

Achieving successful outcomes through Alternative Education Provision: an international literature review

Literature review

Paul Gutherson
Helen Davies
Ted Daszkiewicz



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Contents

About the authors	2
Key points	3
Executive summary	5
Summary of messages from the research	5
Summary of conclusions	10
1. Introduction	11
1.1 Context	11
1.2 Approach	13
2. Messages from the research	15
2.1 Characteristics and components of innovative and effective practice	15
2.2 How do specific intervention types contribute to effective AEP?	16
2.3 What is known to be effective for specific target groups?	22
2.4 How does the delivery model contribute to effective AEP?	28
2.5 How does the curriculum contribute to effective AEP?	30
2.6 How do approaches to teaching and learning contribute to effective AEP?	38
2.7 What workforce characteristics and issues impact on effective AEP?	41
2.8 How do models and practices for assessing need contribute to effective AEP?	43
2.9 How is the effectiveness of provision assessed?	45
2.10 How does the use of ICT contribute to effective AEP?	50
2.11 How do re-engagement strategies contribute to effective AEP?	53
3. Conclusions	56
4. Proposed AEP Framework	60
5. References	62
6. Appendices	66
6.1 Data extraction template	66
6.2 Alternative Provision options in England	73
6.3 Possible outcomes of AEP	74
6.4 ECM outcomes and indicators	75



About the authors

Paul Gutherson

Paul is a research consultant for TAC, a part of CfBT Education Trust. He has worked on a range of national and local programmes within children's, young people's and adult services. His career has focused on developing high quality evidence-based programmes supporting children, young people and adults as well as contributing to the evidence base through rigorous research studies.

He has a great deal of knowledge and expertise related to integrated working and multi-agency approaches to improving outcomes for children and young people, and other stakeholders working within the policy context of the Every Child Matters: Change for Children agenda, as well as related policy areas such as Youth Matters, Care Matters and wider social and regeneration policy.

Helen Davies

Helen is a highly skilled trainer and consultant with extensive experience across the children's workforce. She has worked closely with the Department for Education (DfE), the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA), the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) and the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) on national professional development and change management projects. Helen also works with local authorities across England to support their implementation of the Every Child Matters agenda.

Ted Daszkiewicz

Ted is a training and development consultant for TAC, with broad experience in working across the children's workforce. He has a psychology background and around 15 years of experience in working directly with young people and practitioners in a variety of settings, as well as a number of years of senior management experience in young people's services. This has included working within the areas of substance misuse, behaviour change and management, careers and education. His experience also covers a number of different approaches to working with children and young people, including Transactional Analysis, NLP, Brief/Solution focused therapy and Motivational Interviewing. He co-developed the Motivational Dialogue approach to behaviour change in young people and families.



Key points

In 2010 the Trustees of CfBT commissioned a literature review to:

- Help improve understanding of how to measure the effectiveness of Alternative Education Provision (AEP)
- Bring together evidence of effective approaches to AEP, and
- Identify promising practice and lessons that might be transferable from AEP to mainstream provision.

The evidence reviewed in this document appears to suggest some essential characteristics of effective AEP. Effective AEP is:

- Based on trusting, caring relationships
- Based on effective assessment of need
- Person-centred
- Purposeful (outcomes focused)
- Personalised and appropriate (curriculum/addressing needs)
- Flexible and accessible
- Delivered by highly skilled and trained staff
- Monitored and assessed (to ensure needs are met and to inform delivery)
- Supported by the wider family and community.

The review found some evidence to suggest what outcomes can reasonably be expected from effective AEP. Outcomes that the literature suggests are typically measured, but may not be solely attributable to the provision, are:

- Academic attainment and increase in numbers of learners receiving awards for their performance ^[1, 3, 15, 17] ¹
- School attendance ^[1]
- Reductions in disruptive and/or violent behaviours and exclusions, suspensions, or referrals ^[1, 3, 15]
- Reduction in offending behaviours ^[3]
- Improved sense of direction and self, including changes in self-esteem, confidence, motivation, and health awareness ^[1, 2, 3, 17]
- Improvement in developing and sustaining relationships (with family, project staff, peers) including changes in the ability to communicate, cope with authority, and work with others ^[3, 17]
- Positive progression routes. ^[15]

Limited evidence was found of the effectiveness of tools to measure outcomes. More work is needed to examine the range of tools and their reliability.

¹ Figures refer to articles, publications etc reviewed (see pages 62–5).



This review has not successfully identified evidence of the processes or mechanisms by which those characteristics suggested to be integral to effective AEP actually impact on outcomes, nor has it found evidence of causality. In short it has not uncovered *how* or *why* these characteristics make AEP successful.

By combining the list of effective characteristics, or 'inputs', with a list of outcomes drawn from the literature, an outline framework that could be useful in designing new AEP and also in monitoring the effectiveness of AEP has been produced. More work is needed on this outline framework to identify what tools and evidence could be used to measure or assess the effectiveness of both the inputs and the outcomes and to test its appropriateness for all types of AEP.



...much of the literature on alternative education does present features or characteristics thought to be essential to the success of alternative education efforts.

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- Help improve understanding of how to measure the effectiveness of Alternative Education Provision (AEP)
- Bring together evidence of effective approaches to AEP, and
- Identify promising practice and lessons that might be transferable from AEP to mainstream provision.

Summary of messages from the research

Despite there being little rigorous evaluation research documenting the effectiveness of alternative education programmes that can link *specific* programme characteristics with *specific* student outcomes^[1] much of the literature on alternative education does present features or characteristics thought to be essential to the success of alternative education efforts. A number of documents usefully bring together what are *believed* to be effective characteristics and components² of AEP but it should be noted that: (i) many are characteristics or components of effective education, wherever it takes place; (ii) there is not necessarily a strong evidence base to support claims of effectiveness; and (iii) importantly, there is little or no indication in the literature of *how* these characteristics or components contribute to effective AEP.

Characteristics and components of innovative and effective practice

Effective AEP typically demonstrates the following:

- High standards and expectations that build aspirations^[1, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 14]
- Small schools, small class sizes and high staff/learner ratios^[1, 3, 9, 12, 14]
- Student-centred or personalised (needs-led) programmes that are flexible and customisable to individual need^[1, 3, 4, 8, 12]
- High quality 'caring and knowledgeable' staff as well as ongoing professional development and support for all staff^[1, 4, 9, 11, 14]
- Links to multiple agencies, partners and community organisations and 'a safety net of pastoral support including counselling and mentoring'^[1, 3, 5, 6, 10, 12, 14]
- An expanded, challenging and flexible curriculum related to learners' interests and capabilities that offers a range of accreditation opportunities; a good curriculum is skills focused and also emphasises the basic skills of literacy, numeracy, communication and ICT^[1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14]
- Expanded curricula that foster the development of interpersonal and social skills and enable holistic approaches to be taken; this can be through integration into all lessons and activities, as well as being taught discretely^[1, 5, 6, 9, 14]
- Family and community involvement^[1, 3, 4, 5, 11, 14]

² The literature uses the terms characteristics, components, elements and factors almost interchangeably. In this document 'characteristics' refer to general overarching features that relate to the provision/setting, 'components' or 'elements' refer to specific features related to delivery, and 'factors' refer to aspects specific to the young person.



Many systematic reviews of intervention types conclude that there is limited evidence that any one type of intervention is more effective than another.

- The creation and maintenance of intentional communities that pay considerable attention to cultivating a strong sense of connection among students and between students, families and teachers. This includes establishing relationships that are adult-like and based on respect. [1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 12, 14]
- Healthy physical environments that foster education, emotional well-being, and a sense of pride and safety. [1, 3, 6, 7, 14]

Interestingly, regular monitoring and assessment of progress is not included in many of the lists of effective provision.

How do specific intervention types contribute to effective AEP?

Many systematic reviews of intervention types conclude that there is limited evidence that any one type of intervention is more effective than another. Various authors report on the importance of programme fidelity, namely delivering the programme consistent with its original design, regardless of intervention type. [8, 16, 19] A common issue with literature exploring intervention types is that there is often little or no evidence of what components of the intervention contribute to successful outcomes, and that what there is often fails to address the fact that interventions commonly occur as part of a multi-component programme. It is, therefore, difficult to identify known effects for specific populations or indeed precisely what it is about an intervention type that has an impact. Despite this, evidence reveals the following:

- Research into the effectiveness of cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) suggests that:
 - the general CBT approach, and not any specific version of it, is responsible for the positive effects seen
 - inclusion of anger control and interpersonal problem-solving components in the treatment programme was associated with larger effects
 - inclusion of victim impact and behaviour modification was associated with smaller effects
 - the effects of CBT were greater for offenders with higher risk of recidivism than for those with lower risk
 - CBT-based approaches are as effective for juveniles as for adults.
- Reviews of social and cognitive skills interventions consistently find a positive effect; however, social information processing programmes for learners in AEP or special education were found to be significantly less effective than those for learners still in mainstream provision.
- There is mixed evidence of the effectiveness of Multisystemic Therapy (MST).
- The literature suggests mentoring has a small positive impact on a range of outcomes but that the effect is dependent on the duration and frequency of meetings and on mentoring being part of a multi-modal approach.
- Evidence of the impact of Restorative Justice approaches is inconclusive.
- Boot camps, 'Scared Straight' and other 'juvenile awareness' programmes are shown to be ineffective and may actually lead to more offending behaviour.



Some examples of delivery models where the literature presents some evidence of impact... were identified, for example career academies, industry-focused charter schools and social micro-enterprises.

What is known to be effective for specific target groups of young people?

This review did not identify large bodies of evidence that enable a simple conclusion that a particular set of approaches will help engage all young people within a broad definition (e.g. looked-after children, NEETs, young carers etc). Despite this, it is striking that regardless of 'target group', the evidence suggests similar practices are key to achieving positive outcomes. The evidence suggests that the key characteristics of effective practice with all young people/target groups are as follows:

- It is flexible and individually tailored.
- It addresses a breadth of needs.
- It is based on accurate assessment of need.
- It is delivered by caring and knowledgeable staff, and is supported by continuity of strong relationships.

How does the delivery model contribute to effective AEP?

Some examples of delivery models where the literature presents some evidence of impact, or where, at a minimum, it suggests the approaches are 'promising' were identified, for example career academies, industry-focused charter schools and social micro-enterprises. Some evidence was found suggesting that regardless of the precise delivery model, effective AEP:

- Creates 'smaller, more personal environments' or small learning communities
- Focuses on skills development
- Is rooted in the communities in which the young people are based
- Focuses on addressing risk factors and providing opportunities to develop protective factors
- Offers ongoing support.

How does the curriculum contribute to effective AEP?

Perhaps surprisingly, little research was identified that focused solely on the curriculum within AEP. Many of the documents reviewed, however, made some reference to flexible, tailored or individualised programmes and the possible importance of practically-oriented skills-based programmes.

How do approaches to teaching and learning contribute to effective AEP?

The evidence suggests that approaches to teaching and learning in AEP should take advantage of:

- Out-of-schooltime strategies
- Person-centred approaches
- Creative and flexible teaching.

What workforce characteristics and issues impact on effective AEP?

The literature on workforce and workforce reform focuses overwhelmingly on mainstream school settings, with some consideration of Further Education settings and initial teacher training. However, key messages on workforce suggest the importance of:

- Deploying a wide range of specialist staff
- Well trained, caring and knowledgeable staff
- Strong, engaged, continuous and competent leadership.



How do models and practices for assessing need contribute to effective AEP?

There is consensus from the literature reviewed and systematic reviews of interventions that the foundation of effective work with children and young people is assessment. However, assessment and monitoring is rarely mentioned in lists of what is believed to make provision effective. Effective assessment of need:

- Is holistic
- Establishes the level of need and dimensions of risk to be addressed
- Is linked to appropriate interventions – the right young people on the right programmes
- Can help to engage young people
- Involves parents/carers
- Is ongoing.

Assessing the effectiveness of provision

Frequently studies do not present evidence of whether they actually improve outcomes – only *perceptions* that they may. The main outcomes that the literature suggests are typically measured, but may not be solely attributable to the provision, are:

- Academic attainment and increase in numbers of learners receiving awards for their performance [1, 3, 15, 17]
- School attendance [1]
- Reductions in disruptive and/or violent behaviours and exclusions, suspensions, or referrals [1, 3, 15]
- Reduction in offending behaviours [3]
- Improved sense of direction and of self, including changes in self-esteem, confidence, motivation and health awareness [1, 2, 3, 17]
- Improvement in developing and sustaining relationships (with family, project staff, peers) including changes in the ability to communicate, cope with authority, and work with others [3, 17]
- Positive progression routes. [15]

Almost all lists of effective practice refer to the importance of personal and social development, yet as potential outcomes of AEP these are rarely mentioned.

How does the use of ICT contribute to effective AEP?

There is limited evidence of the effectiveness of ICT in AEP but it may not be suitable for all learners and requires investment in training of staff. However, effective use of ICT in AEP may have a positive impact on:

- Motivation and engagement
- Control and autonomy of learning
- Raising aspirations
- Social relationships and collaboration
- Literacy
- Personal reflection
- Parental/family involvement.



It has been suggested... that there is a need for an accountability system for AEP that captures a richer idea of 'success in education' as well as a 'quality kitemark' scheme for AEP.

How do re-engagement strategies contribute to effective AEP?

Evidence of effective re-engagement of young people suggests flexible and individually tailored responses are key. The evidence suggests effective re-engagement:

- Establishes credibility and relationships of trust ^[10, 15, 55, 71]
- Uses a wide range of community-based partners ^[10, 15, 17, 55]
- Secures the commitment and active involvement of parents, carers and young people ^[10, 15, 17, 38, 55, 71]
- Takes proactive approaches and attitudes such as named contacts/key workers, providing work while out of school, and facilitating flexible options in terms of curriculum, delivery and timetabling ^[10, 15, 17, 55]
- Has ongoing support, including IAG, beyond the project lifetime ^[10, 45, 55, 71]
- Uses effective assessment, making use of appropriate tools that focus on strengths as well as needs and ongoing tracking/monitoring of young people using a range of data ^[15, 17]
- Uses rewards and opportunities to earn stipends or wages in order to meet immediate income needs while work experience is gained ^[10, 15]
- Views the curriculum as a key component of re-engaging young people; this may include flexible approaches and the use of appropriate programmes addressing issues such as anger management, team building, personal safety, self-esteem, sexual health or opportunities for peer instruction ^[15, 71]
- Keeps pupils on the school roll and/or maintains contact with them to create a sense of expectation for a return to education, and to increase ownership by schools ^[17, 71]
- Uses accreditation to give a sense of achievement – it may help raise students' self-esteem and increase their motivation ^[15]
- Has a whole-school philosophy, built on shared staff awareness and understandings ^[17]
- Is aware of the importance of timing and timescales for delivery ^[17, 71]
- Requires an appropriate range of support services and expertise to provide tailored responses. ^[17, 71]

Costs and benefits of AEP

In work published in 2003 the average cost per young person enrolled on AEP was £3,800 or 165 per cent of the average Age-Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU). ^[9] If the same percentage difference is assumed, then currently the average cost per young person enrolled on AEP is estimated to be £5,567. Various documents address the issues of wider costs if young people are allowed to 'fail' or to travel down paths that lead to delinquency. They attempt to place a cost to society on not implementing AEP interventions.

Ensuring high quality in AEP

It has been suggested ^[5] that there is a need for an accountability system for AEP that captures a richer idea of 'success in education' as well as a 'quality kitemark' scheme for AEP. The research into AEP reviewed in this document supports this view and aims to build a clearer picture of what any such accountability system or kitemark scheme could capture in order to evidence the effectiveness of AEP appropriately.



Summary of conclusions

In summary there is evidence to suggest key characteristics displayed by effective AEP. Effective AEP is:

- Based on trusting, caring relationships
- Based on effective assessment of need
- Person-centred
- Purposeful (outcomes-focused)
- Personalised and appropriate
- Flexible and accessible
- Delivered by highly skilled and trained staff
- Monitored and assessed
- Supported by the wider family and community.

This review has not successfully identified evidence of the processes or mechanisms by which the characteristics suggested to be integral to effective AEP actually impact on outcomes. In short it has not uncovered *how* or *why* these characteristics make AEP successful.

There is less strong evidence to suggest what outcomes can reasonably be expected from effective AEP and how they can be measured. More work is needed to examine the range of tools used to measure the outcomes of AEP and their reliability.

It is, however, important that we continue to seek a clearer picture of effective AEP – the costs of failing young people are significant, not just for the young person and their family but also for society.



1. Introduction

One useful way of conceptualising AEP comes from the US Department of Education which defines alternative education as a school that 'addresses needs of students that typically can't be met in a regular school...'

In 2010 the Trustees of CfBT commissioned a literature review that would:

- Help improve understanding of how to measure the effectiveness of Alternative Education Provision (AEP)
- Bring together evidence of effective approaches to AEP, and
- Identify promising practice and lessons that might be transferable from AEP to mainstream provision.

The central research question for the literature review was **'How are successful outcomes achieved for different client groups through Alternative Education Provision?'**

This central question was broken down further, into a number of sub-questions that were used to inform the development of inclusion and exclusion criteria:

- What are considered successful outcomes of AEP?
- What characteristics of AEP are thought to be important to achieve successful outcomes?
- What forms of AEP have been found to have a measurable impact on children, young people and their families?
- What aspects of AEP have been found to have a measurable impact on children, young people and their families?
- What are the most effective ways of measuring outcomes for young people?

1.1 Context

What do we mean by AEP?

Defining AEP is problematic as not only can it take numerous forms (private and third sector provision, FE provision, LA provision, online provision, work-based learning and vocational education, full time and part time) but it can also have different objectives (educational or social, prevention or intervention), be aimed at different beneficiaries (individual, family, community) and finally have different meanings in different countries.

One useful way of conceptualising AEP comes from the US Department of Education³ which defines alternative education as a school that 'addresses needs of students that typically can't be met in a regular school, provides non-traditional education, serves as an adjunct to a regular school, or falls outside the categories of regular, special education or vocational education.' However, thinking of AEP solely as 'schools' excludes some types of alternative provision. (The range of types of programme that may be referred to as AEP are illustrated in Appendix 6.1.) For this review we have therefore adapted an American definition^[12] so as to retain a focus on education programmes.

For the purposes of this review alternative education provision is defined as: schools or programmes that are set up by local authorities, schools, community and voluntary organisations, or other entities, to serve young people whose needs are not being met and who, for a variety of reasons, are not succeeding in a traditional learning environment.

³ Cited in Aron, L.Y. (2006) *An overview of alternative education*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute

Characteristics of young people in AEP

Young people may be in AEP for a range of reasons. Characteristics include:

- Those with low levels of literacy and numeracy
- Those whose attendance at school was poor
- Those whose unsatisfactory behaviour led to, or put them at risk of, exclusion
- Looked after children
- Young people with a learning difficulty and/or disability
- Teenage mothers and pregnant teenagers
- Young carers
- Those with health problems, especially mental health problems
- Young people from disadvantaged or challenging family backgrounds
- Those with complex social and emotional needs
- Young people at risk of offending or those who were leaving a custodial establishment
- Young people who were gifted and talented but had become bored at school
- Those, especially males, from low-income families where there is a tradition of adults not participating in employment, training or further and/or higher education
- Some young people from particular minority ethnic backgrounds.

Using this definition and the wide characteristics of young people in AEP there are potentially many lessons to be learned from extant research into specific programmes that could be classified as Targeted Youth Support, Positive Activity Projects, Work Based Learning Programmes and Curriculum Flexibility Projects (including online learning for disadvantaged groups) in addition to research exploring the effectiveness of Pupil Referral Units and special schools conducted over the past 10 years in this country and abroad.

The review did not include Elective Home Education, alternative provision for those with medical needs (though this is 'an important and challenging part of alternative provision') or as a gang prevention measure. The authors also excluded research where the focus was on multi-agency, inter-agency or integrated practice, early years interventions, parenting and family learning.

Despite the difficulties in defining AEP a number of themes were identified that can impact on the effectiveness of AEP. The report is structured around these themes:

- Intervention types
- Target groups
- Delivery models
- Workforce issues
- Curriculum
- Teaching and learning (including the use of IT)
- Assessment
- Re-engagement.



... there is a need for: 'an accountability system that captures a richer idea of success in education...'

Ensuring high quality in AEP

The authors of a 2009 paper published by the think-tank Demos ^[5] suggest that in relation to AEP there is a need for:

- *'an accountability system that captures a richer idea of success in education – that allows schools, and children and young people's services to flourish'*

and

- *'an Ofsted-style function of inspecting and monitoring voluntary and community and private sector organisations and awarding them a single quality kitemark; this kitemark scheme could build on the experiences of the new Learning Outside the Classroom 'Quality Badge' scheme.'*

The research into AEP reviewed in this document supports this view and aims to build a clearer picture of what any such accountability system or kitemark scheme could capture in order to evidence the effectiveness of AEP appropriately. The main body of this report explores further the evidence of what contributes to effective AEP and the achievement of successful outcomes for young people through AEP; and concludes with a proposed framework that could be used both in planning or assessing AEP.

1.2 Approach

Search strategy

At the outset the authors designed a search strategy that opened the search out to incorporate the wider body of evidence, for example on work-based learning or the outcomes of wider youth programmes. This was necessary to ensure that enough potentially relevant research was identified from which robust conclusions and recommendations could be drawn.

Whilst the literature review employed methods similar to those used in formal systematic reviewing, the commissioners were also keen to find examples of promising practice. For this reason the search included inspection and regulatory bodies, think-tank publications, practice guides and government guidance where examples of evaluated practice might be found.

A number of key databases were identified as well as organisations known to be active in this field. They were searched using the following terms: 'Alternative Education', 'Alternative Education' AND 'PRU', 'Exclusion' AND 'school', or by using their own keyword searches (for example DfE keywords '16–18', 'at risk', 'community education', 'disaffection' etc). Figure 1 shows all the databases and websites searched. The search focused on freely available reported research from the UK, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand published between 2000 and 2010. Research from other countries was included if it was published in English and met the rest of the inclusion criteria.

The search yielded a greater number of potential documents for review than expected: 510 documents were initially identified. These were sifted for relevance based on the content of abstracts or executive summaries. 100 documents were excluded at this stage because they were not concerned primarily with education, were theoretical, academic or polemic pieces, were not evidence based or were policy focused. We were unable to locate any published reports for six records identified through CERUK and a further 89 documents were assigned as 'undecided'. These documents may contain potential lessons *for* and *from* AEP but were either primarily concerned with mainstream provision or were concerned with services that were at the very edge



of our definition of AEP (for example, family learning or health interventions with small educational components). A pragmatic decision, based on the time available to complete the work, was taken to exclude these documents also.

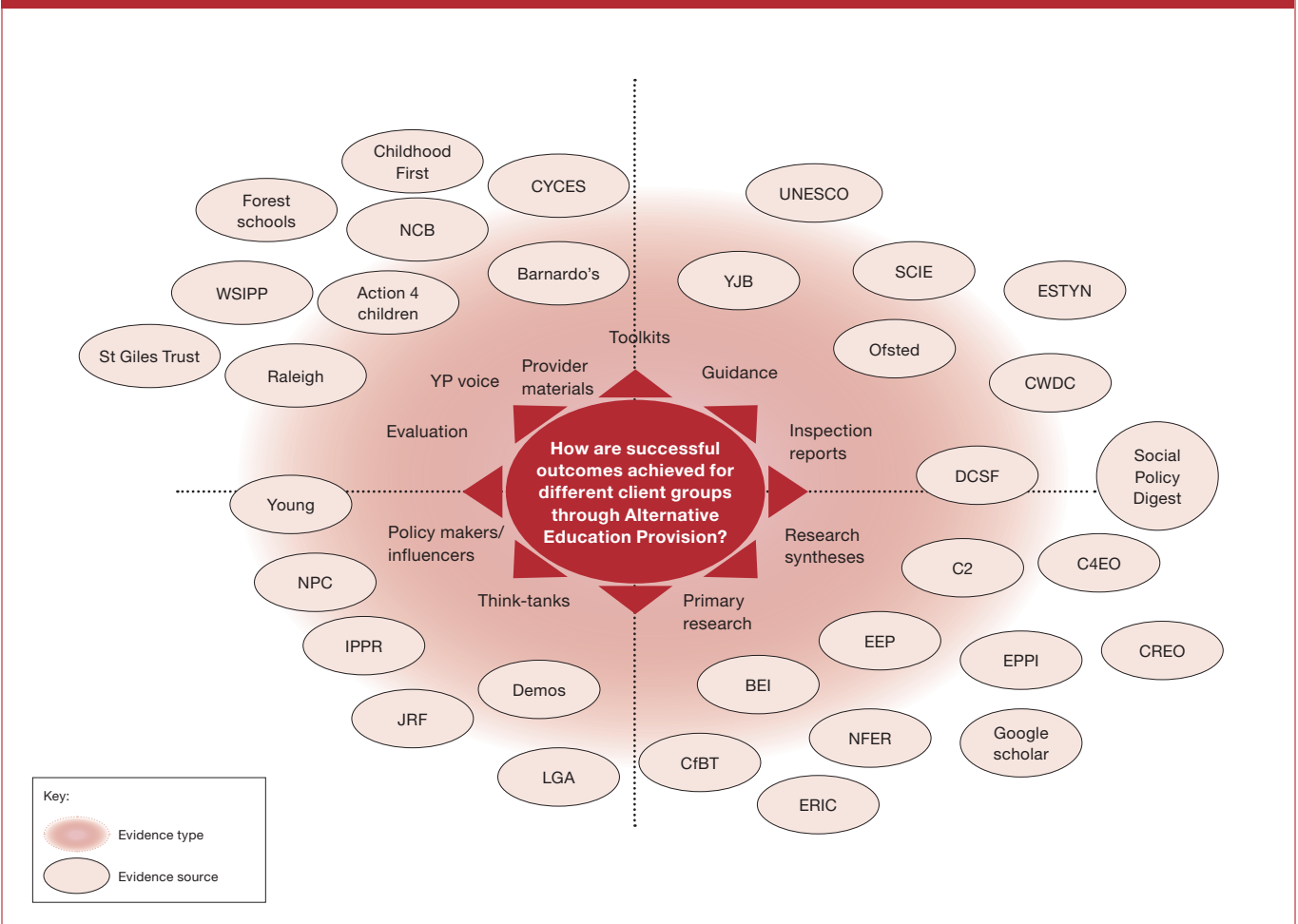
Data extraction, analysis and synthesis

For pragmatic reasons data extraction was prioritised according to the evidence type, namely, systematic reviews were reviewed first, followed by major national evaluations and other large scale multi-site interventions, and finally, where time allowed, small-scale single-site interventions.

A form based on the EPPI-Centre data extraction template, recommended by the Government Social Research Service, was developed for data extraction (see Appendix 6.1).

Of the 334 documents that remained after the first sift, 98 were reviewed in full and 21 were partially reviewed, because either they contained small sections that were relevant (though the main purpose of the document meant it was not included for full review) or there were points of potential interest but the evidence base was not as strong as it could have been.

Figure 1: Diagram showing evidence types and principal evidence sources





There is not necessarily a strong evidence base to support claims of effectiveness.

2. Messages from the research

2.1 Characteristics and components of innovative and effective practice

A number of documents usefully bring together what are *believed* to be effective characteristics and components of AEP but it should be noted that:

- (1) Many are characteristics and components of effective education, wherever it takes place
- (2) There is not necessarily a strong evidence base to support claims of effectiveness, and
- (3) There is little or no indication in the literature of *how* these characteristics and components contribute to effective AEP.

The literature suggests effective AEP typically demonstrates the following characteristics:

- High standards and expectations that build aspirations ^[1, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 14]
- Small schools, small class sizes and high staff-learner ratios ^[1, 3, 9, 12, 14]
- Student-centred or personalised (needs led) programmes that are flexible and customisable to individual need ^[1, 3, 4, 8, 12]
- A strong level of autonomy and professional decision-making ^[1, 14]
- Students are in the programme voluntarily ^[1, 12]
- Clearly identified goals to inform evaluation and recruitment ^[1, 6]
- Integration of research and practice ^[1, 14]
- High quality ‘caring and knowledgeable’ staff with ongoing professional development and support for all staff ^[1, 4, 9, 11, 14, 72]
- Links to multiple agencies, partners and community organisations and ‘a safety net of pastoral support including counselling and mentoring’ ^[1, 3, 5, 6, 10, 12, 14]
- Expanded, challenging and flexible curricula related to learners’ interests and capabilities that offer a range of accreditation opportunities. A good curriculum is skills focused and also emphasises the basic skills of literacy, numeracy, communication and ICT ^[1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14]
- Expanded curricula that foster the development of interpersonal and social skills and enable holistic approaches to be taken. This can be through integration into all lessons and activities, as well as being taught discretely ^[1, 5, 6, 9, 14]
- Family and community involvement ^[1, 3, 4, 5, 11, 14, 73]
- A clear focus based on whether the intervention is a programme (namely a short-term intervention designed to address a specific need and to return the learner to mainstream provision) or a school (namely a long-term placement where the goal is not to return to mainstream) ^[1]
- The creation and maintenance of intentional communities that pay considerable attention to cultivating a strong sense of connection among students, and between students, families and teachers. This includes establishing relationships that are adult-like and based on respect.

^[1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 12, 14]



- Healthy physical environments that foster education, emotional well-being, a sense of pride, and safety ^[1, 3, 6, 7, 14]
- Appropriate and accessible location ^[1]
- Continuity and strong leadership ^[1, 14]
- Support beyond the lifetime of the actual intervention ^[9, 10]
- An 'assets' approach. ^[9]

'Creating caring, non-authoritarian learning environments and populating them with adults who are sympathetic to the special needs of these students and their families is likely a key to success for these students.' ^[7]

Interestingly, regular monitoring and assessment of progress is not included in many of the lists of effective provision. It is included in two Ofsted publications ^[6, 9], where the emphasis is strongly on monitoring and assessment of academic progress (recognising the smallest steps as well as large jumps in learning) and in using assessment to guide teaching directly.

One document ^[1] also refers to US research that identifies additional characteristics for alternative education in secure settings. On the whole it reflects those listed above, though there are a few additional characteristics that arguably may be effective in any alternative provision or indeed any mainstream provision:

- Education is viewed by all stakeholders as a vital part of the rehabilitation process.
- Academic achievement is reinforced through incremental incentives.
- Opportunities exist for on-the-job training, work experience and mentorships.
- Partnerships are developed with potential employers.
- Places in jobs and further education are arranged prior to re-entry into the community.

2.2 How do specific intervention types contribute to effective AEP?

Some of the intervention types included in this section are used as one component in multifaceted alternative education programmes whereas some might be implemented as a 'programme' on their own. All those included here highlight what is known about the effectiveness of the various intervention types and are intended to encourage evidence-based application of the approaches when used as a *component* of alternative education provision. With many of these interventions various authors report on the importance of programme fidelity, namely delivering the programme consistent with its original design. ^[8, 16, 19] In addition many authors suggest that the local delivery context may bring into doubt the transferability of any findings; in other words, would the same results be achieved in a different setting, locality or country?

It is also worth noting that many systematic reviews of intervention types conclude that there is limited evidence for any one type of intervention being more effective than another (with the exceptions of boot camps and 'scared straight' approaches where there is evidence that these are less effective).



It appears then that the general CBT approach, and not any specific version of it, is responsible for the overall positive effects.

Cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT)

A number of meta-analyses of CBT used with specific target groups were identified. Meta-analytic reviews have identified CBT as being one of the most effective approaches to reducing recidivism in young offenders, when included in a multi-stranded approach. Although most of the evidence comes from the US, there is widespread use of CBT programmes in the UK, and the evidence from the few UK evaluations is promising. ^[8]

Cognitive behaviour therapy is based on the assumption that cognitive deficits and distortions characteristic of offenders are learned rather than inherent. Programmes for offenders, therefore, emphasise individual accountability and attempt to teach offenders to understand the thinking processes and choices that immediately preceded their criminal behaviour. Learning to self-monitor thinking is typically the first step, after which the therapeutic techniques seek to help offenders identify and correct biased, risky or deficient thinking patterns. All cognitive behavioural interventions, therefore, employ a set of structured techniques aimed at building cognitive skills in areas where offenders show deficits and restructuring cognition in areas where offenders' thinking is biased or distorted. These techniques typically involve cognitive skills training, anger management, and various supplementary components related to social skills, moral development, and relapse prevention.

One review ^[19] found that inclusion of anger control and interpersonal problem solving components in the treatment programme was associated with larger effects but inclusion of victim impact and behaviour modification was associated with smaller effects. Interestingly the authors also found no significant differences in the effectiveness of different types or 'brand names' of CBT. It appears then that the general CBT approach, and not any specific version of it, is responsible for the overall positive effects. They also found:

- The effects of CBT were greater for offenders with higher risk of recidivism than those with lower risk, contrary to any presumption that higher-risk offenders might be less amenable to treatment
- CBT was as effective for juveniles as for adults
- The treatment setting was not related to treatment effects. Offenders treated in prison (generally close to the end of their sentences) showed recidivism decreases comparable to those of offenders treated in the community.

Somewhat counter-intuitively, especially given the interest in Restorative Justice approaches, the inclusion of 'victim impact' (activities aimed at getting offenders to consider the impact of their behaviour on their victims) components in CBT appears to have a negative impact on recidivism rates. It should also be noted that some authors suggest that programmes focusing on deficits have very little impact, and in some cases, do not seem to work at all. ^[9]

Social and cognitive skills interventions

These can be broadly viewed as education and training interventions that aim to provide the young person with the social skills necessary to manage relationships and/or the knowledge and skills necessary to complete their education, live independently and gain employment. The reviews of these types of interventions were consistent in finding a positive effect.

Thomas *et al* ^[16] identify a number of US-based meta-analysis. They refer to a German and UK meta-analysis of 136 studies by Beelman and Lösel (2006) that evaluated the relative effectiveness



The general feature of all mentoring programmes is the contact of a less experienced or 'at risk' individual with a positive role model.

of social skills training for preventing and treating behavioural problems in childhood and adolescence. They found that intensive cognitive behaviour therapy programmes (interventions that focus on enabling an individual to understand and manage their own behaviour and relationships with others) were most effective when treating anti-social behaviour and social competence, especially when delivered by authors, project staff, or supervised students, rather than teachers or other psychosocial practitioners.

Whilst focusing on social information processing interventions in mainstream schools, albeit interventions targeted at young people considered to be at risk (namely displaying aggressive behaviour) one review ^[26] highlights a positive overall effect for at-risk and behaviour-problem students who participated in social information processing programmes. That is, they showed less aggressive and disruptive behaviour after treatment than students who did not receive a programme. However, social information processing programmes for learners in AEP or special education were found to be significantly less effective than those for learners still in mainstream provision, though overall greater reductions in aggressive behaviour were found for higher-risk students. The authors suggest that young people who have already been placed in alternative provision may have serious or complex problems and thus short-term social information processing programmes are not likely to have a strong impact.

Multisystemic Therapy (MST), Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC) and Functional Family Therapy (FFT)

According to van Poortvliet there is 'robust evidence', from the US, that all three interventions work as cost-effective strategies for preventing offending, and MST and MTFC in particular are also potentially good alternatives to custody, or can form part of a community sentence. ^[8] However, an earlier US-based meta-analysis of studies that evaluated the impact of Multisystemic Therapy on reducing out-of-home living arrangements, crime and delinquency and other behavioural and psychosocial outcomes ^[20] found the 'available evidence does not support the hypothesis that MST is consistently more effective than usual services or other interventions for youth with social, emotional, or behavioral problems.' Whilst the results were inconclusive as to whether MST was more effective than other usual services it found no evidence that MST has harmful effects and importantly notes: 'There is no evidence that any known interventions are more effective than MST.'

Similarly a number of reviews of Treatment Foster Care and other forms of community-based residential placement/foster care, identified by Thomas *et al* ^[16], were found to be inconclusive and based on small numbers of rigorous studies. This said, there is some limited evidence that Therapeutic Foster Care aimed at reducing violence by chronically delinquent⁴ adolescents (termed 'programme-intensive therapeutic foster care') involving short-term programmes, lasting on average 6–7 months, in which programme personnel collaborated closely and daily with foster families, brought about a significant decrease in violence, aggressive behaviour and self-reported felonies. Importantly Thomas *et al* also report a potentially 'negative effect of therapeutic foster care among females' but that community-based family residential placement was more effective than 'standard' residential placement for female juvenile offenders.

⁴ 'Delinquent' and 'juvenile delinquent' are terms commonly used in the literature from the United States. When correctly used 'delinquent' is a formal legal term for the behaviour of children and adolescents that in adults would be judged criminal under law.



When mentoring was part of a multi-modal treatment including behaviour modification, supplementary education and employment programmes, significant reductions in re-offending occurred.

Mentoring programmes

The general feature of all mentoring programmes is the contact of a less experienced or 'at risk' individual with a positive role model. Mentoring programmes may pair struggling students with an adult who serves as a role model, supports school achievement, and helps the youth navigate an often complex school system. One meta-study ^[28] found that such programmes have a small positive impact on school presence and dropping out, but not on achievement. Importantly, most of the interventions evaluated employed paid mentors. Such compensation may have incentivised the mentors to perform better than volunteer mentors, who are more typically utilised in the community.

A second document ^[21] looked at the use of mentors to reduce offending. The evidence suggests successful mentoring interventions (i.e. those that had a large effect in reducing offending) differed from less successful interventions in several respects.

- Duration of each meeting: interventions where mentee and mentor spent more time together per meeting had a greater effect on re-offending than interventions in which mentors and mentees spent less time together, or interventions where the average duration per contact was not stipulated.
- Frequency of each meeting: interventions where mentors and mentees met once a week or more often reduced re-offending more than interventions with less frequent meetings, or where the meeting frequency was not stipulated.
- Mentoring as part of a multi-modal treatment: those studies in which mentoring was the sole intervention were less successful. When mentoring was part of a multi-modal treatment including behaviour modification, supplementary education and employment programmes, significant reductions in re-offending occurred.

Interestingly the beneficial effects of the mentoring programme did not increase with the total period of mentoring in that there was not a relationship between the total duration of mentoring and the reduction in re-offending. If anything, longer-term mentoring programmes had less impact, although this was not a significant relationship. This might suggest that, as mentoring programmes continue, they become less effective, possibly because identifying suitable mentors becomes more difficult or it may be that more difficult mentees require longer programmes. The results also suggested that the beneficial effects of mentoring on re-offending were limited to the time period when mentoring was taking place. Studies in which the follow-up period took place after the mentoring ended did not show a beneficial impact in reducing re-offending.

Another systematic review ^[22] focusing on outcomes related to juvenile delinquency (that also included studies focusing on precursors of delinquency) found mentoring for high-risk youth has a modest positive effect for delinquency, aggression, drug use, and achievement. They also found that effects tended to be stronger when emotional support was a key process in mentoring interventions, and when professional development was an explicit motive for participation of the mentors.

It is striking, given the immense popularity of mentoring programmes and anecdotal reports of its impact, that the authors of documents included in this review note that there is little to no evidence of what components of mentoring contribute to successful outcomes, and that what there is often fails to address the fact that mentoring commonly occurs as part of a multi-component programme. It is, therefore, difficult to identify a mentoring model that has known effects for specific populations or indeed precisely what it is about mentoring that has an impact.



Participants 'seemingly valued a learning culture that emphasized empowerment, the opportunity to have voice and power.'

Restorative Justice (RJ)

Restorative Justice (RJ) can be defined as '...a process whereby parties with a stake in a specific offence resolve collectively how to deal with the aftermath of the offence and its implications for the future.' In one systematic review prepared for the YJB it was found that when properly implemented, restorative justice helps most victims and that the offenders who complete restorative justice may commit fewer crimes in the future. However, the authors note this is not always so and refer to an example where restorative justice increased the rate of arrest frequency among a minority ethnic group. ^[25] Their review suggests effective RJ includes resolutions that are grounded in up-to-date information about the availability and type of rehabilitative programming that victims may wish to see offenders undertake and a strong commitment to monitor whether offenders have kept the promises made in restorative justice processes.

There is contradictory evidence surrounding the impact of RJ. One UK-based review and meta-analysis referred to by Thomas *et al* found that pre-sentencing diversion that included personal skills training and other components (for example reparation to the community) was more effective than caution and monitoring alone and could be taken to suggest RJ approaches may be effective as one component of an intervention. However, the inclusion of 'victim impact' (i.e. activities aimed at getting offenders to consider the impact of their behaviour on their victims) components in CBT appears to have a negative impact on recidivism rates and one review of school-based anti-bullying programmes found that 'work with peers' was significantly associated with an increase in victimisation. ^[29]

Leadership programmes for young people

In a PhD study exploring the components, processes, and experiences that contributed to successful leadership programmes at two different alternative educational settings, the most meaningful learning experiences were found to consist of active, applied, and real-life opportunities; a facilitative and supportive teaching style; new, varied and interesting activities; positive and influential role models; and long-term involvement. ^[2] Whilst this was a small qualitative sample which utilised an appreciative enquiry methodology and therefore sought to focus on the positive, it does provide some limited evidence of what participants in such programmes believe to be the important and effective components.

Perhaps significantly many of the components that participants value reflect the characteristics of effective AEP listed in Section 2.1 of this report (page 15). Participants 'seemingly valued a learning culture that emphasized empowerment, the opportunity to have voice and power. In addition, students appeared to value a culture of positivity, striving, collaboration, and support. They also expressed the importance and benefits of equality, mutuality, and diversity in the program.' ^[2]

Physical activity and 'Wilderness Challenge' programmes

Thomas *et al* ^[16] refer to a US-based review and meta-analysis of 28 US studies evaluating the effectiveness of 'wilderness challenge' programmes (containing both a physical challenge element and an interpersonal element) in reducing offending behaviour. A modest positive effect of the interventions on reduction in re-offending is reported but it appears that longer programmes and/or programmes with greater 'treatment' (as opposed to personal challenge) components may be more effective. They also identify a Norwegian-based review of 23 studies by Ekeland *et al* (2005) that found twelve studies indicating 'exercise can improve self-esteem by a small, but significant amount'.

A review by Loughborough University ^[27] suggests that the social relationships experienced during involvement in physical activity programmes are the most significant factor in effecting behavioural change. In other words, it is the social process and not the activity type that is the vital element.



...boot camp programmes without a counselling component had a negative overall impact...

Self-control programmes

According to Gottfredson and Hirschi, poor self-control is comprised of six inter-related characteristics including: (1) impulsivity and inability to delay gratification, (2) lack of persistence, tenacity, or diligence, (3) partaking in novelty or risk-seeking activities, (4) little value of intellectual ability, (5) self-centredness, and (6) volatile temper.

Most self-control programmes could be broadly characterised as social skills development programmes; a considerable number of the interventions focused on cognitive coping strategies, such as videotape training/role playing, and fewer included immediate/delayed rewards and relaxation training.

The authors of a review of self-control interventions for children under the age of 10^[24] conclude that self-control improvement programmes can be used to improve self-control and reduce delinquency and behaviour problems up to the age of 10 (the age cut-off where Gottfredson and Hirschi argue that self-control becomes relatively fixed and no longer malleable). However, they also note the need for more evidence of the effectiveness of self-control improvement programmes over time and across different segments of the life-course (e.g. mid-adolescence, young adulthood etc.), as well as rigorous cost-benefit analysis.

Boot camps

Dominant features of boot camps are physical exercise, military drill, and ceremony, all carried out in the context of strict discipline. Based on meta-analysis of 32 unique research studies^[18] the authors concluded that the military component of boot camps is not effective in reducing post boot camp offending. Many boot camps, however, incorporate other traditional rehabilitative programmes, such as drug abuse treatment, vocational education, and aftercare transition assistance. These expressly rehabilitative components may add value to a boot camp programme, producing a beneficial effect for the offenders. Juvenile boot camp programmes without a counselling component had a negative overall impact (higher rates of recidivism).

Aversion therapy – ‘Scared Straight’

A US-based review of nine randomised controlled trials (RCTs) in which 14–19 year olds were taken on a visit to prison to ‘scare them straight’^[23] found that the intervention increased the percentage of the treatment group committing new offences anywhere from 1 per cent to 30 per cent. ‘Scared Straight’ and other ‘juvenile awareness’ programmes are not effective as a stand-alone crime prevention strategy: not only do they fail to deter crime but they actually lead to more offending behaviour.

Implications for Alternative Education Provision

- There is evidence that a range of intervention types have positive effects but little or no evidence to suggest that one is any more effective than another.
- The intervention types reviewed here may be most effective when delivered as part of a multi-component programme.
- Programme fidelity appears to be a key aspect determining the effectiveness of any intervention.
- More evidence is needed about the long-term outcomes of intervention types.
- Boot camps and ‘scared straight’ type interventions are not effective and can lead to more offending behaviour.



2.3 What is known to be effective for specific target groups?

When reviewing the research available, a wide range of approaches and interventions to support specific target groups of at-risk young people were identified. We did not identify large bodies of evidence that enable a simple conclusion that a particular set of approaches will help engage all young people within a broad definition (e.g. looked after children, NEETs, young carers etc). Despite this, it is striking that regardless of 'target group', the evidence suggests similar practices are key to achieving positive outcomes. The evidence suggests flexible and individually tailored responses that address a breadth of needs, based on accurate assessment of need, delivered by caring and knowledgeable staff, with continuity of strong relationships are key characteristics of effective practice with all young people/target groups.

Learners with disabilities

One review of existing research highlighted five key components for addressing the support needs of disabled learners, including those with Emotional, Social and Behavioural Difficulties (ESBD). It could be argued that they are no different from the support needs of any young person.

- **Persistence, Continuity, and Consistency:** to show students that there was someone who was not going to give up on them or allow them to be distracted from school, that there was someone who knew them and was available to them throughout the school year, the summer, and into the next school year, and that there was a common message about the need to stay in school.
- **Monitoring:** the occurrence of risk behaviours (e.g. skipped classes, tardiness, absenteeism, behavioural referrals, suspensions, poor academic performance) was consistently tracked, as were the effects of interventions in response to risk behaviours.
- **Relationships:** a caring relationship between an adult connected to the school and the student was established.
- **Affiliation:** a sense of belonging to school was encouraged through participation in school-related activities.
- **Problem-Solving Skills:** skills that students need for solving a variety of problems were taught and supported so students were able to survive in challenging school, home, and community environments. ^[39]

Thomas *et al* ^[16] refer to a US-based systematic review of 16 studies conducted in 2006 that evaluated the effectiveness of cognitive behavioural interventions (CBIs) to reduce school drop-out of young people with disabilities. They found that CBIs that included a behavioural component were effective in reducing school drop-out and that young people with disabilities found CBIs relatively easy to learn. However, the evidence was not clear on the length of time an intervention needed to take to be effective.

Young people who offend or are at risk of offending

Young people who offend are more likely than the general youth population to have multiple and associated needs. These could include combinations of low self-esteem; behavioural or emotional difficulties; mental health difficulties; poor social skills; low levels of numeracy and literacy etc. Thus when focusing on education, training and employment they cannot be viewed in isolation from other issues in a young person's life. There is some evidence to suggest that for this target group, effective interventions are typically:



- **Multi-stranded:** Addressing several of a young person's problems (such as housing, health and welfare) at the same time helps him or her to move away from crime. Some of the most effective approaches to reducing youth offending recognise the breadth of challenges facing these young people, target different problems, and use a range of interventions. [8, 33, 38]
- **Community based:** Delivering interventions in the community appears to be more effective than delivering them in custody or institutional settings. Interventions carried out closer to young people's home environments are more likely to be relevant to their everyday life. [8, 33]
- **Intensive:** Programmes must be of appropriate duration and intensity to make a difference. Building a supportive relationship and responding to a young person's needs takes time, and if an intervention ends prematurely, it may even be damaging and increase re-offending. Continuity of contact is important. [8, 38]

It should be noted, however, that the authors of a review of the effects of custodial versus non-custodial sentences on re-offending were unable to say whether non-custodial sanctions were more effective to prevent re-offending than custodial sanctions. [74]

In addition, effective programmes for young people who offend or are at risk of offending:

- Focus on building self-esteem, confidence and motivation before addressing education and employment issues [33]
- Utilise careful assessment and link interventions to established need and thus are individually appropriate [38]
- Include an element of reparation [38]
- Have programme integrity and are based on programmes that have demonstrated they are effective and are delivered as such. [38]

Minority ethnic and cultural groups

Thomas *et al* [16] refer to a US-based meta-analysis of 305 studies conducted in 2003 that evaluated whether interventions targeting young people aged 12 to 21 years and measuring delinquent or anti-social behaviour as an outcome had different effects for 'majority' (white) and 'minority' (ethnic minority) youth. The researchers found that overall, service programmes were equally effective for minority and white delinquents.

Young carers including young parents

An Ofsted survey of Further Education (FE) college provision for learners with caring responsibilities found that colleges provided a wide range of support for young parents. The learners often experienced isolation, lack of motivation towards learning, lack of family support and poor financial or accommodation situations. Many had complex needs and the support they received to address these complex needs was crucial to their continued learning. [30] However, the report also highlighted that young carers are often highly self-motivated, achieve well against the odds and have to cope with difficult and complex family situations.

Effective practice that helped young carers achieve positive outcomes included the following features:

- Flexible timetabling arrangements and creative option choices that allowed later starting and earlier finishing times [17, 30]



- Courses that are modularised, allowing different entry points throughout the year ^[17, 30]
- Learning materials uploaded to virtual learning environments, which help learners to catch up on work when they needed to miss a lesson ^[30]
- Committed leadership, senior managers and staff with a good understanding of the often complex circumstances and needs of individual learners; this includes commitment and support from schools and teachers – including personal support, a welcoming environment and the avoidance of stigmatisation ^[17, 30]
- Close integration of support with teaching and good links with external agencies to enable multi-agency support ^[17, 30]
- On-site childcare provision ^[17, 30]
- Identification and diagnostic approaches to identify carers and their needs as early as possible and to enable the development of tailored support ^[17]
- Having dedicated staff to support carer education, ensuring approaches are well planned and delivered, and establishing a point of contact for parents and providers, as well as ensuring communications between parties are effective ^[17]
- Support and encouragement to maintain peer relationships, which may ease reintegration. ^[17]

‘Traveller’ children including gypsy travellers, fairground families and show people, circus families, ‘new’ travellers, bargees and other boat dwellers

Little evidence was found with regard to this target group in AEP and a review commissioned by the Children’s Workforce Development Council (CWDC) found gaps and shortcomings in the evidence base but was able to identify a number of key messages for sustaining good practice. ^[36] Some studies were identified that highlight effective practice for mainstream provision and for local authority support services. Key characteristics of effective practice include:

- Cultural awareness, including recognising family expectations of young people’s learning and of developing their contribution to the family economy; and understanding the impacts of exclusion, discrimination and cultural nomadism on child, family and community development ^[17, 36]
- The availability and effective implementation of distance learning approaches – an important element of maintaining educational inputs with mobile groups ^[17, 36]
- Engaged and knowledgeable staff, including a named member of staff/key worker in schools to represent their interests and needs within school and with other agencies ^[17, 36]
- Effective communication and building relationships through supporting and facilitating information flow between schools, families, local communities, support services, and with children’s base schools ^[17, 36]
- Flexible approaches to timetabling and delivery (including provision of facilities on traveller sites) to take account of gypsy/traveller cultural events and mobility patterns and recognition that ‘learning’ was considered to be different from ‘going to school’ ^[17, 36]
- Support for transition phases at age 11 and 14 where school and parental expectations and desires may come into conflict. Outreach work with families is emphasised for early years work. ^[36]



Children in local authority care/Looked after children (LAC)

Two documents provide evidence for effective provision for LAC. One was a wide-ranging review of the reintegration of children absent, excluded or missing from school ^[17]; the other, a current review ^[31] based on a ‘best evidence’ approach to select literature of the greatest relevance and quality from the UK and from abroad on what works in improving services and outcomes for looked after children and young people. They identified some characteristics that may contribute to effective provision for LAC; however, these are not focused specifically on AEP and the evidence base is not strong:

- The introduction of strategic roles, including virtual school heads (VSHs) and the building of cross-professional expertise appears to have been effective in terms of improving the educational experience of children. ^[31]
- Encouragement, which can take different forms, and may include incentives and rewards, or larger-scale celebrations of achievement. ^[31]
- Practical support, in the form of books, computers, software and stationery, which needs to be available to all looked after children in a consistent way. This includes financial support and access to safe and secure accommodation in the longer term, to enable them to participate in further and higher education. ^[31]
- Focusing attention on progress, not problems (an ‘assets’ based approach). ^[31]
- The use of personal education plans (PEPs) has been variable; but there is improvement in the implementation of these and in children’s participation; and the differences in the views of young people concerning their educational experience highlight the importance of talking and listening directly with children and young people. ^[17, 31]
- The involvement of foster, residential, kinship carers, teachers and birth families in order to achieve positive educational outcomes, including areas of the recognition and active support of the role of education and school in a young person’s life. However, there is very little information on the role of birth families in supporting education. ^[17, 31]
- Minimising moves/maintaining school places where possible. ^[17]
- Integrated education and social service provision. ^[17]
- Individualisation and tailoring of packages of support is extremely relevant given the diversity of the target group. ^[17]
- Welcoming schools – in terms of commitment to include a vulnerable child into the school ‘family’, and loss and rejection issues for LAC, meaning that finding a sense of belonging within school is vitally important. ^[17]
- Key workers/dedicated teachers in schools. ^[17]

Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)

According to an Ofsted report based on visits to 12 areas, key characteristics that may contribute to reducing the proportion of NEETs are found in the following: ^[32]

- There was strong leadership, driving a shared vision for local authorities and their partners.
- Young people were consulted about strategies and influenced decisions made about the shape and content of programmes.



Teachers in the providers visited were successful in engaging young people positively in learning new skills.

- Good collaboration between key workers from different agencies such as schools, the Connexions service and health, contributed to complementary and integrated services that met the full range of young people's needs.
- Data was used to inform the planning of programmes, to monitor participation in them subsequently and to ensure resources were targeted at specific groups and in neighbourhoods where there were high numbers of disengaged young people.
- There were well-established measures to identify those at risk and effective preventative measures such as the careful monitoring of potentially vulnerable individual young people and their transition from primary to secondary school.
- Where necessary, local areas continued to support young people beyond the age of 18 through to longer-term adult employment.
- Short courses with clearly defined goals maintained young people's interest and gave them a sense of achievement. The young people interviewed particularly appreciated the opportunity to gain accredited qualifications and relevant skills for employment, including literacy and numeracy.
- Teachers in the providers visited were successful in engaging young people positively in learning new skills. Good classroom management helped young people to concentrate and overcome personal behavioural problems.
- The Connexions service played a key role in successfully coordinating the work of partners and in monitoring the progress and transition of disengaged young people and those at risk of becoming disengaged, especially where personal advisers had a single specialist focus for their work, enabling them to concentrate on specific target groups, such as care leavers or teenage parents, and to help these young people to resolve their problems.

White boys from low-income backgrounds

GCSE and equivalent attainment and post-16 attainment by pupils over the last few years seem to indicate an association between poverty and underachievement and that white British boys from low-income backgrounds continue to make less progress than most other groups. An Ofsted report on good practice in schools (including special schools) presents evidence of the features of schools that are successful in raising the attainment of white boys from low-income backgrounds.^[35] These included:

- An ethos which demonstrates commitment to every individual and which treats staff and pupils with fairness, trust and respect
- Consistent support to develop boys' organisation skills and instil the importance of perseverance; any anti-school subculture 'left at the gates'
- Rigorous monitoring systems which track individual pupils' performance against expectations; realistic but challenging targets; tailored, flexible intervention programmes and frequent reviews of performance against targets
- A highly structured step-by-step framework for teaching, starting with considerable guidance by the teacher and leading gradually to more independent work by the pupils when it is clear that this will enhance rather than detract from achievement
- A curriculum which is tightly structured around individual needs and linked to support programmes that seek to raise aspirations



- Creative and flexible strategies to engage parents and carers, make them feel valued, enable them to give greater support to their sons' education and help them make informed decisions about the future
- A strong emphasis on seeking and listening to the views of these pupils
- Genuine engagement of boys in setting individual targets, reviewing progress, shaping curricular and extra-curricular activities and making choices about the future
- Key adults, including support staff and learning mentors, who are flexible and committed, know the boys well and are sensitive to any difficulties which might arise in their home
- A good range of emotional support for boys to enable them to manage anxieties and develop the skills to express their feelings constructively
- Strong partnership with a wide range of agencies to provide social, emotional, educational and practical support for boys and their families in order to raise their aspirations.

Refugees and asylum seekers

Again little evidence was found relating specifically to effective alternative provision for refugees and asylum seekers. It has been noted that asylum seeker and refugee children are often placed in schools with poor Ofsted reports, where children rejected from other schools on the basis of indiscipline can be found. ^[31] As with other targeted groups considered in this section, some characteristics of effective practice may be:

- Having specialist staff that are able to work with pupils on an ongoing basis ^[17]
- Pooling resources and bringing services together; this can allow specialist expertise to be built up centrally, before being offered out to schools where needs may be variable, for example, a joint pool of bilingual support workers ^[17]
- Building on existing voluntary and community networks to identify new arrivals to local areas and to assess support needs quickly ^[17]
- Basic induction policies to help newly admitted pupils settle into school quickly. Information packs included details of the school curriculum, parental involvement, etc. ^[37]

Reintegration of permanently excluded pupils

In a large national research study on what works in the effective reintegration of children absent, excluded or 'missing from school' some key success criteria were identified for permanently excluded pupils. Those most relevant to this review are listed below: ^[17]

- Speed of response is crucial to keeping pupils in a structured routine, and sends a positive message that the local authority cares about their education and about them.
- Basing reintegration on a genuine new start with excluded pupils being treated like any other student is helpful. Reintegrating pupils at natural breaks e.g. at the start of a new term, is useful, so entry is more natural and fewer questions are asked.
- There is effective partnership working with relevant organisations based on good communication, often including informal communication.
- Specialist reintegration teachers are a central resource. Key to success is staff working with young people on an individual basis.
- Ensuring the engagement of the pupil, and securing and maintaining parental/carer support is vital.



There is some evidence to suggest that when students perceive transfer to an alternative school as punishment, rather than a choice to attend a more appropriate educational environment, their academic motivation may be hurt. Lack of motivation may, in turn, impact on the decision to remain in school, thus contributing to high drop-out rates from AEP. ^[28]

Implications for Alternative Education Provision

- Different targeted groups of young people do have specific needs but the evidence suggests similar practices are able to achieve positive outcomes for all targeted groups.
- Flexible and individually tailored responses that address a breadth of needs (multi-modal), based on accurate assessment of need, delivered by caring and knowledgeable specialist staff, with continuity of strong relationships are key characteristics of effective practice.
- The involvement of young people, parents and the wider community in making decisions can be beneficial, along with effective multi-agency working.
- Ensuring programmes are relevant and of appropriate duration and intensity is important.

2.4 How does the delivery model contribute to effective AEP?

The focus in this section is on alternative delivery models for full-time education provision. Most focus on the creation of ‘smaller, more personal environments’ or small learning communities, ^[39, 40] as well as highly focused skills-based schools that are rooted in the communities in which they are based and reflect deep engagement with community and local employer needs.

An often-cited general typology of intervention types by Raywid ^[12] is shown below in Table 1:

Type 1	Full-time, multi-year, voluntary education options for students of all kinds, including those needing more individualisation, those seeking an innovative or challenging curriculum, or dropouts wishing to earn their diplomas.
Type 2	Shorter-term involuntary programmes aimed at discipline.
Type 3	Short-term therapeutic programmes that focus on the social and emotional problems that are barriers to academic learning.

In an overview of alternative education ^[12] the authors note that Raywid’s and others’ research has concluded that Type 1 programmes are the most successful, while the Type 2 involuntary programmes focused on discipline are the least successful on a whole range of indicators, including academic achievement.

Some examples of delivery models where the literature presents some evidence of impact, or where, at a minimum, it suggests the approaches are ‘promising’ are given below.

Career Academies

These are small learning communities formed within a larger high school. They combine an academic and technical curriculum around a career theme (which differs based on local interest) and establish partnerships with community-based employers to provide work-based learning



With education and training, these youth replenish a diminishing skilled workforce, serve as suppliers for local industry, and renovate blighted communities.

opportunities. A unique feature of Career Academies, in terms of alternative provision, is that they seek to include all learners, not just those with additional needs or those who are 'at risk'. According to the Career Academy Support Network (CASN), there are 6,000 to 8,000 Career Academies in the US. ^[28]

Industry focused charter schools

Improved Solutions for Urban Systems (ISUS) Schools (Ohio) offers out-of-school youth an opportunity to gain employment training and education through a system of industry focused charter schools.⁵ These charter schools, for students between the ages of 16 and 22, integrate industry-certified high-skilled training with academics, youth development, and significant community service initiatives to serve young people.

'Through ISUS, out-of-school youth transform themselves from the source of a problem to the source of a solution for employers and their community. With education and training, these youth replenish a diminishing skilled workforce, serve as suppliers for local industry, and renovate blighted communities. As they change themselves, these youth themselves become change agents.' ^[9]

Social micro-enterprises

Kerka ^[41] refers to examples of social micro-enterprises, small revenue or job-creating projects undertaken by individual social entrepreneurs, non-profit organisations, or non-profit/for-profit partnerships. Using a business model instead of a social service model, micro-enterprises generate income to fund job placement services, life skills mentoring, and other services while offering young people an employment alternative to involvement in gangs or crime.

Addressing risk factors and promoting protective factors

A review of literature commissioned by DCSF ^[16] looked at which services and interventions work to reduce poor outcomes for various groups of young people. The study reviewed 57 previous international reviews of the research literature. The review highlights key risk factors, protective factors and interventions as well as emphasising the importance of not treating young people as part of a homogeneous group based on their characteristics.

Interventions that help address risk factors or provide opportunities to develop protective factors may have a significant impact whatever the approach taken or delivery model used.

The main risk factors for young people are:

- Family (including: poor parental supervision, involvement and discipline; family conflict; low income; and experience of local authority care)
- School (e.g. low achievement beginning in primary school; aggressive behaviour including bullying; lack of commitment including truancy; and exclusions from school)
- Community (including: community disorganisation and neglect; availability of drugs; high turnover) and
- Individuals and peers (lack of social commitment; and personal and friends' early involvement in problem behaviour).

⁵ Charter schools provide an alternative to other American public schools, but are part of the free public education system. They have been freed from some of the rules, regulations, and statutes that apply to other public schools in exchange for accountability for producing certain agreed results.



Effective programs offer long-term follow-up with students for six months to possibly several years after returning to the mainstream setting.

The protective factors included:

- Strong bonds with family, friends and teachers
- Opportunities for involvement in school and community activities
- Social and learning skills to enable participation, and
- Recognition and praise for positive behaviour.

Ongoing support and reintegration

One aspect of delivery, referred to in some literature, suggests that ongoing support is essential if successful reintegration is to be achieved. A mixed methods PhD study^[45] that sought to examine student perceptions of the impact of an alternative intervention programme (AIP) in Virginia, USA, notes the need for ongoing support, and collaboration between the alternative programme and mainstream provision, to aid reintegration back into mainstream settings.

‘Effective programs offer long-term follow-up with students for six months to possibly several years after returning to the mainstream setting. Research on reintegrating students to their home schools indicates that a student should return when the transition team determines the time. Factors considered are whether the student is ready to reintegrate, how the family feels about the transitions, if the teachers and principal are resistant or open to the student’s return, and whether environmental factors in the student’s life may impact the reintegration’. This is important in order to avoid the pitfall that some ‘successful alternative programs engage and nurture students to the point that they do not want to return to the mainstream setting’.^[45]

Implications for Alternative Education Provision

- Delivery models based on smaller, more personal environments or small learning communities may be most effective for AEP.
- There is considerable US-based evidence that skills-based delivery models that are rooted in the local community are most effective.
- There is some evidence that ongoing support, after the initial intervention is over, is important in sustaining change and achieving long-term positive outcomes.
- Delivery models that limit stigmatisation of young people, for example by making the provision open to all, not just those considered ‘problems’, and that are attended voluntarily may be more effective.
- Delivery models should consider how they address risk factors and promote protective factors.

2.5 How does the curriculum contribute to effective AEP?

‘The curriculum must be compelling, challenging and inviting’^[1]

Perhaps surprisingly, little research was identified that focused solely on the curriculum within AEP. Many of the documents reviewed, however, made some reference to flexible, tailored or individualised programmes and the possible importance of practically oriented skills-based programmes.

KS4 engagement programme

The English Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme (KS4EP)^[46] is a personalised programme for key stage 4 learners most at risk of disengagement (typically those who are under-achieving, have poor attendance levels, exhibit issues with behaviour and engagement in learning, and are also



For some pupils, a range of factors appears to have resulted in less positive experiences compared with others.

likely to be from a deprived background). The programme comprises each learner's whole key stage 4 programme, placing an emphasis on the development of personal, social and functional skills. It includes a work-focused component, preferably taking place in a work environment and is underpinned by high quality and regular support, advice and guidance from a trusted adult. After a two-year evaluation of the programme, quantitative measurement of the impact on pupil outcomes was constrained by both the timing of the evaluation and issues of data access and quality.

Nevertheless, the qualitative findings show the following:

- The programme has supported some pupils to achieve better attendance and attainment at key stage 4 than would have been anticipated.
- For many pupils, the impact of the programme is more subtle. Improvements in engagement, skills and decision-making are contributing towards the potential for more secure long-term destinations (through supporting positive aspirations, better preparation for employment or further learning, and informed decision-making).
- Small improvements can be seen in overall trends of first destinations in some areas. ^[48]
- Although it is too early to look at the long-term prospects of these pupils, many of the subtle impacts of the programme have the potential to link to longer-term positive outcomes for the participating pupils (through supporting positive aspirations, better preparation for employment or further learning, and informed decision-making). In turn, there is a possibility that this may also contribute to reducing the likelihood of them being not in education, employment or training (NEET) in the future. ^[48]
- For some pupils, a range of factors appears to have resulted in less positive experiences compared with others. Initial selection, together with other aspects of delivery (limited additional learning support, pupils and parents less engaged in selection and ongoing progress, and disjointed delivery for one element of the programme) has meant that lessons have been more disruptive, there has been limited opportunity for out-of-school experience and delivery of learning has been more of a challenge for teachers. ^[48]
- There is a range of different levels and types of impact for participating pupils, including differences in the distance travelled over the course of the programme. These differences reflect, on the whole, the variance in approach taken to implementing the programme. This results in differences in the initial profile of pupils selected, programme design and aspects of delivery. In many case study areas, the KS4EP has not fully addressed the intended programme features of a personalised and holistic offer which meets the needs of a wide range of learners.
- Common features of the programme shown to maximise its potential to improve pupils' engagement and outcomes include:
 - alternative and supportive learning environments, with tailored components
 - the nature of activities delivered and approaches taken to their delivery
 - holistic approaches to delivery of the programme components
 - partner/school culture of collaborative working, and buy-in to the programme
 - effective management of the programme and quality assurance of the provision.
- Delivery issues that are limiting the potential impact for pupils in some areas include resource and capacity constraints; inconsistent delivery across partners; less effective selection and induction arrangements; varying skills and experience of staff; poor communication between programme partners; timetabling issues; and limited access to accredited units or qualifications and/or work placements. ^[48]



The following are listed as characteristics positively influencing effectiveness and pupil outcomes: ^[48]

- Consistent, well sourced out-of-school provision
- A range of support
- Consistent IAG provision
- Support in school and tailored provision where possible
- Engaging pupils, parents and carers
- Dedicated staff
- Provider/staff skills, experience and commitment
- Holistic delivery
- Collaborative culture
- School staff buy-in and commitment to the programme
- Partnership coordinators and key workers
- Cross-school/stakeholder coordination and good practice sharing.

Increased flexibility programme at KS4

The English Increased Flexibility for 14–16 year olds Programme (IFP) was introduced in 2002 to provide vocational learning opportunities at key stage 4 for those young people who would benefit most. The programme, which entailed FE colleges and training providers working in partnership with schools to offer GCSEs in vocational subjects, NVQs, other vocational qualifications and GNVQs to students, was subsequently extended to three further cohorts of young people. The partnerships worked towards a number of targets relating to achievement of qualifications, progression after Year 11 and attendance during the programme.

Cohorts 1 and 2 were evaluated by NFER ^[49, 50] with a focus on attainment, compared with similar students who had not participated in the programme, in terms of their total points score at key stage 4, their eight highest grades achieved and their achievement of five A* to C grades.

Key findings:

- Overall, the evaluation of the first and second cohorts of IFP has found that the majority of students who participated had benefited, in so far as the majority achieved their qualifications at the end of the programme and nearly all had progressed onto further education and training. Overall, students gained more points at key stage 4 than similar students who did not participate in IFP although, in the case of GCSEs in vocational subjects and GNVQs, students who took these qualifications through the programme gained fewer points than similar students taking these qualifications who did not participate.
- The majority of the representative sample of young people progressed to further education or training after completing their involvement in IFP. The proportion exceeded the target for the programme of 75 per cent of participants remaining in learning post-16.
- There was evidence that IFP participants had developed their social skills and confidence in their employability skills, including interpersonal, communication and problem solving skills, and their attitude towards school, which suggests that, on the whole, the IFP made a valuable contribution to the education of participants.



The evidence indicates that, where students had benefited from participation in IFP in terms of their key stage 4 attainment, those with certain characteristics appeared to have benefited more than their peers.

- A notable minority of young people (around 15 per cent) appeared to have discontinued their involvement in IFP before the end of Year 11. Such discontinuation was associated with students achieving significantly fewer points at key stage 4 than similar students who had either not embarked upon IFP, or had sustained their involvement. It appears that young people who had lower attainment, were eligible for free school meals or were recognised for action on the register of SEN were over-represented among those who discontinued.

The evidence indicates that, where students had benefited from participation in IFP in terms of their key stage 4 attainment, those with certain characteristics appeared to have benefited more than their peers:

- Those who had lower attainment at key stage 3 benefited more in terms of their total points achieved at the end of key stage 4 than students with higher attainment.
- Those who found the course 'interesting' had better outcomes than those who had found it 'boring'.
- Those who had a positive attitude towards school gained more in terms of the points they achieved through their IFP qualification than did others.
- Those who attended partnerships where the approach to delivery was shared between a school and an external provider achieved better outcomes than those where delivery was through other approaches, such as an external provider only, or a school only.
- Those in partnerships that were larger (working with more than five schools) achieved less well than similar students in smaller partnerships.
- The IFP had been an influence on the post-16 choice of two in five IFP participants, and, for eight per cent, the IFP had been the most influential factor on their post-16 destination. There was some indication that this transition into further education and training would be sustained, as most young people planned to remain in education and training for two years or more, and around a third were considering continuing on to higher education. ^[49]

Learning outside the classroom

A study by Ofsted ^[52], looked at learning outside the classroom in schools (including a special school and a PRU) and colleges in England, selected because they had good, outstanding or rapidly improving practice in this area. It also looked at specialist providers of learning outside the classroom, such as museums, residential centres and arts organisations.

Key findings on learning outside the classroom include the following:

- When planned and implemented well, it contributes significantly to raising standards and improving personal, social and emotional development as well as motivation. ^[52]
- It is most successful when it is an integral element of long-term curriculum planning and closely linked to classroom activities. ^[52]
- Pupils whose behaviour in other circumstances has been reported as poor often respond well to involvement in high quality, stimulating activities outside of the classroom. It can also impact positively on their subsequent attendance and engagement in the classroom. ^[52]



Frameworks should include both knowledge and competence-based qualifications.

- The best practice occurs when: leaders are strongly convinced of the need for a broad and motivating curriculum; they are passionate and confident about improving learners' achievement, aspirations, character and personal development; see learning outside the classroom as a key means to do this; and emphasise learning outside the classroom clearly in job descriptions for all staff, so expectations are clear at the start. ^[52]

Vocational learning

An international (but UK-focused) literature review from the Learning and Skills Research Centre looked at the outcomes and processes in vocational learning. ^[53] It considered a range of vocational learning opportunities for 14 to 16 year olds, including vocational GCSE, GNVQ, ASDAN and work placements plus innovations such as increased flexibility programmes. The report highlights that whilst motivation improved for low-achieving students, it did not for 'disaffected' or 'disadvantaged' students and that there was only weak evidence for enhanced academic achievement and limited opportunities for learning technical skills. ^[53] The authors do, however, identify a range of positive outcomes. Vocational learning:

- Enhances student enjoyment, self-esteem and confidence
- Motivates learners to attend and improves their behaviour, though these outcomes do not always transfer to other classes
- Helps to enhance general understanding of work and employment
- Helps to enhance personal and social skills, though there is less evidence for learning 'generic' skills
- Enhances progression to employment.

It also notes some programme characteristics that may support effective vocational learning for 14 to 16 year olds:

- Vocationally relevant curriculum and instruction
- Students being prepared for work-related and work-based learning activities
- Teachers having an understanding of work and learning in the workplace
- Effective instructional approaches and support
- Enhanced curriculum connections between school and work
- Organisational structures that link school and work components.

The study ^[53] also looked at vocational learning for post-16s, including things like advanced GNVGs, NVQs, BTEC and modern apprenticeships. It noted programme characteristics that support vocational learning for post-16s:

- Frameworks that include both knowledge and competence-based qualifications
- Key skills integrated with other components of the courses studied
- Effective assessment at point of entry
- Providers' capacity for delivery is ensured
- Organisational culture that supports learning
- Opportunities for breadth of workplace experience
- Good communication between workplace and college-based components.



The need to engender a sense of community and belonging among individuals has been identified by a number of authors as perhaps the most significant element in any programme involving disaffected youth.

The use of physical activity and sport as part of the curriculum

A literature review by researchers at Loughborough University ^[54] points to the value of physical education and sport in reaching disaffected youth, and indicates that there is value in programmes that use physical activities, or the physical education context, to re-engage disaffected students and to enhance their personal, social and moral development.

Though focused on physical activity, it also reveals points relevant to engaging disaffected young people and as such has relevance for AEP. The research notes that taken together, the literature relating to young people, physical activity and disaffection would seem to highlight key themes for closer consideration:

- **Re-evaluating current practice** – Developing a curriculum that has greater cultural relevance for young people, using alternative forms of appraisal and assessment, and employing varying teaching methods have all been suggested as approaches to targeting and addressing disaffection.
- **The significance of social relationships** – It has been argued that the social relationships experienced during involvement in physical activity programmes are the most significant factor in effecting behavioural change. In other words, it is the social process and not the activity type that is the vital element. As such, it is important to ensure that the appropriate individuals are selected to be involved in the development, delivery and leadership of activity programmes targeted at disaffected youth.
- **Creating a sense of community** – The need to engender a sense of community and belonging among individuals has been identified by a number of authors as perhaps the most significant element in any programme involving disaffected youth. Researchers have suggested that in order to do this it is important to ‘keep programme numbers small and encourage participation over several years’. A number of authors have also highlighted the importance of involving the young people in key decisions relating to the programme. The use of adult and peer mentoring has also been suggested as valuable (see intervention types for more information on the effectiveness of mentoring).
- **Employing a multi-agency approach** – One of the key findings from the literature is that sport and physical activity should be regarded as only one element of any intervention approach. It is recognised that young people’s lives are influenced by numerous factors and, as such, it is argued that any programme designed to re-engage disaffected youth should take account of the wider social contexts of young people’s lives and social experiences.
- **Ensuring structure and sustainability** – Although there is evidence to suggest that physical activities can facilitate personal, social and moral development, instil life skills, and generally re-engage young people with the curriculum and wider school life, it has also been noted that there is a need to teach such skills explicitly because they cannot be viewed as natural outgrowths of the activity.
- Moreover, given that there is no ‘quick fix’ solution to the problem of disaffection, several researchers have suggested that rather than seeking to address all of the factors contributing to the disaffected behaviour, the focus of any programme should be to help build resilience among young people who daily face difficult circumstances. Several authors have expressed concern over the short-lived nature of some initiatives targeting disaffected youth and have commented that ‘...initiatives/schemes may take a long time to bear fruit and need to be sustained if the benefits are to be anything other than transitory’. ^[54]



Volunteering can act as a catalyst for young people to engage more effectively with other learning, or in some cases re-engage with formal learning or training.

In addition, the authors of a pro youth work document ^[43] refer to a 2009 Audit Commission report (*Tired of Hanging Around*) on the role of sport and leisure activities in helping prevent anti-social behaviour by young people and conclude that 'a major challenge for providers is to find activities that will attract disadvantaged young people, and then introduce elements of structure and development at the right point'. They stressed that long-term impact would only be achieved by combining sports and leisure activities with developmental components supporting young people to improve their personal and social skills and to change their behaviour.

Citizenship, volunteering and service programmes

Research for DCSF ^[47] combined fieldwork with 215 young volunteers, aged 11 to 25, in 30 projects across England with a review of relevant literature looking at the impact of volunteering on personal and interpersonal skills development. The authors suggest:

- Young people can and do increase their self-confidence and self-esteem, develop a range of communication skills and improve their ability to work with other people through volunteering.
- Volunteering can act as a catalyst for young people to engage more effectively with other learning, or in some cases re-engage with formal learning or training.
- Many young people also develop practical skills related to their specific experiences of volunteering.

However, the research also highlighted:

- The importance of young people receiving recognition for their volunteering
- That young people wanted more opportunities to reflect on their learning through volunteering. They stressed the relationship between developing skills, having the confidence to use them, receiving positive feedback, and further skills development.
- The difficulty of differentiating between skills and learning gained through volunteering, and those resulting from other interventions (such as the youth work which provides the context for volunteering), and those gained from particular life changes such as becoming a parent or simply growing up.

Research for Raleigh International ^[51] looked at their work with disadvantaged young people who took part in a range of overseas volunteering projects over a period of 25 years. Through self-reporting via a series of interviews, the research looked at personal development and social mobility of the 105 research participants. The research reported:

- 83% said the overseas volunteering had a long-term positive effect on their personal development. 81% said being in a remote environment where you needed to be self-sufficient was important.
- The international element of the expedition was seen to add value over and above that of just a UK-based expedition.
- 89% reported an increased ability to lead and encourage others and 87% an increased ability to work as a team. 76% said that being with young people from other backgrounds was a significant part of the experience.
- For many the expedition stimulated an interest in further learning that was not there before.



- 43% said their willingness to take part in risk activity such as drug taking had reduced as a result of involvement. The challenge helped them break away from destructive patterns in their home environment.
- Support before, during and after the expeditions was seen as adding value by some and essential for others. They emphasised the need for short-term intensive intervention to be complemented by ongoing support.
- Some who had been on expeditions a long time ago said that they returned to re-assess their learning later – they carried on learning from their experiences well into their lives.

It appears that key to much curriculum innovation is the notion of social capital or social skills development and the use or adaptation of positive youth development models. Research demonstrates that children with more assets, or social capital, are less likely to engage in risk-taking behaviour. 'Positive youth development is based on about two dozen personal and social 'assets' that include connectedness, feeling valued, attachment to pro-social institutions, the ability to navigate in multiple cultural contexts, commitment to civic engagement, good conflict resolution, planning for the future skills, a sense of personal responsibility, strong moral character, self-esteem, confidence in one's personal efficacy, a commitment to good use of time, and a sense of a larger purpose in life.' There is some evidence to suggest that community service and service learning, featured in some alternative programmes, are key ways to build assets and give youth opportunities to develop life and career skills, and not just receive services but provide them. ^[14]

Implications for Alternative Education Provision

- Flexible and accessible curricula are important to ensure individual needs are met.
- The lessons from the KS4 engagement programme, including the characteristics it identified as positively influencing effectiveness and pupil outcomes, could be applied to the design of any AEP curriculum.
- AEP could benefit from including components of volunteering (UK and overseas opportunities) within its curriculum and/or encourage and enable young people to become involved in volunteering outside of the AEP, through links with relevant organisations.
- AEP should make sure that curriculum planning includes sufficient structured opportunities for learning outside the classroom and that these opportunities are evaluated to ensure maximum impact on learners' achievement, personal development and well-being.
- Vocational learning can be an important element of AEP but care should be taken to ensure that the programmes reflect the most effective characteristics for the age group. No expectation should be placed on vocational learning necessarily improving academic outcomes.
- AEP could benefit from including components of well designed and inclusive physical activity and sport within its curriculum and/or encourage and enable young people to become involved in it outside of the AEP, through links with relevant organisations. However this cannot be seen as a panacea or quick fix and attention should be given to building resilience.



Reward systems are found to have stable and consistent positive impacts for student learning.

2.6 How do approaches to teaching and learning contribute to effective AEP?

Use of incentives and rewards to improve academic outcomes

Research in 186 Charter schools⁶ in the USA [44] looked at the impact of incentives and rewards on academic outcomes for students. Most incentive systems in the study cover outcomes relating to achievement of grades and test performance, as well as basic learning behaviours such as sitting quietly, tracking the teacher, completing class work and general decorum, which have been shown to correlate positively with academic outcomes. The lag between desired result and payoff in the systems looked at is relatively short. The rewards used include (in order of popularity) access to select activities; certificate of merit; purchasing items at school store; getting to wear special uniform; cash; college fund contribution.

The evidence is modestly positive and contradicts the opposing view that rewards impair the intrinsic motivation of students. The authors themselves note that the results are relatively early and need further exploration, but key messages include:

- 'Reward systems are found to have stable and consistent positive impacts for student learning.' Reward systems seem most effective with younger children, and have a greater impact on outcomes in reading than in maths.
- 'The average effect size on student learning gains associated with the adoption of a reward system across all the systems studied was 0.11 standard deviations. When systems operate under conditions of cohesive and strong support among school personnel and have continuous feedback built into their design, the effect size increases to 0.16.'

However, the author notes that reward systems do not always work as planned and expected. 'In two studies with hyperactive students, token economies influenced behaviour but did little to improve academic performance'. Also, 'a randomized experiment in which students were given cash rewards if they performed well on state achievement tests found a small but significant increase in Math performance but not in reading.'^[44]

Out of School Time strategies

The concept of Out of School Time strategies (OSTs) encompasses classes, courses, one-to-one mentoring and tutoring or other enrichment or support activities. In America OSTs have become of increasing interest as a way of delivering the mandatory supplementary educational services for children from low-income families (following the No Child Left Behind legislation in the USA). The types, provision, timeframes and goals of OSTs are broad and range from summer school and Saturday school to after-school sessions, with an academic, cultural, social, or recreational focus (or a combination of these). Ultimately, the principle of any OST strategy lies in attempting to improve student performance by creating additional time for teaching and learning.

Thomas *et al* [16] refer to a meta-analysis of 47 studies that found statistically significant effects of Out of School Time strategies in assisting low-achieving or at-risk students in reading and mathematics.

⁶ Charter schools provide an alternative to other public schools, but are part of the free public education system. They have been freed from some of the rules, regulations, and statutes that apply to other public schools in exchange for accountability for producing certain agreed results.



The adults in the out-of-school activities were perceived as co-learners and an integral part of the activity.

In the UK two Out of School Time programmes that have been evaluated as successful are Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP) and Uproject. However, without having appropriate comparison groups it is difficult to isolate the impact of both programmes from other initiatives in place at the same time. ^[74] As with much of the research included in this review the need for a flexible programme was considered important to meet individual needs. Flexibility enabled young people to:

- Participate in positive activities during the school holidays and access out-of-school activities throughout the year
- Be supported to engage in learning and/or employment with Key Worker support for those most at risk
- Be supported back into education or training and help them stay there, and at key transitions such as the move from primary to secondary school
- Access high-quality arts, sports and cultural activities, and to continue to access provision for those with an interest and/or talent in any area to continue after the programme has ended
- Access opportunities for personal development including the development of self-discipline, self-respect and self-confidence, enabling them to communicate more effectively with a range of people and work in a team
- Contribute to their communities through volunteering and active citizenship.

Though out-of-school activities are not strictly AEP, one study ^[46] does indicate some messages of potential interest. The study examined educational relationships in a wide range of out-of-school activities and their impact on young people's learning, comparing the experiences of impoverished young people (those on free school meals) with those of their more affluent peers.

The study was relatively small (55 young people from one south west school) and interview based, relying mainly on young people's perceptions and self-reporting of the benefits and outcomes from participation in both organised (e.g. regular clubs) and spontaneous (activities with friends, family and other adults) out-of-school activities.

- Children and young people gain a wide range of benefits from being involved in out-of-school organised activities, such as specialist knowledge and skills, self-control and confidence.
- The value of out-of-school activities lies in their difference from school activities. But better out-of-school provision could have a notable impact on learning in schools.
- The relationships with the adults involved in the activity were a strong factor in continued participation. Teachers in classrooms tended to be perceived as part of the system rather than as part of the activity itself. The adults in the out-of-school activities were perceived as co-learners and an integral part of the activity. This extended understanding of the role of adults in learning changed young people's perceptions of the task and character of teachers. Where out-of-school learning had impacted on learning in school it was because young people's relationship with teachers had been changed to a more equal interaction. The young people now saw themselves as active participants rather than as passive recipients of the curriculum.
- Strict discipline was applied and maintained within many of these out-of-school settings. This was generally accepted without complaint and clearly differentiated from behaviour management strategies in school.



Best practices indicate that an effective alternative school is based on a strong academic programme that is creative and flexible

- The diversity and number of spontaneous activities reported was similar for both the free-school-meal and the more affluent groups. However, almost a half of young people in poverty do not participate in organised out-of-school activities compared with one fifth of their more affluent classmates. The reasons given for non-participation are complex but key factors include cost, transport (especially in rural areas) and self-perception (i.e. not seeing themselves as the type of person to get involved in particular activities).

Person centred approaches

Learner centred teacher-student relationships were the focus of a review of 119 studies carried out by Cornelius-White in 2007. According to Thomas *et al* ^[16] this meta-analysis found that person-centred approaches (i.e. involving human relationships rather than the quality or style of instruction in a subject) can improve student outcomes. Person-centred teaching refers to those aspects or qualities of teacher actions and behaviours that affect students on a personal level: listening, caring, respect, teachers being perceived as honest, sensitive, and understanding.

Creating a positive culture or ethos

Whilst not strictly about teaching and learning, and more about the ethos or culture of the learning environment, Quinn and Poirier, in what the authors describe as 'probably the first methodical investigation of the essential characteristics of alternative programmes that effectively meet the diverse, ever changing needs of children with disabilities for whom traditional school settings do not work' suggest that 'students identified as troubled or troubling tend to flourish in alternative learning environments where they believe that their teachers, staff, and administrators care about and *respect* them, *value* their opinion, *establish fair rules* that they support, *are flexible* in trying to solve problems, and take a *non authoritarian* approach to teaching.' ^[57]

Similarly, 'Best practices indicate that an effective alternative school is based on a strong academic program that is creative and flexible. Caring teachers who provide rigor and high expectations characterize effective programs. The coursework is primarily hands-on, meaningful, and engaging to students. Class size is limited to approximately ten students per teacher. Other components include accessible technology and applicable software, an encouraging teaching and learning environment, various assessment methods, extracurricular activities, enrichment activities through service learning and work experience/career exploration.' ^[45]

An alternative education intervention programme

This mixed methods PhD study ^[45] sought to examine student perceptions of the impact of an alternative intervention programme (AIP) in Virginia USA, and provide a framework meant to inspire programmes in other locations.

The AIP is comprised of approximately 45 students, aged 11 to 18, who have been long-term suspended or expelled from mainstream educational settings. The programme has a 'revolving door' concept, with students being placed on the AIP by a disciplinary hearing officer for a period of 9 to 36 weeks, depending on their infractions. The goal of the programme is to offer students coping, social and academic skills by placing them in a smaller and more structured environment, the overall aim being to transition students successfully back to the mainstream setting.

Key characteristics and components of the AIP include a mandatory student/parent orientation process, school uniforms, small class sizes, a nurturing staff, a structured programme with a thematic curriculum, one-on-one instruction and hands-on learning, technology usage, life skills



AEP programmes aiming to reintegrate young people into mainstream need to focus extensively on preparing for and supporting the transition and providing ongoing support after transition.

lessons, individual and group counselling, career exploration, weekly parent contact, breakfast and lunch served daily, and single-sex open discussion groups. Each classroom has an instructional assistant and a classroom teacher. Students are assigned homework and issued report cards similar to the mainstream setting to aid transition.

Though based on a relatively small sample from just one programme, and relying heavily on perception and student self-reporting (to 'include student voices in the body of knowledge on alternative programs'), the paper indicates some positive results. 'Most students were successful in passing English and mathematics, missed fewer days from school, and accumulated less out-of-school suspension days than in previous placements.' The paper notes some issues with regard to student perception and to the impact of the intervention on academic attainment – 'Quantitative data support student responses in all areas except academics. Although students responded favourably to passing English and Mathematics, data show that academic pass rates were lower than those rates achieved prior to attending the AIP'.^[45]

This research also suggests that programmes need to challenge students academically, regardless of behaviour, avoid using a 'watered down' mainstream curriculum, and consider different instructional strategies to actively engage students.

Implications for Alternative Education Provision

- Personalised teaching that focuses on the quality of the teacher-pupil relationship may lead to improved learner outcomes.
- AEP delivered in small groups with high learner/staff ratios appears important to programme success.
- A well-designed programme delivered in a safe environment may help young people perceive AEP positively.
- Caring and understanding staff seem to be important to programme success.
- 'Out-of-school time' learning such as after-school or summer schools can help low-achieving pupils to improve their basic skills.
- AEP is likely to benefit from reviewing incentives and rewards systems to improve their effectiveness and consider how the systems provide students with more consistent and continuous feedback.
- AEP programmes aiming to reintegrate young people into mainstream need to focus extensively on preparing for and supporting the transition and providing ongoing support after transition. They need to ensure that AEP success does not make successful transition less likely.
- AEP may benefit from encouraging and enabling its students, especially those who live in relative poverty, to participate in out-of-school activities.
- AEP may benefit from establishing a highly inclusive learning environment, with adults seen as partners.

2.7 What workforce characteristics and issues impact on effective AEP?

The literature on workforce and workforce reform focuses overwhelmingly on mainstream school settings with some consideration of Further Education settings and initial teacher training. This literature contains a range of messages with regard to improving practice through workforce reform, but these messages come from and are mainly designed for mainstream settings. Some of the messages may have value and broad application in alternative education settings (as would many of the messages coming out of any mainstream educational research), but the research was not undertaken in, or focused on, AEP.



However, some of the key messages on workforce from an Ofsted report ^[42] may have general applicability to AEP, as they relate to reducing disaffection and exclusion. They include the following:

- Pupils benefit from increased support from members of the wider workforce. Deploying adults with different skills allows schools to improve care and guidance, especially for vulnerable pupils and those at risk of exclusion.
- The full potential of the wider workforce to raise achievement and standards is not realised when schools do not match skills and expertise sufficiently closely to school needs, and when insufficient attention is given to the performance management and career development of the workforce.
- Some schools effectively use the wider workforce to support learning beyond school. Examples include the use of behaviour mentors, school counsellors, work-related learning and 'Aimhigher' coordinators, as well as the police coordinator for 'safer schools' being based in the school for part of each week.

Research focusing on the benefits of youth work ^[43] contains some messages that are broadly applicable to AEP (though it should be noted that the paper comes from an explicitly pro youth work position). The research notes:

- Two-thirds of the young people reported that youth work had made a considerable difference to their lives. The benefits included increased confidence, learning new skills, making decisions for themselves, and feeling more confident about asking for help and information.
- Youth work can provide a route back into the mainstream for the most marginalised young people. Research into the life paths of young adults concluded that an unstructured environment offered a point of access acceptable to those young people outside the mainstream.
- Evidence from Ofsted shows that youth services are valued partners, particularly in multi-agency approaches to tackling crime and anti-social behaviour, and in promoting health.
- It is not the structure, but the practice of those who work directly with young people that transforms their outcomes.

The second bullet point could be considered at odds with other evidence presented in this review that focused programmes are more likely to be effective; however, an unstructured environment may be central to initial re-engagement, prior to enrolment on a more focused programme addressing identified needs.

Caring and knowledgeable staff

Picking up the final point, much of the literature reviewed as part of this work mentions the importance of caring and knowledgeable staff, who can build trusting relationships, as well as the need for ongoing professional development. For example, the evaluation of the Neighbourhood Support Fund (NSF) found individuals were critical to the success of the NSF projects in terms of initially engaging the young people and gaining their confidence and trust, sustaining their engagement with the projects, supporting their transition and providing ongoing support after they had progressed on from the project. Their ability to build a relationship of mutual respect with young people who were suspicious and wary of adults was central to their success. Project workers' understanding of the community from which the young people came, whether a geographical community or a community of interest, also contributed to their success in engaging them. ^[55]



There is consensus... that the foundation of effective work with children and young people is assessment. However, assessment and monitoring are rarely mentioned in lists of what is believed to make provision effective...

A PhD study ^[45] that sought to examine student perceptions of the impact of an alternative intervention program (AIP) in Virginia USA, highlights the importance of caring staff and a supportive environment. 'All study participants overwhelmingly indicated that a caring staff was paramount in their success. A nurturing environment gave students the chance to be self-expressive. They believe that the family-oriented setting allowed them to make mistakes and learn from them. Students also indicated that a major difference between the regular setting and the AIP is that they were given a chance to make and correct mistakes. Teachers who work in alternative settings can assist students by helping them focus on the consequences of specific actions and by exploring new options of responding.' ^[45]

Leadership

One aspect of workforce related research where there is some evidence specifically drawn from AEP is that of leadership. An evaluation of current provision and outcomes for 16–18-year-old learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in colleges ^[55] found that 'the leadership of senior managers was the key factor in establishing a positive inclusive ethos and a commitment to work with learners with LDD.' And Aron (2006) notes in his synthesis of 'noteworthy attributes' of high quality alternative provision the importance of 'strong, engaged, continuous and competent leadership'. ^[14]

Implications for Alternative Education Provision

- AEP is likely to benefit from using the full potential of the wider workforce. However, care needs to be taken to match staff skills to the needs of the AEP setting and the young people it supports and to ensure all staff are adequately trained, inducted and supported.
- Caring and knowledgeable staff are perceived by young people to be 'paramount' in achieving success through AEP.
- AEP may benefit from working in partnership with youth workers, to join up all opportunities for support and achievement and may be able to learn from some youth work practice.
- Like youth work, the impact of AEP may be less easily measured and less obviously and directly related to policy and targets. Value for money in the short term may be difficult to quantify, so AEP needs to be clear and creative about how it monitors, records and evidences achievement of outcomes.
- Effective leadership is a contributory factor in effective AEP.

2.8 How do models and practices for assessing need contribute to effective AEP?

The purpose of assessment is to help identify needs and guide provision; therefore in order to be effective, practitioners need to understand the different approaches to assessment and know which methods are best suited to particular situations and groups of young people.

There is consensus from the literature reviewed and systematic reviews of interventions that the foundation of effective work with children and young people is assessment. However, assessment and monitoring are rarely mentioned in lists of what is believed to make provision effective and an Ofsted evaluation of provision for 16–18 year olds with LDD found 'Eighteen of the 22 colleges lacked understanding about, and expertise in, initial, baseline and diagnostic assessment of learners' needs, how to assess their progress on programmes which were not accredited and how to evaluate their progress against their targets.' ^[56]



Engaging young people within their assessment is an essential feature of effective assessment.

Much of the literature reviewed had a key message resonating around the importance of intervention programmes being based upon a holistic assessment of young people's needs. This is very much in line with current policy in children's services around assessing the 'whole child' and their needs.

Across reviews of effective interventions, Mason & Prior ^[38] found that the role of appropriate assessment is clear in establishing the level of need or dimensions of risk to be addressed, and the appropriate interventions assigned to the young person. The process of effective assessment, using appropriate specialist tools where necessary, can help to engage young people.

Assessment of need should be holistic in nature

A literature review around engaging young people who offend ^[38] found that assessment identifies the focus for intervention and action, and that interventions that tackle aspects of offending behaviour in isolation from the reality of young people's lives are unlikely to be effective.

Whether in relation to education, employment and training, substance misuse or young people with mental health needs, the range and complexity of issues are consistently emphasised as dimensions of interrelated problems or issues that cannot be effectively addressed in isolation. When it comes to planning the nature of the intervention: ...a youth-informed assessment will alert the practitioner to potential barriers to engagement in terms of maturity of thinking, literacy skills and lifestyle issues, all of which should influence how, where and when work is undertaken. ^[38] An earlier review also noted that it is imperative that alternative provision provide the assessment and support services needed to clearly identify and address the cognitive, emotional, health and socio-economic factors affecting the education and development of young people. ^[1]

As part of a holistic assessment, it may be appropriate to involve family members as well as the young person. Effective assessment should involve parents/carers and the findings or conclusions of the assessment, and the suggested programme of action should be agreed with parents and the young person during the process, or certainly once the process has been completed, so that parents and carers can provide support for the young person engaging with their programme. ^[38]

Effective assessment improves communication and relationship building with young people

Engaging young people within their assessment is an essential feature of effective assessment. At the heart of this engagement is a relationship developed through the communication between practitioner and the young person. The assessment process should not be used as an interview schedule as that will make it more difficult to positively engage with a young person. Instead, it should be used as the framework for gathering and analysing information.

Assessment should be ongoing

Ongoing assessment engages young people as it reviews and rewards progress, highlights areas of further or ongoing need, and is based upon a sustained relationship between the practitioner and young person (and their parents/carers). ^[38]

The importance of initial assessment is noted in a number of studies reviewed. For example in an overview of alternative programmes ^[12] the authors state one feature of effective programmes often missing from lists of attributes is a '...comprehensive and rigorous mechanism for admitting the 'right students' to the programme – the students whose characteristics and attributes (both positive and



The outcomes of AEP can also be viewed in terms of outcomes for the young person themselves, for schools and communities as well as for wider society.

negative) suggest that the programme has a high likelihood for meeting their educational, personal, and social needs.'

Similarly, in a wide-ranging review of effective Targeted Youth Support, the authors note: 'Different young people are at risk of different outcomes so, when they first come into contact with TYS, it may not be clear which outcomes any one young person is at risk of and, hence, what support might be most appropriate.'^[16] They also remark on what would appear to be a self-evident truth reinforcing the need for effective assessment of need, namely, 'the importance of considering known risk factors before designing interventions. It seems likely that by targeting known risk factors (assuming the 'correct' ones have been identified), greater efficacy could be achieved.'^[16]

Implications for Alternative Education Provision

- Assessment of need should be based on an appropriate assessment tool.
- Assessment of need should be holistic and ongoing.
- Effective assessment of need is key to effective targeting of risk factors and therefore of effective intervention design.

2.9 How is the effectiveness of provision assessed?

There is widespread and increasing interest in monitoring the performance of education and children's service systems and in monitoring performance across an increasing range of outcomes. Concern is often expressed that some outcomes from AEP are difficult to measure, that they may not be immediately apparent, that they diminish over time or that they cannot be attributed solely to the AEP. The outcomes of AEP can also be viewed in terms of outcomes for the young person themselves, for schools and communities as well as for wider society.

'Some of the interventions that are most widely used by government and charities – from Intensive Supervision and Surveillance to mentoring – have mixed or incomplete evidence of success. Yet they continue to be encouraged and their impact overstated.'^[8]

The recent 14–19 reforms, and the new coalition government's programme for education, open up an opportunity for alternative education providers to form an integral part of a new school system if they can prove their effectiveness and also provide lessons for 'mainstream' provision. Measuring appropriate outcomes is essential in order to make the case for the benefits of AEP in whatever form it takes.

As noted by Aron^[1] 'There is little rigorous evaluation research documenting the effectiveness of alternative education programs, meaning studies that can link *specific* program characteristics with *specific* student outcomes.' Much of the literature on alternative education does however, present features or characteristics thought to be essential to the success of alternative education efforts but as in the case of Kendall *et al*^[4] they do not present evidence of whether they actually improve outcomes – only *perceptions* that they may.

Whilst agreeing with the sentiments of Caspar Walsh^[13] in a recent blog that 'Human beings don't work to pre-set timescales and tickbox funding streams. Wounds take a long time to heal', it is important to know what outcomes can reasonably be expected if a particular programme is



implemented well. In many instances outcome measurements reported in the literature rely on perceived changes and self-reports and may not be considered by some to be reliable. The YJB, for example, does not accept self-reports of reduction in offending behaviour as a valid outcome measure.

Outcomes that the literature suggests are typically measured, but may not be solely attributable to the provision are:

- Academic attainment and increase in numbers of learners receiving awards for their performance [1, 3, 15, 17]
- School attendance [1]
- Reductions in disruptive and/or violent behaviours and exclusions, suspensions, or referrals [1, 3, 15]
- Reduction in offending behaviours [3]
- Improved sense of direction and self, including changes in self-esteem, confidence, motivation, and health awareness [1, 2, 3, 17]
- Improvement in developing and sustaining relationships (with family, project staff, peers) including changes in the ability to communicate, cope with authority, and work with others [3, 17]
- Positive progression routes. [15]

Other outcomes and indicators of success that are less frequently referred to in the literature, possibly because they may be difficult to measure or are difficult to attribute solely to the provision, or are perhaps more specifically related to programme types include:

- The capacity to act upon the world, exercise judgement and to make constructive contributions [2, 17]
- Leadership and organisational skills including the ability to order and prioritise, manage time and manage money [2, 17]
- A sense of accomplishment accompanied by recognition and valuation by others [2]
- Improvement in attitudes towards education or in engagement and motivation, including increases in the number of students, parents and carers contributing positively to the school [15]
- Positive feedback from staff, parents and wider community. [15]

It is interesting to note that almost all lists of effective practice (see section 2.1) refer to the importance of personal and social development, yet as potential outcomes of AEP that can be used to assess the effectiveness of the provision these are rarely mentioned.

One useful 'map' of outcomes for young people, for schools and for others such as families or the wider community [59] based on wide research suggests the following:

For young people, outcomes may be improvements in:

- Personal qualities
- Social skills
- Life skills



- School work
- Knowledge/practical skills
- Employability skills
- Accreditation gained
- Progression routes.

For schools, outcomes of effective AEP may be improvements in:

- Public accountability measures
- Ethos of the school
- Curriculum offered
- Staff development
- Image in the community.

For families and local communities, outcomes of effective AEP may be:

- Improved relationships
- Reduction in criminal activity
- Reduction in social exclusion
- Improvements in partnership working.

A more detailed list, including what may be measured under each of these headline outcomes can be found in Appendix 6.3.

Types of outcome indicators in use internationally

An EPPI review of how countries with high-performing education systems measure children's education, health and well-being found that outcome indicators are mostly used for the purposes of monitoring performance of systems and standards, and for accountability at national and school level and occasionally at regional level. Indicators may be used to inform the development of policies, national programmes and school improvements. They may also be used to monitor equity and to direct resources. ^[58] The researchers constructed analytic maps of types of outcome indicators and their uses.

- **Education indicators** found frequently were attainment and participation in education and employment; social and emotional development and environmental indicators occurred infrequently.
- **Health indicators** were varied in type but found infrequently; they included aspects of general public health and healthy lifestyles.
- **Well-being indicators** were also varied in type but not often found; they ranged from perceptions of well-being; family environment; relationships and social participation; education, employment and income; housing, homelessness and environment; to criminal activity. ^[58]

Aron ^[14] focuses on what here are classified as 'education indicators' as alternative education is 'first and foremost' concerned with education and thus needs to focus on 'preparing students academically' though the author does recognise the need to consider wider outcomes. Interestingly, given Ofsted's role in ensuring education standards are maintained or raised, the 2009 guidance



The tool is used by the young person and can be used prior to and following an intervention to see if their well-being has improved.

on gathering evidence for Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes from independent schools inspections ^[61] gives more examples for the wider ECM outcomes as well as a guide to how and what can be used to evidence each outcome. They can be seen in Appendix 6.4. They are not dissimilar to those in Cullen ^[59] (see previous page and Appendix 6.3) and reflect growing support for a holistic approach to education.

Measuring well-being

New Philanthropy Capital (NPC), working in partnership with the Children's Society, has designed an evidence-based tool that measures seven aspects of 11 to 16 year olds' subjective well-being. These are:

- Self-esteem
- Resilience
- Emotional well-being
- Peer relationships
- Family relationships
- Satisfaction with school
- Satisfaction with the local community.

The tool is used by the young person and can be used prior to and following an intervention to see if their well-being has improved. NPC's own evaluation of piloting the tool showed that the well-being tool is sufficiently reliable and valid, except for the peer relationships scale, which will require further development before it is launched. The well-being questionnaire was shown to be sensitive to change and there is evidence to show that it may be a useful assessment tool that could be used by schools, community and voluntary organisations providing AEP. ^[62]

How are outcome indicators utilised?

Husbands *et al* ^[58] developed four models that illustrated different emphases in the use of child outcome data; however, the focus in all is primarily educational outcomes. These models are heuristic devices rather than analytic descriptions and do not exist in pure forms:

- **Accountability model:** an accountability-led model in which outcomes were rigorously monitored at reporting levels (schools, regions, national) for the purposes of management and accountability (Australia and the Netherlands). This approach required national standardised measures of attainment and benchmarks by which schools, states and local areas could compare performance.
- **School community model:** a reporting model in which outcomes were monitored at national level and effort was focused at policy level on identifying and removing barriers to learning but which was relatively relaxed about within-system accountability at school level (Finland).
- **Social capital model:** where improving child outcomes was part of plans to increase individual citizens' contributions to the economy of the country and to strengthen social networks (Japan and Singapore).
- **Psycho-social model:** where improving mental and physical health and well-being were seen as prerequisites to improving learning outcomes (Australia). ^[58]



The focus on educational outcomes in these models is also reflected in the success criteria for AEP produced by Husbands *et al* in 2008, which again primarily focus on educational outcomes despite the broader range of potential outcomes of AEP listed in the same document. It may be interesting to question if the ‘success criteria’ on which AEP is currently judged reflect accurately both the outcomes it sets out to achieve and the characteristics that evidence suggests contribute to effective AEP. ^[58]

Success criteria for AEP provision: ^[3]

Table 2: Success criteria for AEP provision	
Success criteria bounded by duration of programme/ programme component	Success criteria that looked to the future:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohort attended; • Cohort were aware of personal/psychological improvements (e.g. in motivation, interest, attitudes, participation, self-esteem); • Cohort maintained in school (i.e. not permanently excluded); • Course/placement/taster was completed; • Evidence that what had been learned was applied; • Qualitative data showing happy/satisfied stakeholders (e.g. pupils, parents, schools); • Improvement in... (whatever the problem had been); • Increase in number of GCSEs taken; • Accreditation/certification gained; • Improved exam results; • Programme passed Ofsted inspection; • Individual targets were met (e.g. successful relationship with mentor). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme resulted in positive changes to school curriculum; • Programme enabled cohort to move on to positive progression routes; • Programme was sustainable.

The process of measuring success

A study of quality and performance in Integrated Youth Support Services ^[60] also highlighted the need to gather evidence around quality of provision. The range of data identified reflects both formal and informal methods of gathering evidence and making judgements about quality and performance, and includes the perspective of those receiving the service as well as those responsible for its planning and delivery. The authors recommend that the process should include the following as a minimum:

- Young people’s feedback
- Records of outcomes for young people
- Participation rates and types
- Managerial observation
- Peer observation
- Self-assessment
- Formal inspection using young people, peers and managers.

Note the authors do not list the actual outcomes that these data sources can effectively provide evidence for.



Implications for Alternative Education Provision

- It is important that providers gather evidence and data from a range of sources on:
 - impact on young people
 - value for money
 - quality of practice of the workforce
 - improvement and where necessary reshaping of service planning and delivery
 - areas for workforce development and investment in CPD.
- Assessment of impact should be appropriate and fit the accountability model being used.
- Outcomes used to evidence impact should be relevant to young people, varied and enable progress to be shown.
- Assessment of impact must reflect the full range of potential outcomes.

2.10 How does the use of ICT contribute to effective AEP?

The use of ICT to aid learning has been a developing aspect of many types of provision over recent years. In 2005, the then Department for Education and Skills (DfES) published its e-strategy, *Harnessing Technology – transforming learning and children’s services*. Within this, two of its key objectives were:

- To transform teaching and learning, and help to improve outcomes for children and young people, through shared ideas, more exciting lessons, and online help for professionals
- To engage ‘hard to reach’ learners, with special needs support, in more motivating ways of learning, and give them more choice about how and when they learn.

ICT is currently used in different ways and to different extents across the AEP sector. There are many examples and suggested ways of using ICT; however there is a lack of a significant evidence base and research underpinning usage and effectiveness. Within the literature reviewed there was evidence of various approaches addressing curriculum requirements to try and re-engage learners as well as inventive methods of online delivery, support and activities. Some approaches and trends that are being developed in alternative provision are becoming influential but have not been researched enough; however there does seem to be a lot of promise around digital creativity.

Using ICT to support creativity

Creative use of ICT (including creating videos and DVDs, and stop frame animation) can contribute to the education and interpersonal needs of children with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) according to a Becta-commissioned study.^[63] It demonstrated that digital creativity could be used to unlock learners’ interests and creative energy. The following positive impacts on pupils’ education were seen: motivation and engagement; control and autonomy of learning; raising aspirations; social relationships and collaboration; literacy; personal reflection; and developing insight. Impact on attainment appeared positive but would require confirmation by a larger-scale study.^[63]

Using ICT to support young people 16- to 18-years-old who are NEET

Although based on a small sample, a study assessing the potential of e-learning to support re-engagement amongst young people with ‘not in education, employment or training’ status (NEET) provides evidence that the following may be effective:



- Facilities using mobile technologies to support contact with personal advisers, not just for arranging meetings, but also for providing key information
- Websites that provide ideas about opportunities available, as well as what is involved, and what young people's experiences and successes have been with them, in forms that provide visual and auditory access as well as textual access
- Creative media workshops that use ICT in a central way
- The range of ICT should cover aspects of online testing, interactive digital resources or games focusing on specific skills, research, data recording and numeracy work, portfolio work, presentations, report writing, written work and literacy work, creation of CVs and application letters, evidence gathering, and recording practice using digital cameras and video. ^[69]

Providing children and young people with personal computers and internet access at home contributes to engagement and motivation to learn

The Computers for Pupils (CfP) initiative, launched in 2006, aimed to help overcome the digital divide, which can prevent young people from disadvantaged backgrounds from enjoying the benefits of access to information and communications technology. The initiative provided funding for schools in deprived areas to invest in home access to ICT for their 'neediest' pupils. Results found that there was evidence for the following:

- ICT skills and communication: the CfP initiative has largely met its aim of encouraging the development of ICT skills, particularly among learners, but also to some extent among families.
- CfP has had a positive impact on learners' motivation, the quality of their work, and their behaviour in class.
- Evidence suggests that CfP has supported personalised learning.
- Evidence from the surveys and case studies suggests a perception that CfP has been a contributory factor in raising educational achievement. ^[64]

The use of virtual learning environments (VLEs) and an online learning community can re-engage young people back into the learning process

Virtual learning environments⁷ use computers to allow remote access to learning materials and there is an expectation that they will form a significant part of the next generation's experience of learning.

Notschool.net was developed in direct response to the problem faced by young people who, having been exposed to the alternative provision within schools, had become disengaged from the learning process and subsequently could not make progress with their learning. Young people mainly aged 14–16, but some from the age of 12, were able to work from home and online in order to increase their self-esteem and re-engage with learning. ^[65]

Research showed clear learning gains for all categories of young person researched, but those who gained most quickly were the phobic and the ill, or those whom school simply 'didn't fit'. Improvements in conventional literacy have been substantial in this group of young people, most of whom had low levels as a starting point. Their media-literacy was evident and showed rapid progress.

⁷ VLEs may also be referred to as: learning management systems; course management systems; learning content management systems; managed learning environments; learning support systems; online learning centres or learning platforms.



Issues affecting Notschool.net are as follows:

- Mentors, who are qualified teachers, need to be computer competent.
- There are groups of young people whom Notschool.net cannot reach e.g. young people whose homes or families provide a temporary, transient, or unsuitable environment. In many cases these fall outside the education system and there is little in the way of current mechanisms to support them. This includes young people in short-term care and temporary hostel accommodation.
- Notschool.net does not work in seriously dysfunctional families where there is no support from any adult or carer.

In an Ofsted review carried out in 2008 on the use of VLEs in 41 different education providers, ^[66] results found evidence of a great deal of development work being carried out by individual institutions and local authorities. However, in most of the provision surveyed, the use of VLEs to enhance learning was not widespread. 'We found that the exploitation of VLEs at curriculum level resembled more of a cottage industry than a national technological revolution. In most cases, at subject level, the VLE remained one small aspect of learning, supported by enthusiastic staff and learners.' ^[68]

Using ICT to monitor progress

A study worth noting was of a self-reporting behavioural IT system called Auto-Graph where pupils recorded both their own positive and negative behaviours. The Auto-Graph system supported teachers with the effective management of problem behaviours using a continuous monitoring technique that supports the direct involvement of pupils in the management of their own antisocial disruptive behaviours. Unlike other data collection procedures such as surveys/questionnaires, interviews, and periodic observation, Auto-Graph recorded all behavioural incidents, thus providing a comprehensive record of pupils' problem behaviours as opposed to merely a sample of incidents. ^[67]

- Pupils and teachers at both pilot sites reported that Auto-Graph was easy to use and required little time to complete.
- At both sites data from Auto-Graph was used to help set targets for improved behaviours. Pupils understood that the graphs were a representation of their behaviours.
- Teachers noted that Auto-Graph offered pupils the opportunity to become more involved in managing their own behaviour by providing them with direct and immediate feedback and the chance to take charge of their behaviour.
- Teachers at both sites reported that Auto-Graph presented no technical or practical barriers in its daily application. Nor did Auto-Graph require additional teacher time to implement or integrate into their existing classroom management strategy.
- An accurate history of individual pupil behaviours supports decision-making at the level of individual education plans and behavioural intervention.
- Teachers at both pilot sites reported that problem behaviours were reduced with the implementation of Auto-Graph over the course of the four-week pilot study.



Implications for Alternative Education Provision

- The use of well-designed technology that works smoothly and attractively has intrinsic appeal. When this includes items having the 'street credibility' associated with young people's popular cultural interests (music, digital imaging etc) it can appeal to learners in BESD environments. Implementation may require staff training and confidence building around the use of different forms of ICT.
- Implementation of ICT in AEP and effective home access initiatives require staff training to support them in maximising the benefits of increased ICT access for learners and their families.
- Ways of creating opportunities to provide advice and training to parents on usage of computers and software should be considered in order to maximise the impact of any future home access initiatives and how they could be involved in helping their child's learning.
- For some groups of learners the degree to which their learning can be personalised, through the use of digital technologies, is limited. For example, learners on the Autistic spectrum at one of the schools found it difficult to process ideas and information, and as a result couldn't be given total freedom to choose activities or ways of presenting their work. This resulted in class teachers refining the choices available, based on their perceptions of learners' preferences. Limited literacy skills also restricted access to computer programs and software for some learners. Others, who for example cannot spell their name, had problems logging in and the poor motor skills of some learners made the use of digital technologies difficult.

2.11 How do re-engagement strategies contribute to effective AEP?

Research on disengagement from education among 14–16 year olds based on a longitudinal study was able to ascertain different types of disengaged learner. ^[71] Important distinctions were made around the type of disengagement as some learners who are defined as disengaged may not be disengaged with learning but are simply unhappy with their school or the approach to learning last experienced. Whatever the reason, disengagement from learning and the likely subsequent unemployment and social exclusion of young people continue to be major social and economic challenges for government and policy makers.

'At-risk youth need the same kinds of ongoing support and access to resources that middle-class parents provide for their children during the young adult years.' ^[10]

In a UK report that looked at good practice in support for disaffected students in mainstream schools, the schools had managed to re-engage successfully 78% of learners who had become disaffected. ^[15] Though based on partial evidence from only one group of stakeholders in the process, the schools visited perceived three common factors that must be counteracted to successfully re-engage disaffected students:

- Unwillingness on the part of parents to work with the school and, in some cases, collusion with the students against the school
- External influences and attractions that were more compelling for the students than school, such as gangs, criminal activity and drug-taking
- Weaknesses in the provision made by the schools and other services for their students.

However, the focus and emphasis of re-engaging young people varies by pupil group, as well as by more individual specific needs. A single approach to reintegration will not suit all young people, even if they have 'seemingly' similar characteristics; flexible and individually tailored responses



are key. For example, the Neighbourhood Support Fund (NSF) (1999–2002), which aimed to re-engage hard-to-reach young people aged 13 to 19 with education, employment or training, was, in part, found to be successful because it was delivered in a flexible way, responded to local needs and conditions and was tailored to the complex needs of the ‘hard-to-reach’ group of young people. The NSF pilot was delivered through 650 voluntary and community sector (VCS) projects at neighbourhood level in 40 of the most deprived areas of England. Progress of over 50,000 young people was tracked on the NSF database. ^[55]

The projects generally offered activities that would help to prepare young people for a successful transition into education, employment and training such as life skills, literacy and numeracy and communication. Other activities included examples such as drama, dance, music, sports, information technology, bicycle repairs; whatever was thought could engage the young people.

The evidence suggests a number of contributory components that may increase the effectiveness of re-engagement activities and also boost retention:

- Establishing credibility and relationships of trust. Young people need to know that programme staff are working with them because they want to, not because they have to and programmes should promote positive relationships. ^[10, 15, 55, 71]
- Timing and timescales – timescales are crucial in order to prevent the risk of pupils drifting and losing interest in education; as is the availability of an appropriate range of support services and expertise to provide tailored responses. ^[17, 71]
- Culture and ethos – driven by the desire to ensure all children can access appropriate educational opportunities; a whole-school philosophy, built on shared staff awareness and understandings, was found to be key. ^[17]
- The availability of appropriate support services for reintegrating pupils and for supporting transitions as well as a wide range of community-based partners. ^[10, 15, 17, 55]
- Securing the commitment and active involvement of parents, carers and young people – supported by effective communications and participatory approaches to allow individuals’ views to be considered. Participant involvement in programme governance and planning enables young people to develop a sense of empowerment whilst learning how organisations work. ^[10, 15, 17, 38, 55, 71]
- Keeping pupils on the school roll and/or maintaining contact with them – to create a sense of expectation for a return to education, and of ownership by schools. This may be through extra-curricular activity (e.g. making sports facilities available for young people to use outside of lessons, and providing school clubs and societies) or through study support (e.g. additional teacher-led classes, ‘drop-in’ classes where young people can study on their own or with friends, or attending classes in the school holidays). ^[17, 71]
- Proactive approaches and attitudes such as named contacts/key workers, providing work while out of school, and facilitating flexible options in terms of curriculum, delivery and timetabling. Messages must be believable and relevant, utilise youth-friendly uses of print and broadcast media and incentives, and have other youth and credible adults, such as former dropouts or juvenile offenders, be the messengers. You may need to reach out to young people physically, emotionally, and repeatedly. ^[10, 15, 17, 55]



- Ongoing support, including IAG, beyond the project lifetime – maintaining contact with the young person once they have left the project, including providing guidance if they choose to change destination, can be influential in helping young people to sustain their transition. ^[10, 45, 55, 71]
- Curriculum is a key component of re-engaging young people; this may include flexible approaches and the use of appropriate programmes addressing issues such as anger management, team building, personal safety, self-esteem, sexual health or opportunities for peer instruction. ^[15, 71]
- Accreditation to give the students a sense of achievement, to help raise students' self-esteem and increase their motivation. ^[15]
- Effective assessment using appropriate tools that focus on strengths as well as needs and ongoing tracking/monitoring of young people using a range of data. ^[15, 17]
- Rewards, such as opportunities to go on trips or to gain awards, can be a powerful incentive. This may also include opportunities to earn stipends or wages in order to meet immediate income needs while gaining work experience. ^[10, 15]

Characteristics that foster retention

One review ^[10] highlighted characteristics that aid retention of young people in AEP. The authors suggest that continuing involvement of young people requires sensitive and youth-friendly intake, focused outcomes, activities and supports that scaffold achievement of challenging milestones, guidelines about behaviour and expectations, messages of achievement, and flexible scheduling. They suggest this may include academic and job training components that feature active, hands-on learning in which students apply knowledge and skills to real-world problems and issues.

Implications for Alternative Education Provision

- AEP should establish credibility and relationships of trust. Young people need to know that programme staff are working with them because they want to, not because they have to and programmes should promote positive relationships.
- Provide initial engagement activities that are interesting and relevant to the young people, as unlike school as possible, flexible and responsive to their needs.
- Establish flexible and credible systems to communicate with disaffected students, their parents and carers, and the agencies supporting them.
- Work closely with the parents and carers of disaffected students and make them aware of successes as well as areas for improvement.
- Recognise the importance of key workers and strong community links/partnerships.



3. Conclusions

There is evidence to suggest key characteristics displayed by effective AEP and also some evidence to suggest what outcomes can reasonably be expected from effective AEP.

It is important that we get a clearer picture of effective AEP – the costs of failing young people are significant, not just for the young person and their family but also for society. In work published in 2003 the average cost per young person enrolled on AEP was £3,800 or 165 per cent of the average Age-Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU).^[3] If the same percentage difference is assumed, then currently the average cost per young person enrolled on AEP is estimated to be £5567. When compared to the estimated costs if young people are allowed to ‘fail’ or to travel down paths that lead to offending behaviour this level of investment is small but it is right that we seek ways of maximising impact from our investment.

Various documents address the issues of wider costs. They attempt to place a cost to society on not implementing AEP interventions. The Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) has done much work on this and their model may be worth replicating. In the UK NPC estimates costs of exclusion based on:

- (1) The cost to the education system
- (2) The cost of lower earnings
- (3) The cost to the health service
- (4) The cost of higher crime
- (5) The cost to social services.

In each case, conservative estimates are made and an aggregate figure produced. NPC suggests the average excluded child costs society £63,851 (Martin Brookes, Emilie Goodall, Lucy Heady, 2007, *Misspent youth: The costs of truancy and exclusion. A guide for donors and funders*. NPC).

In *Punishing Costs* the New Economics Foundation (NEF) estimates the costs of holding a person in a Young Offender Institution (YOI) at about £100,000 a year but also estimates that the cost to the state due to impact of custody on subsequent crime and unemployment to be a further £40,000 (Aleksi Knuutila, 2010, *Punishing Costs: How locking up children is making Britain less safe*. NEF).

Are we now any clearer about how successful outcomes are achieved for different client groups through Alternative Education Provision? Almost inevitably the answer is ‘possibly’. There is evidence to suggest key characteristics displayed by effective AEP and also some evidence to suggest what outcomes can reasonably be expected from effective AEP. The review also found some evidence of the effectiveness of some tools to measure outcomes. More work is needed to examine the range of tools and their reliability. This review has not successfully identified evidence of the processes or mechanisms by which those characteristics suggested to be integral to effective AEP actually impact on outcomes, **nor has it found evidence of causality**. In short it has not uncovered *how* or *why* these characteristics make AEP successful.

In general, the findings of the literature review reflect the sentiments of Brown Ruzzi:

*‘The **creative and individualized environments** of these educational programs serve to **reconnect and re-engage** out-of-school youth providing them with an **opportunity to achieve** in a different setting **using different and innovative learning methods**. While there are many*



*different kinds of alternative schools and programs, they are often characterized by their **flexible** schedules, **smaller student-teacher ratios**, **relevant and career oriented** themes, and **modified curricula**.'*

[¹², emphasis added]

How do specific intervention types contribute to effective AEP?

In relation to specific intervention types there is often little to no evidence of what components of the intervention contribute to successful outcomes, and what there is often fails to address the fact that interventions commonly occur as part of a multi-component programme and much of the literature concludes that there is limited evidence for any one type of intervention, even where it is found to be effective, being more effective than another.

What is known to be effective for specific target groups of young people?

Regardless of 'target group', the evidence suggests similar practices are key to achieving positive outcomes. These include programmes that are:

- Flexible and individually tailored
- Addressing a breadth of needs
- Based on accurate assessment of need
- Delivered by caring and knowledgeable staff, with continuity of strong relationships.

How does the delivery model contribute to effective AEP?

Regardless of the precise delivery model, effective AEP:

- Creates 'smaller, more personal environments' or small learning communities
- Focuses on skills development
- Is rooted in the communities in which the young people are based
- Focuses on addressing risk factors and providing opportunities to develop protective factors
- Offers ongoing support.

How does curriculum contribute to effective AEP?

Perhaps surprisingly, little research was identified that focused solely on the curriculum within AEP. Many of the documents reviewed, however, made some reference to flexible, tailored or individualised programmes and the possible importance of practically oriented skills based programmes.

How do approaches to teaching and learning contribute to effective AEP?

The evidence suggests approaches to teaching and learning in AEP should take advantage of:

- Out-of-school-time strategies
- Person centred approaches
- Creative and flexible teaching.

What workforce characteristics and issues impact on effective AEP?

The literature on workforce and workforce reform focuses overwhelmingly on mainstream school settings with some consideration of Further Education settings and initial teacher training. However, key messages on workforce suggest the importance of:



- Deploying a wide range of specialist staff
- Well trained, caring and knowledgeable staff
- Strong, engaged, continuous and competent leadership.

How do models and practices for assessing need contribute to effective AEP?

There is consensus from the literature reviewed and systematic reviews of interventions that the foundation of effective work with children and young people is assessment. However, assessment and monitoring are rarely mentioned in lists of what is believed to make provision effective. Effective assessment of need:

- Is holistic
- Establishes the level of need and dimensions of risk to be addressed
- Is linked to appropriate interventions – the right young people on the right programmes
- Can help to engage young people
- Involves parents/carers
- Is ongoing.

Assessing the effectiveness of provision

Frequently studies do not present evidence of whether they actually improve outcomes either – only perceptions that it may. Almost all lists of effective practice refer to the importance of personal and social development, yet as potential outcomes of AEP these are rarely mentioned.

How does the use of ICT contribute to effective AEP?

There is limited evidence of the effectiveness of ICT in AEP but it may not be suitable for all learners and requires investment in training of staff. However, effective use of ICT in AEP may have a positive impact on:

- Motivation and engagement
- Control and autonomy of learning
- Raising aspirations
- Social relationships and collaboration
- Literacy
- Personal reflection
- Parental/family involvement.

How do re-engagement strategies contribute to effective AEP?

Evidence on effective re-engagement of young people suggests flexible and individually tailored responses are key.

In summary, the evidence reviewed in this document appears to suggest essential characteristics of effective AEP are:

- Based on trusting, caring relationships
- Based on effective assessment of need
- Person centred



- Purposeful (outcomes focused)
- Personalised and appropriate (curriculum/addressing needs)
- Flexible and accessible
- Delivered by highly skilled and trained staff
- Monitored and assessed (to ensure needs are met and to directly inform delivery)
- Supported by the wider family and community.

By combining the list of effective characteristics, or 'inputs', with a list of outcomes drawn from the literature, an outline framework that could be useful in designing new AEP and also in monitoring the effectiveness of AEP has been produced. More work is needed on this outline framework to identify what tools and evidence could be used to measure or assess the effectiveness of both the inputs and the outcomes.



4. Proposed AEP Framework

Table 3: Evidence of inputs	
Inputs	How evidenced?
High standards and expectations – an ethos of achievement	
Small schools, small group sizes and high staff/learner ratios	
Student-centred/personalised (needs-led) programmes that are delivered flexibly and are customisable to individual need	
Appropriate needs assessment of child/young person	
Clearly identified goals within a challenging and flexible curriculum	
Highly trained staff able to deliver programme fidelity	
‘Caring and knowledgeable’ staff with ongoing professional development and support for all staff	
Strong and effective partnerships	
Strong active participation of families and community	
Effective leadership and professional autonomy	
Positive environment	
Appropriate and accessible location	
Support beyond the lifetime of the intervention	
Monitoring and assessment	
Voluntary participation	
Incentives and rewards	
Integration of research and practice	



Table 4: Evidence of outcomes

Young Person Outcomes	How evidenced?
Attitudinal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance • Confidence • Motivation • Reduction in offending behaviours • Positive contributions to school or community life 	
Personal and social development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-esteem • Emotional well-being • Health awareness • Developing and sustaining relationships 	
Life skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The capacity to act upon the world, exercise judgement and to make constructive contributions • Communication • Coping with authority • Working with others • Leadership and organisational skills • Improved ability to develop and maintain relationships • Reduction in need for ongoing support 	
Academic development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sense of accomplishment accompanied by recognition and valuation by others • Recognition of success • Accreditation 	
Employability	
Progression <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of direction • Positive destination 	

Table 5: Measure of community and social outcomes

Community and Social Outcomes	How measured?
Reduction in criminal activity	
Improved relationships	
Reduction in social exclusion	
Improvements in partnerships	




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6. Appendices

6.1 Data extraction template

Purpose and use of the data extraction form

This form is designed to help identify and extract information to be included in the literature and practice review. It is designed to help the reviewer obtain all the necessary information to:

- Answer the specific questions of the review
- Identify relevant information about the design, execution and context of a study to assess the trustworthiness and quality of the study
- Identify relevant contextual information that may have affected the results obtained in the specific study or that may impact on the transferability of an intervention.

When using the form reviewers should always keep in mind that the purpose of data extraction is to enable the review team to answer the following questions:

- How are successful outcomes achieved for different client groups through Alternative Education Provision?
- What characteristics of AEP have been proven to lead to successful outcomes?
- What forms of AEP have been found to have a measurable impact on children, young people and their families?
- What are successful outcomes of Alternative Education Provision?
- What are the most effective ways of measuring outcomes for young people?

In addition to these central questions there are a number of specific questions for each sub-theme that reviewers need to keep in mind (these can be found in Appendix A).

Where possible the boxes should be filled by cutting and pasting text from the documents being reviewed to avoid introducing reviewer bias or interpretation.

Remember: Data extraction should help the review team provide evidence of how practice in each of the sub-themes enables AEP to be delivered successfully (however 'success' is defined).



6.1 Data extraction

Section 1: Administrative data

Title	
Date	
Authors	
Linked documents <i>(any other reports etc resulting from this work that are specifically mentioned)</i>	
Theme	A: Be Healthy (please specify)
	B: Stay Safe (please specify)
	C: Enjoy and Achieve (please specify)
	D: Positive Contribution (please specify)
	E: Economic Well-being (please specify)
	F: Other (please specify)
Sub-theme	A: Assessment
	B: Background
	C: Curriculum
	D: Delivery
	E: Intervention Types
	F: IT
	G: Re-engaging
	H: Targeted Groups
	I: Teaching and Learning
	J: Workforce



Section 2: Contextual information	
Type of educational setting	Alternative education programmes
Target population <i>(e.g. is the intervention aimed at a specific age, gender, ethnicity, socio economic background etc?)</i>	
Country	A: England
	B: Wales
	C: Scotland
	D: Northern Ireland
	E: USA
	F: Canada
	G: Australia
	H: New Zealand
	I: Other (please specify)
Section 3: Aims and purpose	
What is the broad aim of document?	A: Description
	B: Exploration of relationships between variables
	C: What works?
	D: Development of a new approach
	E: Reviewing/synthesising research
	<i>Please give details and refer to page numbers in the report, where necessary</i>



<p>What issue does the project/ paper/intervention aim to address?</p>	<p><i>Please give details and refer to page numbers in the report, where necessary</i></p>
<p>Does the document attempt to answer specific (research) questions?</p>	<p>A: Explicitly stated (please specify)</p>
	<p>B Implicit (please specify)</p>
	<p>C: Not stated/unclear (please specify)</p>
	<p><i>Please give details and refer to page numbers in the report, where necessary</i></p>
<p>If the document reports on a specific project or intervention, what is it called?</p>	
<p>Briefly describe the intervention process.</p>	
<p>Why was the project/ intervention done at that point in time, in those contexts and with those people or institutions?</p>	<p>A: Explicitly stated (please specify)</p>
	<p>B: Implicit (please specify)</p>
	<p>C: Not stated/unclear (please specify)</p>
	<p><i>Please give details and refer to page numbers in the report, where necessary</i></p>



Section 4: Outcomes	
What outcomes does it report on? (explain how the outcomes fit these categories)	A: Be Healthy (please specify)
	B: Stay Safe (please specify)
	C: Enjoy and Achieve (please specify)
	D: Positive Contribution (please specify)
	E: Economic Well-being (please specify)
	F: Other (please specify)
	<i>Please give details and refer to page numbers in the report, where necessary</i>
Briefly describe how 'success', 'effectiveness' or outcomes were measured.	<i>Please give details and refer to page numbers in the report, where necessary</i>
Is there any quantitative impact data?	A: Explicitly stated (please specify)
	B: Implicit (please specify)
	C: Not stated/unclear (please specify)
What are the results of the study as reported by the authors?	<i>Please give details and refer to page numbers in the report, where necessary</i>
What do the author(s) conclude about the findings of the study?	<i>Please give details and refer to page numbers in the report, where necessary</i>



Section 5: Implications	
How does this document help us understand <i>how</i> successful outcomes can be achieved through AEP and/or increase our knowledge of the types of alternative provision that are effective? <i>(Key messages)</i>	<i>Please give details and refer to page numbers in the report, where necessary</i>
What are the potential implications for CfBT? <i>(How do the findings relate to current or planned CfBT provision? Are there strategic implications?)</i>	
Section 6: Quality of evidence	
Do you trust the document? <i>(Consider methods used to collect data, how conclusions were reached, if the authors have a vested interest, the extent of links made to existing research or theories, support of key bodies.)</i>	
Section 7: Additional comments	
Any additional comments or observations you want to make can be added here.	



Sub-theme questions

A: Assessment

1. How is achievement for all ECM themes measured?
2. Are there any models of measuring success that are broader than measures of attainment? What are they?
3. Do assessment processes impact on planning and delivery? How?

B: Background

1. How does the policy context/background influence how AEP is delivered?

C: Curriculum

1. Do specific curriculum innovations have an impact on outcomes for CYP?
2. Can lessons be learnt from adult education, vocational education, LOtC?

D: Delivery

1. What delivery mechanisms support effective AEP? In what conditions?

E: Intervention types

1. What outcomes can be achieved from what interventions?
2. What interventions work in what circumstances and for whom? Why?
3. Is it known how they work?

F: IT

1. How can IT be used to improve AEP?
2. How is IT currently used to support curriculum innovation?

G: Re-engaging

1. What activities are effective in re-engaging CYP? Why? How?
2. What types of support and incentives work?

H: Targeted groups

1. Do specific interventions work better with certain groups of young people than others?

I: Teaching and learning

1. What strategies and approaches to teaching and learning are known to be most effective in AEP?

J: Workforce

1. What skills does the AEP workforce need?
2. What structure is necessary for the AEP workforce to be most effective?
3. Are there specific issues (e.g. training and development or recruitment and retention) that impact on effectiveness of AEP?



6.2 Alternative Provision options in England

Description	Lead responsibility	Comment
Pupil Referral Units	Local authority or Education Improvement Partnerships	Schools continue to be accountable as long as pupils remain on their roll or are dual registered
Pupil Referral Services	Local authority	
Home teaching services for pupils unable to attend school for medical [or other] reasons	Local authority/schools	
Hospital provision	Local authority/schools	
Separate provision for young mothers/ pregnant school girls	Local authority	
In-fill and link courses at FE, 6th form colleges and with training providers	Local authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local authorities are accountable for all local pupils placed in Alternative Provision whose names have been taken off roll (or for whom no local school has yet been identified). - Local authorities have some accountability for pupils in the care of their local authority even where pupils attend schools outside the area. - Local authorities are responsible for meeting the needs of any pupil with a statement of special educational needs maintained by the local authority regardless of where the pupil receives their education.
Extended work experience	Local authority	
'e-learning' provision using ICT and web-based resources	Local authority	
'Virtual' provision to register pupils who follow individual programmes	Local authority	
Boarding schools	Local authority	
Extended work experience organised by schools	Schools	Schools are responsible for all placements arranged to offer curriculum flexibility for pupils on their roll who should be working towards the achievement of an approved qualification to which the work experience is relevant; pupils should not be taken off roll following the beginning of their placement other than in exceptional circumstances when liaison with the local authority is essential.
Vocational placements	Schools	
Arrangements with the voluntary and private sector	Schools (or local authorities if pupil is off school roll)	
Increased Flexibility Programme for 14-16s	Schools	

(From DCSF (undated) *Guidance for Local Authorities and Schools – PRUs and Alternative Provision.*)



6.3 Possible outcomes of AEP

For young people	For their schools	For others
<p>Improvements in:</p> <p>personal qualities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – self-esteem – self-confidence – sense of achievement – happiness – responsibility – maturity – attitude/motivation <p>social skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – interaction with others – quality of relationships – ability to mix with wider range of people <p>life skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – independent travel – punctuality – handling money <p>school work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – work ethic – ability to prioritise/meet deadlines – completion of set work – understanding relevance of academic subjects – completion of courses – number of GCSEs attempted <p>knowledge/practical skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – in a range of academic and vocational areas <p>employability skills</p> <p>accreditation gained</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – in a range of academic and vocational areas <p>progression routes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – awareness of post-16 opportunities – application to/places gained in further education colleges – prospects of/promises of apprenticeships or of work 	<p>Improvements in:</p> <p>public accountability measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – attendance – exclusions (reduced) – qualifications gained – positive progression rates (i.e. into education, training or employment) <p>tenor/ethos of the school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – pupil-pupil interactions – teacher-pupil interactions – referrals for behaviour (reduced) – staff's sense of being supported – staff's positive attitudes towards pupils concerned – staff awareness of pupil aspirations – teacher motivation – the aspirations of other pupils – celebration of achievements <p>curriculum offered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the breadth of curriculum – support, including careers guidance <p>staff development (e.g. new curriculum developments; interacting with teenagers; minimising conflict)</p> <p>image in the community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – public relations – working relationship with other organisations 	<p>For families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – improved quality of relationship with son/daughter – reduced worry/tension at home – sense of pride/relief at son or daughter's success <p>For local communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – some evidence of reduced involvement in crime/drugs – reduction in number of socially excluded local young people – community based learning – better relationships between schools and communities <p>For providers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – raised local profile – increased local awareness of what they offered – increased awareness of local needs – greater numbers of suitable applicants for their post-16 opportunities – improved 'staying-on' rates (in education, training, employment) – engagement of staff interest by offering variation from usual routines – increased motivation in staff from success with pupils – (in some cases) financial gain – development of inter-agency partnerships – improved working relationships with schools

(From Husbands, C., Shreeve, A., Jones, N.R. (2008) 'Accountability and children's outcomes in high-performing education systems: analytical maps of approaches to measuring children's education, health and well-being outcomes in high-performing education systems' in: *Research Evidence in Education Library*. London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London.)



6.4 ECM Outcomes and indicators

Achieving	Enjoying	Contribution to Society
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They make good progress in their learning and personal development • Pupils understand what they have done well and what they need to do better • They achieve the standards expected of them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have good attitudes to school, show willingness to participate in activities and be eager to learn • Attend regularly and arrive punctually at school and for lessons • Take interest and pride in their work, are careful with its presentation • Behave well in school and abide by rules • Take the initiative and feel free from intimidation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form stable, positive relationships with others • Show social responsibility and refrain from bullying and discrimination • Show tolerance and respect those who are different from themselves. • Express their views at school and participate in decision making, with confidence that their voices will be heard • Take part in and initiate a range of organised activities in school and community organisations • Manage changes in their own lives, such as transition between key stages • Have the knowledge and understanding to become informed citizens.
Economic Well-being	Being Healthy	Staying Safe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT and develop the ability to express themselves • Develop self-confidence, self-esteem and teamworking skills • Become enterprising, able to handle change, take initiative, and calculate risk when making decisions • Become financially literate and gain an understanding of business and the economy • Know their career options and acquire the knowledge and skills related to actual workplace situations through work experience and other work related activities • Take up opportunities for education and training after the age of 16. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take regular exercise • Adopt healthy lifestyle choices • Understand sexual health risks, and the dangers of smoking and substance abuse • Eat and drink healthily • Recognise signs of personal stress and develop strategies to manage it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt safe practices by applying what they have been taught • Refrain from intimidating and anti-social behaviour • Display concern for others and show respect for their views • Feel safe from bullying and discrimination • Feel confident in reporting incidents and getting support if they need it • Understand key risks, for example those posed by some adults, and how to minimise them • Act responsibly in high risk situations, for example in using tools and in physical contact sports.

(Adapted from: Ofsted, September 2009, Guidance on gathering evidence for Every Child Matters outcomes in section 162A inspections)







CfBT Education Trust
60 Queens Road
Reading
Berkshire
RG1 4BS
0118 902 1000
www.cfbt.com