

**Pilot evaluation of 'Placing an advisory teacher in Children's Social Care' at
Bath and North East Somerset (BANES) Virtual School**

Intervention Developer	Bath and North East Somerset (BANES) Virtual School
Delivery Organisation	Bath and North East Somerset (BANES) Virtual School
Evaluator	NatCen Social Research
Principal Investigator	Julia Griggs
Protocol Author(s)	Julia Griggs, Jonah Bury, Isaac Thornton
Type of Trial	Mixed methods – qualitative interviews and analysis of quantitative administrative data
Age or Status of Participants	Nursery through to Year 11
Number of Participating Local Authorities	1
Number of Children and Families	70 Pupils
Primary Outcomes	Exclusions, attendance, academic progress
Secondary Outcome(s)	N/A
Contextual Factors	COVID-19 and related partial school closures

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Background and Problem Statement

Bath and North East Somerset (BANES) Virtual School is a statutory body overseeing 185 'looked after' Children in Care (CIC) in the authority's education system, from nursery through to post-16 education. Given their size, BANES can monitor children's progress as though they were part of a single school and provide individually tailored support to each pupil via a bespoke education plan. BANES Virtual School comprises 2.6 dedicated staff, with an additional 2 days a week of support from the Educational Psychology (EP) service and 2 days a week from a Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) team.

BANES have a further 650 children who are either on a Child Protection (CP) or Child in Need (CIN) plan. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in spring 2020, and in response to recent research indicating that CP and CIN pupils achieve significantly poorer outcomes than CIC (Berridge et al. 2020; Department for Education 2019), BANES Virtual School expanded to offer additional support to the most vulnerable CIN and CP pupils. The resulting pilot programme 'Placing an advisory teacher in Children's Social Care' funded by What Works for Children's Social Care (WWCSC) sits within the BANES Virtual School and is targeted specifically at supporting a select cohort of CIN and CP pupils.

Intervention and Theory of Change

The aim of the pilot is to raise the academic progress of pupils and increase their school attendance, confidence and resilience through interventions outlined in bespoke education plans. Moreover, the pilot aims to decrease pupil exclusions.

Why: theory/rationale

Berridge et al. (2020) identified that CIN and CP pupils achieve significantly poorer educational outcomes than CIC. And nationally, exclusions and attendance figures are consistently poor for CIN and CP cohorts compared to CIC. Despite this, CIN and CP pupils receive a lower level of support. Recent figures suggest there are almost five times as many CIN (399,500) than CIC (78,150) in England (Berridge et al. 2020). Berridge et al. conclude that there is a need for a strong education advocate in the social care structure to support outcomes for these children and to work alongside schools to develop practice ensuring that these children are not further disadvantaged.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the BANES Virtual School was temporarily expanded to offer additional support to the most vulnerable CIN and CP pupils. This was in response to Berridge et al.'s findings and concerns that COVID-19 would disproportionately impact the mental health, wellbeing and academic progress of the most vulnerable pupils. BANES Virtual School prioritised the 100 most vulnerable CIN and CP pupils and added them to the Virtual School caseloads until the end of the academic year (July 2020). The Virtual School provided advice and guidance to individual social workers and liaised with schools to ensure that pupil places were available for the new term. This short intervention was highly effective: by July 2020, 88% of pupils in this targeted cohort had either returned to school or were being supported remotely at home.

The focus of the pilot is to build on the success of this intervention by consolidating and formalising the support provided to social workers and piloting the bespoke education plans. This will be done by appointing and placing two experienced advisory teachers within the social care teams to support vulnerable CIN and CP pupils and to closely monitor their education outcomes. These advisory teachers will work alongside schools, social workers

and families to break down barriers to education and ensure best practice is carried out and shared across schools in BANES.

What: procedures

The Virtual School will recruit two part-time advisory teachers with experience in trauma-informed practice and leadership experience in educational settings to effectively provide support to individual schools and social care teams. Advisory teachers will be embedded within the social care teams, meaning they will work directly with social workers rather than providing support in an external capacity, e.g. from a different team within BANES. Advisory teachers will also source external organisations with expertise and capacity to deliver specific interventions for individual pupils where these are not already provided by schools themselves. Moreover, an educational psychologist will be recruited with the capacity to deliver one day a week of training and support to schools (22 hours overall).

CIN and CP pupils will be selected for inclusion in the programme by social workers, the Virtual School lead (programme lead), two LA social care leads and an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service lead. This will take place at the beginning of delivery via a process of RAG-rating all CIN and CP pupils within BANES. Advisory teachers will then draft bespoke education plans for each individual pupil and identify individual interventions that suit pupils' needs. These education plans will be reviewed in termly meetings by advisory teachers, school staff, families and social workers.

At three different timepoints throughout delivery, the Virtual School Lead, LA Director of Education, advisory teachers and Virtual School governors will collate and review data on pupils' progress.

What: materials

Key materials necessary for delivering the intervention include:

- £1,000 per pupil
- Training materials for schools receiving training from Educational Psychologists
- Documentation (e.g. education plan)

Who: recipients

The pilot programme targets 70 CIN and CP pupils, spanning from nursery to Year 11. Currently 40 are on CIN plans, while 30 have CP plans. All 70 pupils have been rated 'red' in terms of their education¹, and 17 pupils have Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP). None of these pupils are considered likely to come into care. Of the 70 pupils, 35 are in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Key Stages 1 and 2 cohort (primary), and 35 are in the Key Stages 3 and 4 cohort (secondary). Pupils come from 35 different education settings (including mainstream and alternative provision and specialist settings for Cognition and Learning and Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs (SEMH)). Where a pupil leaves the programme, for instance because of moving out of the area, they are replaced by another CIN or CP pupil (see p.8).

¹ A 'red' rating describes pupils who are at risk of underachieving at school or are likely to have poor outcomes. This is either because of their additional needs and lack of engagement in school or because of their home circumstances, lack of appropriate parenting support and lack of parental engagement in education. Red typically indicates a combination of these factors rather than just one or two that can be mitigated by something else.

Subcategory	Number of Pupils
Plan	
<i>Child in Need (CIN)</i>	40
<i>Child Protection (CP)</i>	30
Setting Type	
<i>Nursery and Primary</i>	35
<i>Secondary</i>	35
Education, Health and Care Plan	
Yes	17
No	53

Who: provider

As a key aspect of this pilot, two experienced advisory teachers were appointed part-time, one for EYFS and Key Stages 1 and 2 (primary), and the other for Key Stages 3 and 4 (secondary). Alongside the two advisory teachers, the Virtual School delivery team includes the Virtual School lead, i.e. the programme lead (see Table 2).

Where: location

The pilot covers pupils from 35 education settings within the Bath and North East Somerset local authority area.

The bespoke interventions are delivered in school to 33 of the 35 EYFS and primary cohort, with the remaining two pupils completing the activities online. In contrast, the intervention activities for secondary school pupils are primarily online, with only three secondary school pupils receiving the intervention face-to-face at school.

When and how much: dosage

The overarching intervention of embedding advisory teachers into social care teams began in October 2020 following the recruitment of advisory teachers.

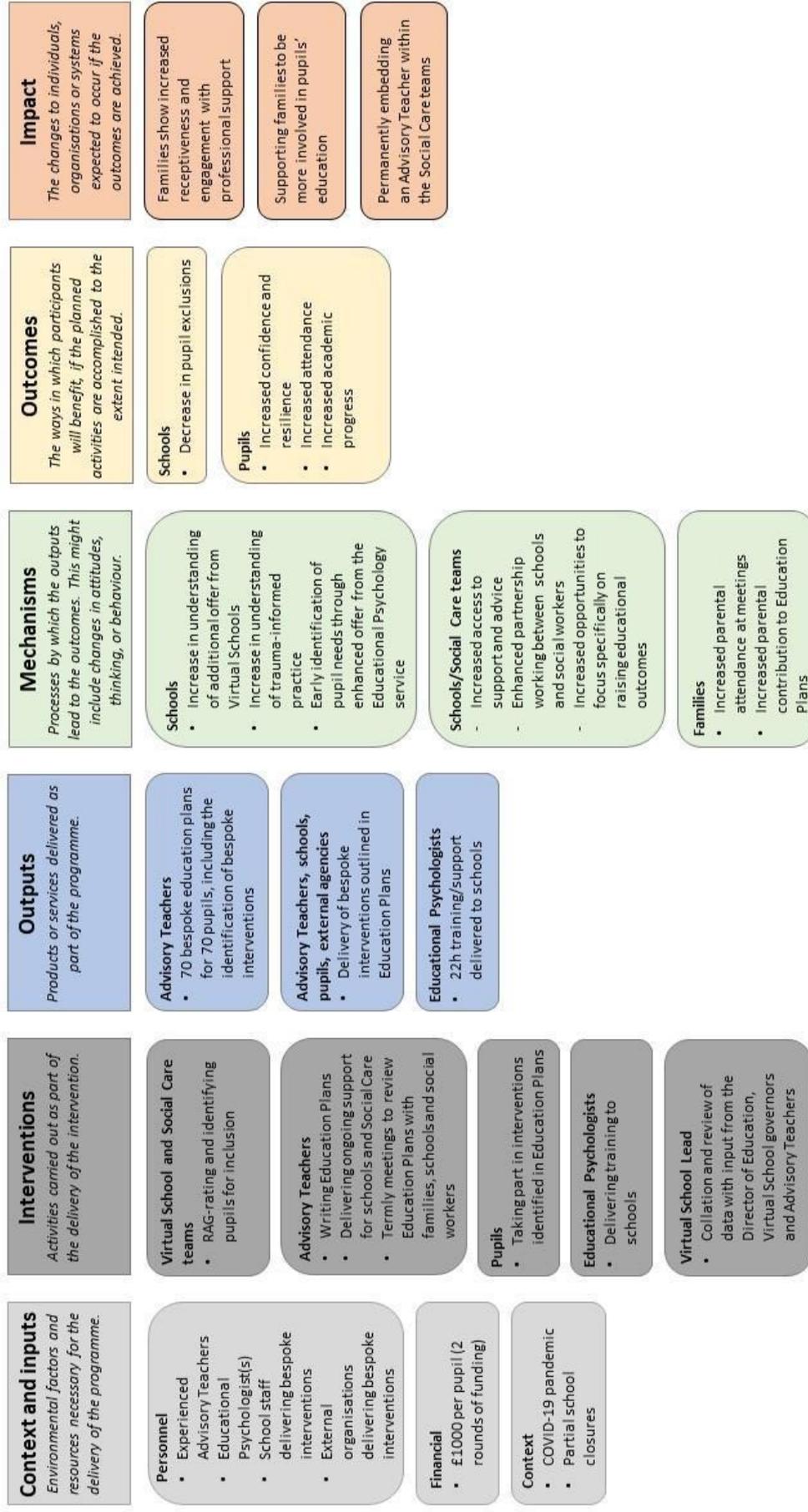
The duration and frequency of bespoke interventions for pupils specified in their education plans varies, as the support provided to pupils is individually tailored.

Implementation and process evaluation

The purpose of the implementation and process evaluation (IPE) is to explore delivery of the pilot programme 'Placing an advisory teacher in Children's Social Care'. The IPE will illustrate how the programme is implemented in practice to inform learning for the planning of an evaluation of effectiveness.

The IPE will capture qualitative data from stakeholders and a group of recipients involved in the programme. The different perspectives provide a more holistic understanding of programme delivery and early indicators of perceived impact. Administrative data will be collected and analysed to explore any evidence of promise.

BANES Placing an Advisory Teacher in the Social Care Teams: Logic Model



Research questions

The IPE brings together quantitative and qualitative data collection activities to address key IPE dimensions and accompanying research questions. These questions are set out in the first column of the table below the relevant IPE dimension. The second column details the evaluation activities we will use to address each set of questions.

Research question	Evaluation activities
Feasibility: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How is the programme implemented in practice? ● How does the programme complement or replicate existing provisions for this group of pupils? ● What are the challenges and enablers to intended delivery? ● Are all participating schools reached? ● What adaptations are made to delivery? ● Is the support acceptable to teachers and pupils, and how responsive are they? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Paired interviews with advisory teachers ● Interviews with school staff ● Interviews with parents/carers ● Interviews with social workers ● Interviews with programme lead, Director of Education and Director of Children and Young People
Early indicators of promise: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What changes, if any, are made to teacher practice in supporting pupils with a social worker? ● What perceived impact is there on pupils' social, emotional and mental health? ● How have levels of attendance, exclusions and academic progress changed over the pilot period? ● Are there any adverse or unintended consequences? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Paired interviews with advisory teachers ● Interviews with school staff ● Interviews with parents/carers ● Interviews with social workers ● Interviews with programme lead, Director of Education and Director of Children and Young People ● Analysis of monitoring data
Readiness for trial: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What changes, if any, need to be made to the logic model? ● Can the programme be delivered at scale? ● What changes are required to optimise delivery? ● Have suitable outcome measures been identified? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Paired interviews with advisory teachers ● Interviews with programme lead, Director of Education and Director of Children and Young People ● Analysis of monitoring data
Costs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What resources are needed to deliver the intervention? ● How has funding for the intervention been used alongside existing funds? ● What resources have teachers/school leaders needed to contribute to the running of the intervention? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Collection of programme cost data from the programme lead ● Interviews with school staff

IPE methods

Our design aims to understand how the programme is implemented in practice and gather learning for the planning for an evaluation of effectiveness. We will primarily use qualitative methods and draw on quantitative administrative data. The components are discussed in turn below, and (where relevant) the subsections include details about sampling, data collection methods and timing.

Qualitative paired interviews with advisory teachers

We will carry out interviews with both advisory teachers placed with the BANES social care teams to understand programme implementation. The advisory teachers will be given the option of being interviewed as a pair or individually. The interviews will take place at two timepoints: 1) during ongoing delivery (February 2021) and 2) at the end of delivery, i.e. the end of the academic year (July 2021). The first paired interview will focus on early and ongoing implementation and map the support provided to schools, families and social workers. The second interview will capture reflections on implementation, perceived impacts, and suggestions to further optimise the programme. Individual interviews will last around 60 minutes and paired interviews around 75 minutes. They will be conducted over the telephone or online (via Teams).

Qualitative interviews with school staff

To understand school experience of the programme we will interview relevant school staff (e.g. Designated Safeguarding Lead or a member of the Senior Leadership Team) with oversight for attendance, exclusions or behaviour policy. The interviews will examine views on the training and support the school has received through the programme and how this has helped the school, pupils and families. We will also seek to understand any unmet needs and suggestions to refine the programme. The interviews will take place during the spring term (April-May 2021). We will select a sample of 10 schools with the BANES programme lead to ensure a mix of settings based on primary sampling criteria (primary and secondary; size) and secondary sampling criteria (number of pupils with a social worker; average attendance, exclusions and attainment; level of engagement with the programme). We aim to carry out two interviews per school. Each interview will last up to 60 minutes and be conducted over the telephone or online (via Teams).

Qualitative interviews with parents/carers

To understand family experiences of the programme we will interview parents/carers of pupils involved in the programme. The interviews will explore parents'/carers' views of support received through the programme and how this has helped their children and family. We will also seek to understand any unmet needs and suggestions to refine the programme. The interviews will take place during the summer term (June 2021). The sample will be selected with the BANES programme lead and advisory teachers to ensure selection is sensitive to families' circumstances and appropriate. We aim to include a mix of families based on primary sampling criteria (age of child; CIN/CP status) and secondary sampling criteria (level of engagement with the programme). We aim to carry out 10 interviews with parent/carers. Each interview will last up to 45 minutes and be conducted over the telephone or online (via Teams).

Qualitative interviews with social workers

We will interview social workers to understand how they experienced the programme and the inclusion of an advisory teacher in their teams. These interviews will provide insights into the cooperation, collaboration and information sharing between advisory teachers and social workers and how this added to the support they provided to schools and families. The interviews will take place during the summer term (June 2021). We aim to carry out 5 interviews and interview one social worker per social work team. Each interview will last up to 45 minutes and be conducted over the telephone or online (via Teams).

Qualitative interviews with senior LA stakeholders

We will interview senior LA stakeholders towards the end of programme delivery (July 2021). This includes the BANES programme lead, the LA Director of Children and Young People and the LA Director for Education, Inclusion and Safeguarding. The interviews will capture reflections on implementation, including what worked well and the key challenges as well as their view and understanding of the progress towards the intended impacts. The interview will also explore their view on future scale-up and suggestions for the programme for a post-16 cohort. Each interview will last 60 minutes and be conducted over the telephone or online (via Teams).

Collection of administrative data

We will analyse administrative data on pupils' academic progress, school attendance and exclusions. Baseline and endline data, collected routinely as part of programme administration, will be pseudonymised and shared with NatCen by the BANES programme lead via a secure server at the end of delivery (July 2021).

Analysis

Individual and paired interviews will be recorded (with participants' permission) and transcribed. We will use Framework in NVivo to facilitate thematic analysis of qualitative data. In the Framework approach data from each interview is summarised within an analysis matrix (where columns represent the key sub-themes or topics and the rows represent participants), so the data are ordered systematically and grounded in participants' accounts. Analysis will look for patterns, consistencies and inconsistencies in data collected from different participants to help answer the research questions.

The team will manage and analyse administrative data shared by the BANES programme lead in SPSS. Because this is a pilot study, and due to the small sample size limiting statistical power and the likelihood of non-normally distributed data, we will not be conducting null hypothesis significance testing. We will, however, provide descriptive analysis to establish how many pupils completed the intervention (reach) and identify any cohort-level changes in key outcome variables (attendance, exclusions, and academic progress) over the pilot period. Where we receive individual-level numerical data (pupil attendance rate, school exclusion rate) we will calculate means at baseline (autumn term) and endline (summer term) for the treated pupils and compare them descriptively. We will further provide, where possible, a comparison of school exclusion rates for the past three academic years (2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21). Where we receive ordinal data (academic progress), we will produce frequency tables comparing baseline and endline data.

Where possible, we will conduct child-level level subgroup analysis for attendance and progress data. A key issue for subgroup analysis is the relatively small number of pupils receiving the programme (n=70), meaning it would not be possible to analyse by year group for example. Another challenge is the transient nature of the target population (e.g. pupils moving from CIN status to CIC) and the likelihood of attrition.² Subgroup analysis will therefore be performed to assess broad differences between primary and secondary school pupils, and between CIN and pupils subject to CPP.

We will triangulate and synthesise IPE data according to our research questions and implementation domains. This will enable us to provide a comprehensive assessment of implementation and report findings against the finalised logic model.

The following steps will be taken to ensure rigor in the analysis and reporting of qualitative data:

- Confidence that the findings are an accurate reflection of participant experience will be ensured through presentation of examples of participant responses using quotations, and triangulation between different participants.
- The degree to which findings are transferable to other contexts will be considered through description of contextual factors, and collection of data from participants with different characteristics (e.g. primary and secondary pupils) to gather a range of perspectives.
- Transparent reporting of the research and analysis process will ensure the study methods are clear and repeatable.
- When interpreting findings, consideration will be given to contrasting and inconsistent accounts.

Cost evaluation

We will provide estimates of the cost of implementing the programme for BANES and delivery costs for schools. The programme lead will be asked to supply a breakdown of implementation costs, including prerequisites for intervention delivery and required staff time. Delivery costs will be collected from school staff selected for interview and will cover the different types of costs incurred over the intervention period. Where possible we will assign costs to different categories, such as staff costs, fixed costs and set-up costs (where appropriate). This will allow us to calculate a broad estimate of average cost per school and per pupil and provide information about how to collect costs more comprehensively as part of a full evaluation of effectiveness.

Ethics & Participation

Ethical clearance was sought from NatCen's ethics committee in November 2020 and ethical approval granted on 11 December 2020. Some of the key considerations for our ethics application are outlined below.

The parents/carers of pupils selected for the programme can be especially vulnerable. Care will be taken to ensure that they are given opportunities to give explicit consent. Consent will be treated as continuous: parents/carers be able to opt-out at any point before, during, and immediately after data collection, i.e. before analysis begins. We will reiterate to parents that they will not be identified in any outputs (presentations, reports).

² Should one of the target pupils leave CP or CIN status, or move to another local authority, it will not be possible to collect monitoring data for them as part of the pilot programme.

With support from the programme lead, we will obtain a list of local support services for parents. We will highlight at the beginning and end of the research encounter that while we're not offering support ourselves as an independent research organisation, local support organisations provide helpful advice and support if needed.

Researchers will be thoroughly briefed before interviews. The briefing will focus particularly on managing interviews with vulnerable participants. It will also include information on the NatCen disclosure policy, to make sure they are clear on the process to follow in the event of disclosure.

Registration

The final version of the protocol will be published on Open Science Framework (OSF). The NatCen team will update OSF with the report at the end of the project.

Data protection

NatCen will be the data processor and data controller on this evaluation.

BANES will be data controller for the administrative data provided as part of the IPE. It is the responsibility of the data controller to decide on the legal basis for data sharing. At this stage we anticipate that the legal basis for data sharing is "legitimate interests" with special category personal processed for scientific research purposes.³

NatCen will be data controller for personal data collected during the qualitative research activities that form part of the implementation and process evaluation (IPE). Participants will receive a link to the privacy notice available on the NatCen website which will provide further information on how we will use the data we collect for the IPE, what their rights are as research participants and how they can withdraw their data from the study if they wish.

The process for secure data transfer will be set out in a signed Data Sharing Agreement (DSA) between NatCen and BANES.

Personnel

Table 1 Delivery team		
Name	Title	Role
Sarah Gunner	Virtual School Lead (programme lead)	Coordination of Virtual School and pilot project
Julia Wallcroft	Advisory Teacher	Supporting pupils at EYFS and Key Stages 1 and 2 (Primary stage)
Ruth Taylor	Advisory Teacher	Supporting pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 (Secondary stage)
Table 2 Evaluation team		
Name	Title	Role

³ General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Article 6(1) and Article 9(2[j]).

Dr Julia Griggs	Research Director, Children and Families	Principle investigator
Dr Jonah Bury	Senior Researcher, Children and Families	Day-to-day project manager
Emily Roberts	Researcher, Children and Families	IPE
Isaac Thornton	Researcher, Evaluation	IPE

Timeline

Table 3 Timeline		
Dates	Activity	Staff responsible/leading
November 2020	Kick-off meeting	Julia Griggs
December 2020	Logic model workshop	Julia Griggs
December 2020	Ethical approval	Julia Griggs
February 2021	Protocol and OSF registry	Julia Griggs
February 2021	Advisory teacher interviews Wave 1	Julia Griggs
March 2021	Short interim report	Julia Griggs
April to May 2021	School staff interviews	Julia Griggs
June 2021	Parent/carer interviews	Julia Griggs
June 2021	Social worker interviews	Julia Griggs
July 2021	Advisory teacher interviews Wave 2	Julia Griggs
July 2021	LA senior stakeholder interviews	Julia Griggs
July 2021	Obtain administrative dataset	Julia Griggs
December 2021	Final report	Julia Griggs

References

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