Evaluation of the IntegratED Programme

Summary report

Emma Disley, Natalie Picken, Lillian Flemons, Emily Hutton (RAND Europe)
Kerry Martin, Eleanor Bradley, Megan Lucas, Caroline Sharp (NFER)
Introduction

Between 2019 and 2023, Porticus – a philanthropic organisation – supported around 20 organisations working to reduce preventable exclusion from school and improve the quality of alternative provision.

Two independent research organisations evaluated the IntegratED Programme: the National Foundation for Education Research (NFER) evaluated the work of organisations delivering school-based initiatives and pilots, and RAND Europe undertook a Programme-wide evaluation assessing the activities of all organisations involved in IntegratED.

This report summarises key findings from both evaluations and aims to be useful for funders, delivery organisations and wider stakeholders engaged in exclusion and alternative provision issues. The report is also for those interested in the lessons learned from Porticus’ experience building and operating a multi-year, multi-partner programme aiming to achieve policy and practice change.
Why IntegratED was created: social disadvantage, exclusion from school and alternative provision

The IntegratED Programme was created to support those excluded from school and those in ‘alternative provision’, representing some of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people in the country.

Exclusion is when a pupil is no longer allowed to attend school. A headteacher may decide to exclude a pupil in response to a serious or persistent breach of the school’s behaviour policy and where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm their or others’ education or welfare. A suspension is when a child is temporarily removed from school.1

Alternative provision settings provide education for children who cannot attend a mainstream school for some or all the time.2 Alternative provision can be used during suspensions or after permanent exclusions, but most pupils attending alternative provision have not been permanently excluded from school.3 Alternative provision is often used as a temporary placement while children and young people wait for an Education, Health and Care Plan assessment or because of insufficient capacity in special schools.4 Over 35,000 pupils attended alternative provision in 2021/22.5

Pupils who are permanently excluded and suspended6 and those in alternative provision have some of the highest levels of need in the country. They are more likely to have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND),7 be referred to social services for a ‘child in need’ assessment during their school career, be socioeconomically disadvantaged and from certain ethnic groups.8 On average, young people who have spent time in alternative provision achieve lower attainment. Only 4% of pupils in state-funded alternative-provision schools achieved a GCSE in English and Maths in 2019, compared with 64% in mainstream and state-funded special schools.9 Longer-term, research has shown that exclusion from school increases the chances of unemployment and lower wages.10

How exclusions and alternative provision contribute to (or fail to mitigate against) these poor outcomes is complex. Alternative provision varies enormously; pupils’ needs vary, and are often acute by the time they attend alternative provision, and children spend different lengths of time in alternative provision.

Features of the alternative provision system that have, to date, impeded its ability fully support young people include limited resources (which vary across the country), a lack of national quality standards for alternative provision (standards are now planned as part of the Department for Education’s 2023 Improvement Plan11), poor integration with the SEND system, and a lack of clarity about alternative provision’s role.12

Many challenges experienced in the alternative-provision sector are rooted in mainstream schools and broader education systems, such as inconsistent identification of pupils’ support needs, limited resources and capacity to help pupils avoid exclusion (particularly those with special educational needs and disabilities) and unclear accountabilities around exclusion.13

Porticus created the IntegratED Programme with these challenges in mind.
The IntegratED Programme

The IntegratED Programme aims to reduce preventable school exclusions and improve the quality of alternative provision. Porticus is a philanthropic organisation that aims to create a just and sustainable future where human dignity flourishes. Based in six regions around the world, their work is realised through networks of Partners including local and global non-governmental organisations, communities, people with lived experience, policymakers and co-funders.

Between 2019 and 2023, Phase 1 of the IntegratED Programme supported around 20 organisations – known as IntegratED Partners – delivering activities at the school, classroom, local and national levels in pursuit of the Programme goals, as shown in Figure 1.

Phase 2 of the Programme will support fewer Partners between 2024 and 2026, aiming to embed the key activities and programmatic assets developed in Phase 1 and ensure their continuation after 2026.

Figure 1: The IntegratED Programme activities at the school, local and national levels

**NATIONAL POLICY LEVEL**

IntegratED Partners engaged directly with policy and decision makers to raise awareness about alternative provision and exclusions and share evidence to bring about policy change.

**LOCAL LEVEL**

Partners worked to increase the awareness of multi-academy trusts and local authorities about practices and policies that improved alternative provision and reduced preventable exclusion.

The work often focused on how alternative provision was commissioned, used and regulated locally or about how students at risk of exclusion were supported in mainstream schools.

**SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM LEVEL**

Partners delivered a diverse range of initiatives with the broad aim of improving teachers’ understanding of pupils’ holistic needs and their ability to work to support those needs.

These initiatives aimed to help pupils engage with learning and better relate to teachers and classmates.

The aim was for schools and families to work together to support students at risk of exclusion.

*Source: RAND Europe evaluation team*
### Figure 2: The IntegratED Programme: intended outcomes and goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ten-year goals</th>
<th>Social change goals</th>
<th>Systemic change goals</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A society in which every young person, especially those in adversity, feel included and valued and are able to graduate the English state secondary system (mainstream (MS) and alternative provision (AP)) with values, aptitudes, capabilities and skills sufficient to realise their full potential and contribute to the common good.</td>
<td>English education systems comprehensively reduce preventable school exclusions and improve AP nationally.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>Four-year goals</th>
<th>Whole-child development (WCD) as an intervention is tested and proven to contribute to a reduction in preventable exclusion from MS schools and improvement of AP.</th>
<th>Increased political momentum to reduce preventable exclusion and improve AP</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Whole-child development (WCD) as an intervention is tested and proven to contribute to a reduction in preventable exclusion from MS schools and improvement of AP.</td>
<td>Quality preventative programmes are integrated within one Multi-Academy Trust (MAT).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>WCD becomes more embedded in MS schools, contributing to a reduction in preventable exclusion and a reduction in AP entry.</td>
<td>New knowledge enables positive interventions, including by political stakeholders, to improve AP for those pupils for whom AP is the best and most appropriate option.</td>
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### Programme outcomes

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Objective A: Change at the individual and classroom level</th>
<th>Objective B: Change at the education sub-system level</th>
<th>Objective C: Change at the national policy level</th>
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<td>Teachers and senior leaders in MS and AP settings: a. Have increased knowledge and understanding of WCD. b. Have increased understanding of pupils’ WCD needs. c. Are more confident in their ability to identify challenging behaviour and intervene using WCD approach. d. Integrate WCD approaches in their practice.</td>
<td>MATs and local authorities (LAs) are aware of approaches to improving AP, WCD and/or preventing exclusion.</td>
<td>Formal/informal recognition by policy makers that there needs to be improvement in AP provision and the prevention of exclusion.</td>
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<td>Schools and families work together to support children at risk of exclusion.</td>
<td>MATs and LAs adopt practices to improving AP, WCD and/or preventing exclusion.</td>
<td>Commitment by policymakers to bring about improvement in AP provision and the prevention of exclusion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Families with excluded children have access to legal support.</td>
<td>Proof of concept and identification of critical success factors for how local authorities can change their approach to identifying and supporting children at risk of exclusion.</td>
<td>Policy change around improving AP provision and preventing exclusion informed by influencing.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>National government are equipped with the necessary evidence and research to develop policies and underpinning legal frameworks to improve AP provision and prevent exclusion.</td>
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Source: The IntegratED Programme theory of change, developed by the RAND Europe and NFER evaluation teams in consultation with IntegratED Partners.
The IntegratED Programme aimed to increase understanding and adoption of ‘whole-child development’. This approach to education moves beyond the acquisition of academic knowledge to include cognitive, physical, psychological, ethical, social and emotional well-being and development in a way that addresses every student’s distinctive strengths, needs and interests.14

Figure 2 shows the Programme’s intended long-term (ten-year) and shorter-term (four-year) goals and the ten Programme outcomes.15

Details about the IntegratED Partners are available on the Programme website.16

IntegratED was intended as a ‘programmatic’ funding approach. Implicit in a programmatic approach is the idea that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, i.e. that funding various activities by different organisations will stimulate the formation of new collaborations and will allow barriers to change to be addressed from different angles. While IntegratED Partners received individual grants and delivered individual activities aligned with at least one of the Programme’s stated outcomes, the intention was that Partners also shared information, supported each other and collaborated towards the Programme’s strategic goals.

By design, the IntegratED Programme had the flexibility to invest in additional Partners and modify the approach to achieve its objectives. Some funded Partners worked closely with organisations not receiving funding from IntegratED and the Programme expanded to become a community involving organisations beyond those initially funded. Over 30 Partner organisations were involved in IntegratED in various ways and to different extents.17 Funded Partners were given some discretion about how to implement their IntegratED-funded activities.
Evaluating the IntegratED Programme

Two research organisations evaluated the IntegratED Programme by undertaking separate but closely coordinated studies. NFER was commissioned to evaluate the work of the seven IntegratED Partners delivering school-based initiatives and pilots (see Figure 3). This evaluation aimed to generate learning about these Partners’ progress towards the IntegratED Programme outcomes and longer-term goals and about how progress was achieved in the first three years of delivery. RAND Europe was commissioned to undertake a Programme-level evaluation of IntegratED.

This evaluation aimed to capture the activities, outputs and outcomes from the Programme, document challenges, barriers and facilitators, and draw together implementation lessons.

This report summarises key findings from both evaluations of IntegratED and is relevant to funding organisations, delivery organisations and wider stakeholders engaged in exclusion and alternative provision issues. Annex A describes the evaluation methodologies and approaches.
What progress did IntegratED make towards the intended Programme outcomes?

The IntegratED Programme had ten intended Programme outcomes, listed in Figure 2.

At the Programme-level, IntegratED made progress in all ten intended outcomes and delivered some results not originally expected. The evaluations found that half of the intended Programme outcomes had been achieved, and that tangible progress had been made towards the others. The outcomes not fully achieved were ambitious; it was understood from the outset of the IntegratED Programme that these were unlikely to be entirely delivered in Phase 1. Further details are available in Annex B, which describes evidence of the extent to which each outcome was achieved.

The IntegratED Programme yielded some key contributions. Figure 3 (below) summarises the tangible ways the Programme might directly impact pupils’ and families’ lives. Annex B provides further information about how these contributions relate to Programme outcomes.

**Figure 3: Key achievements of the IntegratED Programme**

| **Creation of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for School Exclusions and Alternative Provision in 2021** |
| This group aims to 'improve outcomes for vulnerable children by facilitating upstream working to reduce preventable exclusions and improve the quality of education for those excluded by schools'. An IntegratED Partner was instrumental in the creation of the APPG. The APPG raises the profile of issues at the heart of the IntegratED Programme. It provides a key avenue through which evidence and research from across the sector is shared with, sought by and examined by the MPs and peers involved. |

| **Piloting of a systems approach to preventing exclusions in local authorities** |
| The work of one IntegratED Partner resulted in the co-production and piloting of a model to identify and support young people at risk of exclusion. This led to changes in those authorities’ approach to exclusion and inclusive practice. While still in the pilot phase, the approach has potential for wider application. |

| **Creation (and adoption by local authorities and MATs) of an Alternative Provision Quality Toolkit** |
| IntegratED led to the creation of an ‘Alternative Provision Quality Toolkit’ which provides a framework for evaluating and improving alternative provision. It is aimed at alternative provision leaders and those in strategic roles in MATs and local authorities. It seems very likely that the Toolkit will 'live on' beyond the IntegratED Programme, constituting a significant contribution to the field. |

| **The impact of the IntegratED Partners’ responses to the SEND Review.** |
| The substantive inputs to the SEND Review by IntegratED partners and the significant commitments to reform alternative provision contained in that Review. |

| **The roll-out of training and support to staff and professionals** |
| The IntegratED partners successfully reached front line and strategic professionals, students and families with a range of training and support which aimed to reduce preventable exclusion and improve the quality of alternative provision. |

| **IntegratED Annual Reports** |
| Published in 2020 and 2021 – and expected in 2023 – these reports capture the ‘state of the nation’ in relation to exclusion and alternative provision. There is evidence that these reports were considered a useful resource by policymakers. Phase 2 of the IntegratED programme will support the publication of Annual Reports in 2024, 2025 and 2026. |
IntegratED Partners contributed to improved knowledge about whole-child development, alternative provision and preventing exclusion. Phase 1 of IntegratED funding generated new and valuable information. Examples include research reports and briefings as well as Partners’ learning from working with schools, local authorities and Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) about what is practical and feasible. These knowledge outputs were produced for stakeholders including classroom teachers, support staff, school leaders, MATs, local authorities, the national government and a wider audience of funders, charities and delivery organisations. The IntegratED Programme successfully engaged stakeholders who could effect change. There are concrete examples of the Programme reaching national policymakers, local authority and MAT stakeholders, and those at the classroom level. For example, IntegratED Partners gave evidence to the Education Select Committee, briefed officials in the Department for Education and shared research with members of parliament (MPs) and The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted). Partners also responded to policymakers’ requests for evidence, e.g. submitting responses to the SEND review and a government consultation on Statutory Exclusions and Behaviour Guidance. Partners also connected policymakers with pupils, parents and teachers with lived experiences of exclusion and alternative provision. IntegratED Partners worked closely with local authorities and MATs, notably by creating the Alternative Provision Quality Toolkit. The IntegratED Programme developed Partners’ capacities and contributed to a growing ecosystem of organisations working for change. The range of stakeholders engaged signifies the Programme’s success. The evaluations found that, through engagement with IntegratED, Partners and other organisations improved their understanding about alternative provision, the factors contributing to exclusions and what could be done to prevent exclusion or promote inclusion.

Porticus supported Partners and encouraged flexibility and adaptation in response to COVID-19. The pandemic presented significant challenges for Partners. Examples include internal financial and capacity pressures, key stakeholders’ competing priorities, school closures and the impossibility of in-person data collection or events. Faced with these challenges, Partners reported that the IntegratED Programme’s flexibility was a strength. Partners were encouraged to depart from the activities outlined in their grant agreements to overcome organisational challenges and react to pupils’, schools’ and wider stakeholders’ rapidly changing needs. While COVID-19 reduced the scope of Partners’ work and caused significant delays, most Partners adapted their approaches, enabling the IntegratED Programme to deliver its planned activities.

The COVID-19 pandemic posed particular challenges for IntegratED Partners delivering in-school interventions. They typically worked with fewer schools than initially intended and had more limited engagement with those schools. Almost all in-school Partners had to adapt the delivery of their initiatives. Due to the pressures created by COVID-19, some schools struggled to find the capacity to implement fundamental components of IntegratED-funded initiatives with sufficient fidelity. The pandemic also made it almost impossible for Partners to measure the impact of their in-school interventions as intended.
Where Partners implemented initiatives in schools, teachers’ knowledge and understanding improved, but changes in practice appeared limited. Partners could deliver interventions in a limited number of schools and alternative provision settings. The evaluation found some evidence that teachers’ understanding of how to prevent exclusion and improve the quality of alternative provision improved in these schools. However, there was limited evidence that this translated into practice (particularly at the whole school level) in the evaluation timeframe.
What progress did IntegratED make towards its four-year systemic goals?

The IntegratED Programme had three systemic four-year change goals:

• Whole-child development becomes more embedded in mainstream schools, contributing to a reduction in preventable exclusion and a reduction in alternative provision entry.
• Quality preventative programmes are integrated within one MAT.
• New knowledge enables positive interventions, including by political stakeholders, to improve alternative provision for those pupils for whom such settings are the best and most appropriate option.

There was some evidence of whole-child development becoming more embedded in mainstream schools. One of the IntegratED Programme’s aims was to engender greater focus on pupils’ communication skills and social and emotional capacities in tandem with academic achievement, thereby reducing preventable exclusions. IntegratED Partners delivered a wide range of activities to achieve this goal. For example, some Partners sought out and shared existing practices in schools reflecting a whole-child approach so that others might implement similar practices. Other Partners undertook research to fill evidence gaps about how teachers and policymakers might focus on social and emotional development. Partners shared their work with teachers, schools and policymakers to raise awareness of whole-child approaches. However, despite positive progress in individual schools, evidence of significant change in the use of whole-child approaches in mainstream schools was limited. However, this was an ambitious goal, and it was recognised from the outset that it was unlikely to be fully achieved during Phase 1.

IntegratED generated considerable ongoing work with MATs and local authorities. IntegratED Partners worked directly with around five MATs (and indirectly with about ten), which was more than originally expected (only one Partner aimed to work with one MAT at the outset of Phase 1). Partners adapted their plans and responded to the greater-than-expected interest from MATs. For example, the Alternative Provision Quality Toolkit – a key output from Phase 1 – was initially aimed at policymakers. However, the IntegratED Partner developing this Tool adapted it as a reference guide for local authorities and MATs in response to their considerable interest. Partners reflected that MATs and local authorities are increasingly important actors who influence policy and affect systems change (especially given ongoing government support for schools to join MATs).

IntegratED generated evidence supporting the development of quality alternative provision that has been influential at all levels. It is too soon to determine the extent to which the knowledge produced as result of IntegratED has improved pupils’ experiences of alternative provision. However, IntegratED Partners actively disseminated knowledge to key decision makers and delivered practical toolkits. For instance, Partners presented their research and shared learning with the Department for Education, MPs, the Education Select Committee, Ofsted and MATs.
To what extent did IntegratED take a programmatic approach?

**From the outset, IntegratED was intended to take a programmatic approach.** In a programmatic approach, funders seek to achieve their system-change objectives by supporting various Partners’ activities rather than funding individual organisations through separate grants, aiming to address barriers to change at different levels and using different approaches. Thus, IntegratED aimed to create a community of Partners to share information, support each other and collaborate towards achieving the Programme’s strategic goals. Although this expectation was articulated to all Partners, they retained discretion about if and how they engaged in Partnership working.

**IntegratED Partners interacted, shared information and supported each other throughout the Programme.** Partners reported benefiting from sharing learning and expertise through programmatic working. Partners exchanged documents and reports, shared information about news, events, and policy developments, provided resources and contacts and communicated opinions, experiences and ideas. For some Partners, IntegratED led to the development of supportive relationships with peer organisations.

**IntegratED supported a growing ecosystem of organisations from different parts of the sector who knew each other and might not have interacted without the Programme,** increasing knowledge and awareness of issues relating to alternative provision and exclusions. Some Partners felt that bringing diverse organisations together was IntegratED’s primary achievement.

**IntegratED proactively engaged with organisations not funded under the Programme.** Porticus increasingly built connections with other funding and delivery organisations outside the funded IntegratED Partners, blurring the Partnership’s boundaries. IntegratED started with a selection of funded Partners and, over time, expanded to include ‘associates’ (organisations not funded by the Programme) to form a broader IntegratED community.

**The IntegratED Programme’s activities raised awareness among other funders.** Porticus increasingly focused on building relationships with a community of funders who might invest in similar goals. Bringing funders into the IntegratED ‘community’ increased their awareness of these issues and introduced them to the Partners in this space.

**IntegratED took a ‘programmatic’ approach by addressing alternative provision and exclusion issues from multiple angles.** IntegratED supported activities at the classroom, local and national levels across England, involving a broad range of Partners with wide-ranging skills, networks and capabilities. As a result of the diverse activities IntegratED funded, the Programme could implement interventions, work with stakeholders, and influence at local, regional and national levels across a broad geography. This diversity enabled Partners to work in complementary ways, e.g. service delivery organisations could facilitate other Partners’ access to practitioners and pupils with lived experience of exclusions and alternative provision. Partners’ activities targeted different elements of a shared challenge, including in-school interventions, research, toolkit development, sharing information with the government and co-designing approaches with local authorities, reflecting IntegratED’s programmatic approach.
Recommendations for programmatic working

In addition to the Programme’s achievements, IntegratED Programme provides valuable learning about coordinating and facilitating a programmatic approach. The evaluations of IntegratED identified several lessons for other funders wishing to adopt a programmatic approach, as outlined below.

**Recommendation 1: Allocate time for partners to interact and understand each other’s activities. Actively facilitate purposeful partner interactions at critical points in the programme.**

Collaboration in a programmatic approach is more likely when funded partners understand if and how their work relates to that of others and when there are planned interaction points around common relevant themes. This recommendation stems from the following evaluation findings:

- IntegratED Partners were not always aware of the full range of activities undertaken by organisations funded by the Programme, potentially impeding Partners’ ability to identify shared and complementary activities and opportunities for collaboration.
- Partners valued events that brought IntegratED Partners together to network, discuss matters of mutual interest and collaborate.

**Recommendation 2: Ensure shared expectations of what ‘partnership working’ involves and assess partners’ interest in and capacity for it. Support partners in understanding how they might benefit from programmatic working and allocate resources for collaboration.**

Programmatic working may be more likely if clear expectations for partnership working are explained at the outset, allowing organisations to plan the necessary time and resources. Examples include expectations about attending all-partner meetings, engaging in information sharing or collaborating with other organisations. Partners are more motivated to engage in programmatic collaboration when they can see the potential for generating benefits and returns from the time spent working together. This recommendation stems from the following evaluation findings:

- IntegratED Partners had different capacities, capabilities and appetites for partnership working.
- Not all Partners saw the benefits of partnership working.
- Organisations with the experience and ability to proactively contact other Partners were more able to utilise the partnership-working opportunities.
Recommendation 3: Ensure clear explanation of how all partner activities contribute to the programme goals. Communicate this to all partners. Ask partners to report on their progress towards programme goals – in addition to the specific planned outputs of their individual projects.

Programmatic working may be facilitated when partners understand the part they play in achieving programme goals, and how their activities are intended to combine with those of others to contribute to programme goals. This recommendation stems from the following evaluation findings:

- IntegratED Partners shared a broadly defined objective of working towards greater inclusion. However, the link between some Partners’ work and the Programme goals, particularly whole-child development, was not explicit. Partners did not always see a direct link between their activities and the goal of embedding whole-child approaches within the education sector.

- All IntegratED Partners were able to report on the implementation and results of their planned activities. However, not all Partners could report if and how their work might contribute to the IntegratED Programme’s four-year change goals.

Recommendation 4: Clearly identify and define coordinating activities and who will undertake them. Outline how these activities will facilitate programmatic working.

Clearly defining a programme’s coordination activities, who will perform them, how they will generate collaboration and benefit partners, and when coordination and collaboration will happen helps facilitate a programmatic approach. This recommendation stems from the following evaluation findings:

- The IntegratED Programme assigned a coordinating role to one Partner – referred to as the ‘hub’ organisation – with trusted connections to national and regional policy and decision makers; this was central to IntegratED’s successes. Supporting other IntegratED Partners in reaching the right audiences to raise awareness and share research findings and good practices was crucial to this role. The hub organisation also created and maintained the IntegratED website, which shared Partners’ activities and reports with wider audiences.

- However, the activities and mechanisms designed to unite IntegratED Partners’ activities within a programmatic approach were not fully described or articulated. Although the Programme theory of change mentioned cross-programme coordination, it was unclear precisely what these coordinating tasks were, how often they should be undertaken and how they contributed to the Programme’s overall goals.
Recommendation 5: Frame Programme goals to ensure clear definitions, transparent assumptions and measurable goals.

Programmatic working will be facilitated where cross-cutting programme goals use clear and shared terminology and where metrics for charting progress are understood and can be disseminated to partners. This recommendation stems from the following evaluation findings:

- The IntegratED Programme referred to ‘whole child development’ in its four-year goals, but Partners did not have a fully shared understanding of this term. This created some challenges for evaluating the contributions made by Partners’ activities to this goal.
  - At the heart of one of the Programme goals was the assumption that embedding ‘whole child development’ would help reduce preventable exclusion. However, the Programme did not explicitly acknowledge this assumption.
  - This goal was also hard to measure since many factors beyond whole-child approaches drive exclusion rates.
Conclusions

IntegrED Partners worked with schools, local authorities, MATs and national policymakers between 2019 and 2023. Their work has contributed to an improved understanding of the nature of exclusion and alternative provision and generated ideas about improvements to support the country’s most vulnerable children.

The Programme produced some resources intended to continue beyond the end of Phase 1, including an All-Party Parliamentary Group on School Exclusion and Alternative Provision, a Quality Toolkit for alternative provision and a school exclusions legal hub. The IntegrED Programme has also played a role in building an ecosystem of relevant organisations working together in the sector.
Annex A: Evaluation approaches and methodology

The evaluation teams

Two research organisations evaluated the IntegratED Programme, undertaking separate but closely coordinated studies.

NFER was commissioned to evaluate the work of the seven IntegratED Partners delivering school-based initiatives and pilots. This evaluation aimed to generate learning about these Partners’ progress towards the IntegratED Programme outcomes and longer-term goals and about how this progress was achieved in the first three years of delivery.

RAND Europe was commissioned to evaluate the IntegratED Programme as a whole. This evaluation aimed to capture the Programme’s activities, outputs and outcomes, document challenges, barriers and facilitators, and draw together lessons from implementation.

Developmental approach

Both evaluations took a developmental approach, as outlined below:

- While maintaining independence, the evaluation teams were internal Programme Partners responsible for gathering information and surfacing issues. This approach is different from a more traditional evaluation, where the evaluator is entirely separate from the programme, observing rather than interacting with those designing and implementing it.

- The evaluation teams supported the Programme’s ongoing development and adaptation. In contrast, a more traditional evaluation aims to support improvement by presenting findings at critical points or at the end of an evaluation.

- The evaluation teams responded to changes in the Programme’s design, whereas a more traditional evaluation aims to specify and control the Programme’s implementation.

- The evaluations measured and tracked the Programme’s outcomes, whereas a traditional evaluation judges performance against pre-determined goals.

A theory-based approach informed by contribution analysis

Both evaluations were based on a theory of change for the IntegratED Programme that set out the key activities, main intended outputs and outcomes and the hypothesised mechanisms linking them. The theory of change showed how the activities of each Partner intended to contribute to the Programme’s longer-term goals and systemic change objectives. It included cross-programme activities. The theory of change was used to guide the evaluation in a way that was compatible with the developmental approach.

- The theory of change was updated during the evaluations to record the Programme’s evolution and support Porticus’ reflections and shared with Programme Partners for validation and feedback.

- The evaluations identified outcomes and achievements not anticipated at the Programme outset and not explicitly mentioned in the theory of change. The Programme’s flexible nature allowed
Partners to work towards new goals emerging during the Programme, and the evaluation aimed to capture these alongside intended outcomes.

- The evaluations recorded where activities and outcomes that were in the theory of change did not materialise. However, these were not necessarily considered implementation failures; instead, the evaluations aimed to record why and how implementation plans changed to capture learning.

The evaluations aimed to explore if and how the Partners’ activities contributed to change at the classroom, school and national policy levels and, therefore, how much progress the Programme made towards its systemic change objectives. The evaluations did not aim for definitive conclusions about the Programme’s causal impacts. Instead, it aimed to provide evidence about plausible contribution narratives about how Partners’ activities supported change and how the overall Programme contributed to the specified goals.

The evaluation examined if and how participating in the Programme enabled Partners’ activities and impact and assessed IntegraED’s contribution to each Partner’s work and the broader policy and practice landscape.

This approach – informed by contribution analysis – was chosen because it was unrealistic, based on IntegraED’s size and scale, that it could directly and single-handedly achieve the system-wide changes needed to realise the programme goals fully.

The evaluations featured prominent formative and developmental objectives. The RAND and NFER teams worked collaboratively with Porticus and provided regular feedback to inform ongoing Programme design and evolution.

The evaluations were conducted over the four years between Spring 2019 and the end of 2022. In the Inception Phase that concluded in December 2019, the evaluation teams worked with Porticus and Partners to develop a theory of change for the Programme – drawing on interviews with sector stakeholders to understand the policy context.

### Data collection and analysis – Programme level

RAND Europe based its Programme-level evaluation on the following information:

- Regular, semi-structured interviews with eleven Programme Partners.
- A review of documentation supplied by the Partners alongside relevant policy and other grey literature.
- Monthly meetings with the Porticus Programme Manager.
- Observations of cross-Programme activities.
- Annual semi-structured interviews with relevant educational and alternative-provision stakeholders (e.g., policymakers, researchers, educational leaders, practitioners and funders).

RAND did not collect information from the seven Partners operating in schools and implementing pilot initiatives because these Partners were subject to NFER’s separate evaluation.

The analysis approach assessed the extent to which the Programme progressed towards its intended outcomes using the following steps, informed by contribution analysis:

1. **Develop a theory of change for the intervention and set out the attribution problem.** The evaluation team worked with Porticus to refine a theory of change for
2. **Gather evidence on the theory of change.** Through observations and data-collection rounds with the Partners and Programme Manager, the evaluation team gathered evidence about activities and outputs relevant to the theory of change and relating to the Programme goals. The data collection tools used for the regular interviews with Partners were structured to ask Partners to give updates on information and achievements mentioned in previous interviews, allowing the ‘story’ of each Partner’s work to evolve and be updated and nuanced throughout the evaluation period.

3. **Assemble and assess the contribution story and its challenges.** This step was achieved using interim reports, summarising the evidence collected to date, examining contributions and exploring limitations.

4. **Seek out additional evidence.** Data collection at regular interviews throughout the evaluation gathered evidence to support, challenge and refine the emerging contribution story. Interviews with stakeholders not involved in IntegratED provided an additional perspective.

5. **Revise and strengthen the contribution story.** Once all data were collected, the evaluation team drew conclusions about the contributions made by the Partners and IntegratED as a whole. These conclusions were challenged and discussed in workshops with representatives from Porticus and NFER, and findings were sent to Partners to check accuracy and identify any misinterpretations.

The analysis approach used to answer research questions about barriers and facilitators subjected the data to thematic inductive and deductive coding.

**Data collection activities – school-intervention Partners**

NFER based its in-school intervention evaluation on the following information:

- A total of 66 interviews with the seven Partners every 4–6 months (the number of interviews differed by Partner).
- Partner meetings and delivery observations.
- An online baseline survey of schools in Autumn 2019 to capture exclusion rates, the use of alternative provision and views on whole-child development. At least one response was received from 24 of the 29 schools participating in the initiatives at the time of the survey. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the limited capacity of school staff to engage in research activities, a follow-up survey was not administered.
- Telephone interviews with school staff (the number of interviews differed by Partner).
- Secondary data provided by the Partners (reports, case studies, literature reviews, summaries of school-level/pupil-level data, initiative-related publicity material, websites and blogs).

NFER analysed data collected about the in-school interventions and pilots as detailed in their final report.
Evaluation strengths and limitations

The evaluations capture a rich overview of IntegratED's activities, achievements and lessons

The embedded, developmental approach and regular data collection provide a detailed account of the Programme and offer clear and specific evidence about Programme achievements and grounded practical reflections and learning.

The evaluations relied on Partners’ self-reports

The IntegratED Partners cooperated with the evaluations, which relied primarily on self-reported achievements and activity accounts. Where possible, the evaluation teams aimed to verify these accounts through triangulation with other sources. Partners’ monitoring and evaluation expertise and capacity varied significantly, with some Partners better able to record and communicate their activities and outcomes relevant to IntegratED’s goals. Partners with less monitoring capacity risked being unable to evidence impact. Partners more forthcoming in their reporting and participation in the evaluation process – often due to greater internal expertise or capacity – were more likely to evidence contributions.

The majority of Partners did not carry out systematic monitoring activities.

Evaluating the in-school initiatives and pilots was challenging

Since the distribution of interviewees across the seven in-school intervention and pilot Partners was uneven and the COVID-19 pandemic caused particular challenges in conducting interviews, some data were limited and untriangulated. It was difficult for some school-level interviewees to identify impacts resulting specifically from participating in a Partner’s initiative, partly due to the range of other interventions, support and Continuing Professional Development simultaneously taking place, impacting the findings’ validity. Furthermore, the high attrition rates across nearly all Partner activities (largely due to disruptions caused by the pandemic) meant that impacts varied significantly even among participants working with a specific Partner.

Many of the Programme’s outcomes and objectives were not sufficiently bounded or quantifiable

This uncertainty made it difficult to assess whether the desired level of progress had been achieved, particularly in objectives relating to change at the national policy level.
Annex B: Assessment of progress towards IntegratED Programme goals

The first evaluation question for the Programme-level evaluation asked about the extent to which the Programme achieved its four-year systemic change goals.

To address this question, the evaluation team first assessed progress towards each of the ten outcomes in the IntegratED Programme’s theory of change. Findings are summarised using a ‘RAG’ (Red-Amber-Green) rating for each outcome, as explained in Figure A-1. Assessments made by the Programme-level evaluation conducted by RAND and the evaluation of in-school interventions and pilots conducted by NFER are based on the teams’ synthesis and judgement of the evidence collected throughout the Programme.

As Annex A explains, the Programme-level evaluation used a contribution analysis approach to understand the role IntegratED Partners’ work played in achieving Programme outcomes.

**Figure B1: Criteria for assigning RAG ratings to summarise progress towards Programme outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colour</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>The outcome has been achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amber</td>
<td>Significant progress towards this outcome was achieved during the Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>No significant progress was achieved during the Programme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table B1: Evaluation findings about the extent to which the ten Programme Goals were achieved**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>RAG rating</th>
<th>Key findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Teachers and senior leaders in mainstream schools and alternative-provision settings: a. Have increased knowledge and understanding of whole-child development. b. Have increased understanding of pupils’ whole-child development needs. c. Are more confident in their ability to identify challenging behaviour and intervene using a whole-child development approach. d. Integrate whole-child development approaches in their practice.</td>
<td>Amber</td>
<td>In-school intervention Partners worked with fewer schools than initially intended and had more limited engagement with participating schools, primarily due to the pandemic. The pandemic also led to challenges for partners in measuring their impact. In schools where IntegratED Partners implemented interventions and pilots, these activities improved teachers’ knowledge and understanding. However, changes in practice were not typically achieved beyond individual or small staff groups within the timeframe of the evaluation. Whole-school changes were limited for many of the Partners. Beyond the work of IntegratED Partners in schools, the Programme generated new and valuable information that would not have existed without IntegratED funding. Limited information was available about whether or not this lead to changes in practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outcome Description</td>
<td>Evaluation Color</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Schools and families work together to support children at risk of exclusion.</td>
<td>Green</td>
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<td></td>
<td>This outcome related to the work of one IntegratED Partner implementing a parental engagement and training programme in alternative provision and mainstream schools. As well as implementing the training as planned, the Partner went further than initially intended by building on their IntegratED funding to secure additional funding (not from Porticus), enabling them to deliver the training to many more professionals than expected. There was no reliable information on whether or not the training yielded changes to practice – although there was some anecdotal evidence, the evaluation team could not verify it.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Families with excluded children have access to legal support.</td>
<td>Green</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This outcome related to the work of one IntegratED Partner creating an online School Exclusions Hub, which increased the legal support available for vulnerable young people and their families.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>MATs and local authorities are aware of approaches to improving alternative provision, whole-child development and/or preventing exclusion.</td>
<td>Green</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IntegratED Partners engaged with MATs and local authorities more than initially expected. There were clear examples where IntegratED Partners actively engaged with decisionmakers, including influencers in the sector, thereby raising awareness among MATs and local authorities about whole-child development, alternative provision and exclusion prevention. Developing the Alternative Provision Quality Toolkit would have been impossible without IntegratED funding. The Toolkit – targeted at alternative provision leaders and those in strategic roles in MATs and local authorities – will ‘live on’ beyond the IntegratED Programme, constituting a significant contribution to the field.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>MATs and local authorities adopt practices to improve alternative provision, whole-child development and/or reducing preventable exclusion.</td>
<td>Amber</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The evaluation teams are cautious in concluding whether the extensive engagement with MATs and local authorities has improved or changed practice since they could not test this directly. The high engagement with local authorities and MATs and the evidence suggesting local authorities and MATs demonstrated a clear interest in using IntegratED’s outputs mean it is plausible that the IntegratED Programme could lead to changes in the mid-term.</td>
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### Evaluation of the IntegratED Programme

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<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>Green</strong></td>
<td>This outcome related to one IntegratED Partner’s work successfully developing a model with two local authorities. In addition to developing the model, the Partner exceeded initial ambitions by commencing pilots. The relevant local authorities started thinking differently about their broader approach to exclusions and inclusive practice due to these pilots.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>Amber</strong></td>
<td>Establishing the All-Party Parliamentary Group for School Exclusions and Alternative Provision can be seen as a signal that the need for improvement is recognised. Including alternative provision in the scope of the government’s SEND Review was a key breakthrough. IntegratED Partners submitted evidence in response to this consultation. The SEND Review’s conclusions signalled recognition of the need for improvement in alternative provision and some acknowledgement of the need to improve early intervention in mainstream schools. The 2023 SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan (the government’s response to the SEND Review) reinforced recognition of the need for improvement. However, the SEND Review’s conclusions did not reflect the full range of changes IntegratED called for: there was little focus on exclusions and minimal practical action to support mainstream schools in whole-child development approaches. The SEND Review was published alongside the Schools White Paper, which focused on academic attainment without recognising whole-child development or exclusion issues. Overall, the education sector and inspection regime still focus primarily on academic attainment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6</strong> Proof of concept and identification of critical success factors for how local authorities can change their approach to identifying and supporting children at risk of exclusion.</td>
<td><strong>Green</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>7</strong> Formal/informal recognition by policymakers that there needs to be improvement.</td>
<td><strong>Amber</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Commitment by policymakers to bring about improvement.</td>
<td>Amber</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Policy change working to improve alternative provision or reduce preventable exclusion.</td>
<td>Amber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>National government are equipped with the necessary evidence and research to develop policies and underpinning legal frameworks.</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Endnotes


The 2021/22 data show Gypsy/Roma pupils had the highest rates of permanent exclusions and suspensions, Traveller of Irish Heritage pupils had the second highest rate of permanent exclusions and suspensions, and pupils with White and Black Caribbean ethnicity had the third highest rate of permanent exclusions and suspensions. Department for Education. 2023. Permanent exclusions and suspensions in England Academic year 2021/22. As of 30 August 2023: https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england


The RAND and NFER Evaluation teams developed a theory of change for the IntegratED Programme at the outset of the evaluation.

As of 30 August 2023: https://www.integrated.org.uk/our-mission

This includes organisations who received IntegratED funding and those who did not, as well as other funding organisations.

Reports and information produced by Partners can be found on IntegratED Partners’ websites and IntegratED website: As of 30 August 2023: https://www.integrated.org.uk/


However, this Bill was not taken forward. While there is no indication that this target remains live, there have been indications from the government that the government continues to support and encourage schools to academise and join MATs (see Written Questions from February 2023. As of 30 August: https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-01-11/121149)

22 Findings from the NFER report included in an unpublished report prepared for Porticus by NFER in early 2023.

