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Transition Support

PILOT EVALUATION REPORT

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACE	Adverse Childhood Experience
ARE	Age-related expectations
ASD/C	Autism Spectrum Disorder/Condition
CIC	Children in Care
CiN	Child in Need (Plan)
CP(P)	Child Protection (Plan)
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan
FSM	Free School Meals
HBC	Hartlepool Borough Council
IPE	Implementation and Process Evaluation
LA	Local Authority
MLSS	Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale
MMF	Me and My Feelings Questionnaire
OSF	Open Science Framework
PCP	Person-Centred Planning
REC	Research Ethics Committee (NatCen)
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
STARS	School Transition and Adjustment Research Study
TPPT	Transition Planning Profile Tool
WWCSC	What Works for Children's Social Care

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The *Transition Support Pilot*, developed by Hartlepool Borough Council (HBC), provided support to children who were on a Child in Need (CiN) or Child Protection plan during their transition from primary to secondary school. The pilot involved training for schools and social workers; providing an administrative tool for schools known as the Transition Planning Profile Tool (TPPT); and Person-Centred Planning (PCP) meetings involving parents/carers, pupils, social workers and primary and secondary school staff. The pilot supported children who were in Year 5 and Year 6; delivery started in February 2021 and will complete in November 2022.

NatCen's evaluation aimed to understand how the pilot was implemented in practice and gather learnings for the planning of a larger evaluation. It adopted a mixed-methods approach consisting of qualitative interviews, a pupil survey and analysis of administrative data. The evaluation only included children who were in Year 6. There were 55 children from 21 schools in the evaluation cohort (this reduced to 47 by the end of the evaluation period due to attrition). The evaluation ran from January 2021 to March 2022.

The pilot was designed in 2019 and took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a significant impact on delivery and the evaluation. This is an important caveat to the findings.

Research questions

This evaluation aimed to evaluate the early implementation of the *Transition Support Pilot* to answer questions framed around the pilot's feasibility, evidence of promise and readiness for trial. The research questions for each domain are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Research questions

IPE domain	Research questions
Feasibility	- How is Transition Support implemented in practice, and what adaptations are made to delivery? - What are the challenges and enablers to delivering the support as intended? - What is the school staff and child reach and dosage? - Is Transition Support acceptable to school staff and children? How engaged are school staff and children with the support provided?
Early indicators of promise	- What changes, if any, are made to school staff practice and school support for transition as a result of the pilot? - What is the change in children's attainment and social and emotional outcomes? - Are there any adverse or unintended consequences?
Readiness for trial	- What changes, if any, are needed to the theory of change? - Can Transition Support be delivered at scale? - What changes are required to optimise delivery? - Have suitable outcome measures been identified?

Methods

Adopting a mixed-methods approach, this pilot evaluation involved:

- Observations of Teacher training and Person-centred Planning (PCP) meetings

- Interviews with HBC pilot leads, school staff, social workers and pupils in Year 7
- Analysis of a pupil survey. A pre- and post- survey with children in the pilot cohort was part of the evaluation design. However, the baseline survey was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The results from the endline survey are included in this report
- Analysis of administrative data including the Transition Planning Profile Tool (TPPT).

Key findings

Evidence of feasibility

- **Pilot activities were generally delivered as intended, with some adjustments.** The only activity that did not appear to take place as intended was social worker training. One key change was that school staff training was delivered online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This meant it was not possible to capture whether the online training reached as many school staff as intended, nor what the implications were for staff engagement and perceptions of acceptability. Another adjustment was the need for additional meetings between school staff outside the PCP meetings.

- **High number of PCP meetings for secondary school staff was a key delivery challenge.** Disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic was another challenge, along with unexpectedly high support needs from schools. Meanwhile, the following factors enabled delivery: a pre-existing local need for better transition support; good school staff and pupil engagement in pilot activities; and ease of use of the TPPT.

- **School staff found the training and the TPPT acceptable, but primary and secondary school staff were divided in views about PCP meetings.** For primary staff, PCP meetings made transitions more child-focused. Secondary staff agreed, but also found meetings insufficient for sharing information and did not consider the high number of meetings they were required to attend sustainable in the long run.

- **Participant responsiveness was generally good, but social worker engagement and attendance was mixed**. While social workers have a defined role in the logic model, they reported a lack of clarity about their role and not feeling they were part of the pilot.

Evidence of promise

- **Information sharing between schools improved**. The TPPT was a clear improvement on previous practice, which was disjointed, with no single document containing information on all relevant children. School staff used the TPPT to share data on a large number of measures, in a format that was easy to use, though secondary staff had some concerns about the reliability of data. PCP meetings led to school staff having a better understanding about individual children's needs, though secondary school staff did not always find them effective for information sharing.

- **Ways of working between schools, social care teams and families saw limited improvements.** PCP meetings brought together school staff, parents/carers, pupils and social workers for a child-centred discussion. However, the mixed attendance of different participants, including social workers, led to limited impact in this area.

- **Evidence of positive outcomes for children was also limited.** This may partly be due to data collection taking place in the first term of secondary school. Quantitative

findings showed that both attainment and attendance improved a little; however, we are not able to attribute these changes to the pilot activities. Qualitative findings highlighted positive perceived impacts on children's social and emotional outcomes and that children had settled in well in secondary school. On the other hand, the quantitative data suggested little change in pupils' level of concern about transition.

Readiness for trial

- **Logic model refinements.** The logic model would benefit from more detailed information about activities (e.g. targeted support) to help measure reach and dosage.

- **Outcome measures.** Suggestions from qualitative interviews included using exclusions or behaviour sanctions in the first term of Year 7 as key measures as well as 'softer' measures, like having a trusted adult at a new school.

- **Scalability.** We suggest refinements would be needed to improve scalability, for example, a review of PCP meetings to reduce the time burden on secondary schools.

Discussion and recommendations

Supporting transitions for vulnerable children is important and participants agreed that there was a need for a programme like the *Transition Support Pilot* in Hartlepool. This mixed-method evaluation provides first early evidence on the new approach.

Our evaluation found some key activities to be feasible in the current design, notably training for schools and the TPPT, but that PCP meetings require further development to make them feasible. Taken together, the different needs and expectations of primary and secondary schools in relation to transition support was a key cross-cutting finding. Related to this was the potentially contradictory aims of PCP meetings in both aiding information sharing and elevating the child and parent/carer voice. Lastly, lack of capacity to attend activities and lack of clarity about the role of social workers were recurring themes.

Our evaluation found limited evidence of intended outcomes for children, though there were significant limitations to both the qualitative and quantitative data collection. For example, the data collection was completed early in Year 7 which made it challenging for participants to evaluate outcomes. Participants in interviews generally perceived that the pilot had improved transition support for this cohort of pupils, with school staff noting improvements in pupils' social and emotional outcomes. The quantitative data (based on small samples) gave a mixed picture overall, though there was some improvement in attainment and attendance.

The findings suggest that the *Transition Support Pilot* would benefit from further development work before scale-up to a full trial.

Finally, the pilot was designed in 2019 and took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. This had a significant impact on delivery. Overall, it is unlikely that the pilot would have been delivered this way outside the COVID-19 context, which is an important caveat to the findings.

Recommendations

The findings suggest a number of refinements to address issues of feasibility and scalability:

- Consider whether the needs and expectations of secondary schools in relation to transition support are currently met and find ways to secure their buy-in
- Consider targeting PCP meetings at a smaller subset of pupils with greater needs in order to make the number of meetings more feasible for secondary schools to attend
- Review the current format of PCP meetings so that information sharing amongst school staff is given equal weight to making the meetings child-centred. For example, by only including parents/carers and children in part of the planning meeting
- Consider alternatives to PCP review meetings that are less time-intensive ways of sharing the same information. This could include having virtual meetings, sharing the information in a document, and targeting a subset of children with higher needs
- Review training and guidance for schools. For example, making part of the training focused on chairing PCP meetings and targeting this at primary schools. We also suggest giving guidance to primary schools about TPPT data completion to ensure data are comparable, complete and consistent across schools
- Clarify the role of social workers in the pilot and find ways to secure their engagement and attendance. Ensure that training for social workers takes place
- Clarify expectations for secondary schools around the types of targeted support activities they are expected to deliver, including guidance on the ideal number of sessions/hours. This would be alongside meeting individual children's needs
- Increase capacity in the delivery team to take on administrative burden from school staff and to develop relationships with local social care teams.

INTRODUCTION

Project background

The *Transition Support Pilot*, developed by Hartlepool Borough Council (HBC), aims to support children during their transition from primary to secondary school. The pilot offered additional support to pupils subject to Child in Need (CiN) and Child Protection (CP) plans, and who therefore have a social worker.

The pilot was set up between September and December 2020. It ran from February 2021 (when participating children were in Year 5 or Year 6) and will continue delivery until November 2022 (when children who were in Year 5 at the start of the pilot are in Year 7). It was available across all 30 primary schools in HBC but only 21 primary schools had pupils subject to Child in Need or CP plans. All five secondary schools in HBC took part in the pilot.

Our mixed-method evaluation aimed to evaluate the early implementation of the *Transition Support Pilot* and to understand how it was implemented in practice; measure progress towards stated outcomes; and consider whether refinements are required ahead of potential scale-up and a larger trial to assess impact. The evaluation ran from January 2021 to March 2022. The quantitative element of the evaluation included 55 Year 6 pupils from 21 primary schools. The qualitative element included eight staff from four primary schools and five staff from two secondary schools; eight pupils in Year 7 from the same two secondary schools; two social workers; and two pilot leads.

Transition Support Pilot

Transition from primary to secondary school is a period of considerable change for all children. Primary schools are typically smaller and offer predictability, secondary schools are larger, with classes delivered by subject teachers and often requiring a new, longer commute to school. A difficult transition can have a negative impact on children's wellbeing and academic achievement (Mentally Healthy Schools, 2020).

Transitions for children with a social worker can be particularly difficult. For example, evidence shows that children on Child in Need plans are more likely than other children to experience complex family circumstances and to lack support outside of school and are more likely to have experienced past trauma or adversity (DfE, 2018b). They also typically experience frequent transitions between homes, caregivers and social workers that may compound the long-term impact of trauma or adversity (DfE, 2018a). This evidence suggests that transitions to secondary school may be particularly disruptive for children on Child in Need plans.

The challenges children with social workers face outside school may be barriers to their educational attainment. In 2018-19, only 35% of children on CP plans and 34% of those on Child in Need and other social care plans[2] achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 2, compared with 65% of their peers (DfE, 2020). Moreover, a re-analysis of randomised controlled trials funded by the Education Endowment Foundation found that the average effect sizes of school-based interventions were smaller for children with a social worker[3] compared to other children (Sanders et al., 2020).

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[2] Including family support (to help keep together families experiencing difficulties), leaving care support (to help young people who have left local authority care), adoption support or disabled children's services (including social care, education and health provision).
[3] Defined as Children in Need, Children subject to a Child Protection Plan, and Children Looked After.

The *Transition Support Pilot* was designed to offer additional transition support to children with a social worker in Hartlepool. It set out to provide the following activities:

- Appointment of Transition Leads in each participating primary and secondary school
- Whole-school and targeted training for schools delivered as one-off sessions for both primary and secondary school staff, and separate training for social workers
- The Transition Planning Profile Tool (TPPT), an administrative tool completed by primary school staff in Spring 2021 and secondary school staff in November 2021
- Person-Centred Planning (PCP) meetings delivered one to three times for each child. The first and second meetings were designed to take place in primary school with a final 'review' meeting in secondary school after transition. Participants included pupils and their carers/parents, primary and secondary school staff and social workers
- Interventions for children before and during transitions, including a *Smart Moves* resilience programme delivered in Year 6 and Year 7, and one-to-one therapeutic work and other personalised targeted support delivered at secondary schools
- Transition Passports for each child, developed by schools and the pilot delivery team to highlight key information about each child and help schools develop a whole-school approach to transitions.

Through these activities, the pilot sought to enable schools to better identify children's needs and plan personalised support accordingly to mitigate the risks of a difficult school transition. By facilitating improved secondary school transition, the pilot also aimed to improve the academic progress of children with a social worker in the longer-term.

The pilot included pupils identified as being Child in Need and those subject to a CP plan, who were in Year 5 and Year 6 at the start of the pilot. Pupils with SEND who would transition to specialist secondary provision were not included (as they already received targeted support around transition). In total, the pilot included 100 pupils in HBC: 55 pupils in Year 6 across 21 primary schools and 45 pupils in Year 5 across eleven primary schools. The delivery team was led by the Manager for Integrated Services for Learning and the Virtual Headteacher at HBC (referred to as pilot leads throughout this report), with support from a Specialist Teacher with the Virtual School. The pilot was designed in 2019 and was scheduled to start delivery in January 2021 but following a delay caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and partial school closures, it started in late February 2021 instead.

Pilot Context

Hartlepool is a town of ~93,000 people in the coastal North East of England. On 31 March 2021, there were 1,438 Children in Need[4] in Hartlepool, which is a rate of 715 per 10,000 children. This is significantly higher than the rate nationally (321) and in the North East (461). The figure has risen in Hartlepool since the COVID-19 pandemic while reducing nationally (a rate of 698 in Hartlepool on 31 March 2019, compared to 334 nationally). This overall figure included 245 children subject to a CP plan; a rate of 122 per 10,000 children – again higher than the national average (41) and the rate for the North East (67) (DfE, 2021).

A wider Transition Support Programme has been available to all Year 6 pupils in HBC since 2020. This wider programme included the TPPT and the *Smart Moves* resilience programme, but unlike the pilot did not include PCP meetings. NatCen's evaluation is of the *Transition Support Pilot*, while the wider Transition Support Programme is evaluated through Opportunity North East.

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[4] In national statistics, Children in Need includes children subject to Child in Need plans, CP plans as well as Looked After Children, young carers, and disabled children.

The pilot set up and delivery took place during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-21 amid partial school closures and lockdowns. Hartlepool had particularly high rates of COVID-19: on 21 April 2022, Hartlepool had recorded 35,758 cases per 100,000 people during the whole pandemic compared to 32,604 in England and 34,776 in the North East (UK Government, 2022). Overall, COVID-19 had a significant impact on pilot delivery and it is unlikely the pilot would have been delivered in the same way outside this context.

Pilot Evaluation

Our pilot evaluation took an implementation and process evaluation (IPE) approach. It aimed to understand how the pilot was implemented in practice and gather learnings to inform whether and how future larger scale rollout as part of an impact evaluation is possible. We adopted a mixed-methods approach for the IPE consisting of qualitative interviews, a pupil survey and analysis of administrative data. The evaluation cohort was comprised of children who were in Year 6, and who had a social worker due to being subject to Child in Need or CP plans. This was 55 children from 21 schools (reducing to 47 by the end of the evaluation period due to attrition). The qualitative element included eight staff from four primary schools and five staff from two secondary schools; eight pupils in Year 7 from two secondary schools; two social workers; and two pilot leads. The evaluation ran from January 2021 to March 2022.

NatCen evaluators and pilot leads co-produced a logic model during a virtual workshop on 7 January 2021 (see Appendix B).

METHODS

Research questions

The research questions we sought to answer were as follows:

Evidence of feasibility

- How is transition support implemented in practice, and what adaptations are made to delivery?
- What are the challenges and enablers to delivering the support as intended?
- What is the teacher and child reach and dosage?
- Is transition support acceptable to teachers and children? How engaged are teachers and children with the support provided?

Evidence of promise

- What changes, if any, are made to teacher practice and school support for transition as a result of the pilot?
- What is the change in children's attainment and social and emotional outcomes?
- Are there any adverse or unintended consequences?

Readiness for trial

- What changes, if any, are needed to the theory of change?
- Can transition support be delivered at scale?
- What changes are required to optimise delivery?
- Have suitable outcome measures been identified?

Research design

Our design aimed to understand how the pilot was implemented in practice and to gather learnings for the planning of a potential future impact evaluation across a larger number of sites. We adopted a mixed-methods approach, involving observations of training sessions and PCP meetings; interviews with teachers, social workers and children; a pupil survey; and analysis of administrative data (collected in the TPPT).

Protocol Registration and Ethical review

Ethical approval for this study was granted from NatCen's Research Ethics Committee (REC) in February 2021. The NatCen REC reviewed the study design to confirm compliance with internal ethical standards.

Care was taken to ensure that all participants were given opportunities to give explicit consent. Consent was treated as continuous: participants were able to opt out at any point before, during, and immediately after data collection, i.e. before analysis began. We reiterated to participants that they would not be identified in any outputs. Where participants would potentially be identifiable because of their specific role, we made this clear before and after the research encounter. NatCen researchers were briefed thoroughly before interviews and observations. This included information on safeguarding and disclosure procedures.

The final version of the protocol was published on Open Science Framework (OSF).[5] The NatCen team will update OSF and upload the report at the end of the project.

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[5] Available at [OSF | Pilot Evaluation of Transition Support](#).

Sample

Quantitative sample

Sample criteria

As evaluators we did not select the sample for the evaluation, but we ascertained the total number of children by their inclusion in the baseline TPPT. There were 55 pupils from 21 primary schools in the quantitative evaluation sample at the baseline.

The criteria for the sample was all Year 6 children identified as being subject to Child in Need or CP plans in HBC primary schools. In the protocol, we estimated that circa 100 children would meet these criteria. In fact, only 55 children did. This is because the original figure of 100 included Year 5 pupils who were also intended to receive the pilot activities. However, COVID-19 and limited school capacity meant that pilot leads excluded activities for Year 5 pupils from the pilot during the 2020-21 school year.

In addition, HBC carried out a separate parental opt-out process where parents/carers of children selected to take part in the pilot could refuse consent for their children to be part of NatCen's evaluation (though they would still be part of the pilot).

Attrition

There was some attrition during the evaluation period, as 7 of the 55 pupils in the initial sample were no longer eligible by the time of the endline data collection. The reasons for attrition included children with SEND transitioning to specialist secondary provision (meaning they did not take part in *Transition Support Pilot* activities) and children moving out of the HBC area. It is important to note that our sample still contained children with SEND as long as they transitioned to a mainstream secondary school and took part in *Transition Support Pilot* activities. Of the 48 pupils who were still eligible at the end of the evaluation period (and for whom we have pupil survey data), there was one parental opt-out for the TPPT data, meaning the number of pupils in the endline TPPT dataset is 47.

Qualitative sample and recruitment

Pilot leads selected a sub-sample of schools to take part in qualitative interviews made up of eight primary schools and two secondary schools. The selection was based on the pilot leads' knowledge of school capacity to take part in evaluation activities.

Pilot leads facilitated recruitment by sharing invitation emails with school staff and the social care team in HBC. Interested adult participants were asked to contact the NatCen research team to arrange an interview. School staff were additionally asked to select pupils to take part in interviews; ideally pupils of mixed abilities and those on both Child in Need and CP plans, but prioritising pupil welfare in the selection. School staff then shared information about the research with parents/carers alongside instructions on how to opt-out their child from the research (see Appendix A). We invited the two pilot leads directly to take part in an interview.

All participants, including pupils, received information sheets that briefly explained the study and what participation entailed. Information sheets for school staff, social workers and parents/carers also included a link to the privacy notice and NatCen's contact details.

Data Collection

Qualitative data

We carried out four virtual **observations** of training for schools in Spring 2021: one of the one-day training sessions for primary and secondary school staff, and three observations of the online training links. We observed three PCP meetings virtually, two in the Summer term and one in the Autumn term (i.e. a review meeting). The meetings were all with different children.

We carried out **interviews** remotely at two time points (Round 1 in Summer term 2021 and Round 2 in Autumn term 2021) to understand pilot implementation and early indicators of success (Table 2). Across the evaluation we spoke to:

- *Transition Support Pilot* leads: Manager for Integrated Services for Learning and Virtual School Lead, both based at Hartlepool Borough Council
- School staff involved in transition planning: eight staff from four primary schools and five staff from two secondary schools[6]
- Two social workers[7]
- Eight children in Year 7; four from each of the two secondary schools, sampled across Child in Need and CP groups, and reflecting a range of attainment levels.

Table 2: Qualitative interviews

Type of participant	Number interviewed Round 1	Number interviewed Round 2
Pilot leads	2	2
Primary school staff	8	-
Secondary school staff	3	4
Social Workers	2	1
Pupils	-	8

Pupil Survey

A pre- (baseline) and post- (endline) survey of all children in the Year 6-7 evaluation cohort was originally included in the evaluation design with the aim of measuring social and emotional outcomes and school engagement. However, the baseline survey was cancelled

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[6] We carried out a mix of paired and individual interviews in Rounds 1 and 2. Two secondary school staff participants were interviewed in both Round 1 and 2.
[7] We interviewed two social workers in Round 1, then carried out a Round 2 interview with one of them (attempts to secure a second Round 2 interview were unsuccessful).

due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, a pilot was carried out to test the administration of the survey and the data transfer processes.[8] Children in the evaluation cohort completed the endline pupil survey in October 2021 (n=48). The endline pupil survey was administered on paper and completed in school under the supervision of school staff. It took around 15 minutes to complete. NatCen gave HBC a unique password for each pupil so that pupils' survey responses could be linked with administrative data. The survey aimed to capture social and emotional outcomes and school engagement, including the following measures:

- The **Me and My Feelings (MMF) questionnaire** was used to provide an indicative measure of children's social and emotional outcomes[9]. The emotional and behavioural difficulties subscales of the MMF had the following cut-offs:
  - Emotional difficulty score: 0-9 'expected level of difficulty'; 10-11 'borderline difficulty'; 12-20 'elevated difficulty'
  - Behavioural difficulty score: 0-5 'expected level of difficulty'; 6 'borderline difficulty'; 7-12 'elevated difficulty'.
- The **Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (MLSS)** 'school' subscale was used to measure the children's feelings about and satisfaction with school.[10] The score ranges between 8 and 32, and the higher the score, the higher the child's school engagement is.

Administrative data

HBC developed the **Transition Planning Profile Tool** (TPPT) to collect and share information about the number of children involved in the pilot, demographic data, level of social care involvement and school indicators (e.g. attendance, attainment).

The TPPT also collected teachers' assessments of children's emotional development and behavioural difficulties. Further details of these measures are as follows:

- Teachers assessed the <u>emotional development</u> of pupils by assigning them to one of four categories. They were given guidance on the assessment including a description of emotional development and an example of common behaviours shown by pupils in each category[11]. The four categories were: emotional development typical for chronological age, low-level difficulties, disproportionate emotional response and extreme difficulties. In our analysis we grouped the last two together due to small cell sizes.

- Teachers also assessed the frequency of pupils displaying <u>internalising and externalising behaviours</u>. Internalising behaviours include becoming withdrawn or isolated and externalising behaviours include displaying challenging, disruptive, or disturbing behaviour. These assessments used categories that are in line with government guidelines (Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools, SEND Code of

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[8] The pilot pupil survey was administered in two primary schools with six pupils in total. We did not detect any problems that could affect the quality of the endline survey. The data could not be used for analysis due to the very small sample size.

[9] The measure consists of 16 items, typically takes under 10 minutes to complete, and is designed to be completed by children aged 8 and over (Deighton et al., 2013). The questionnaire items are available at: https://www.corc.uk.net/outcome-experience-measures/me-and-my-feelings-mmf/

[10] The subscale measure consists of 8 items. It typically takes under 5 minutes to complete and is designed to be completed by children and young people aged between 8-18 (Huebner, 2001).

[11] For example, the TPPT guidance has the following examples for 'low-level difficulties': Needs encouragement/reminders; Some difficulty identifying and expressing own feelings (underdeveloped self-awareness); low self-esteem.

Practice) and evidence-based measurement tools (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires [SDQ], Boxall Profile).

Most of the data was completed by school staff. However, the TPPT also included data collected (using a variety of methods) from pupils and parents/carers about their concerns about transition.[12] Pupils and their parents/carers were provided with four statements and asked to rate each statement based on a five-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. These statements are about possible concerns with settling in well at secondary school with their work, friends, teachers and to the new routine.[13] The responses to each statement were summed to create an overall measure which ranges between 4 and 20.[14] Resulting scores are referred to as 'pupil's views' and 'parent's views'. The higher the score, the more successful a transition to secondary school is expected/experienced.

The TPPT data was supplied for 55 children who satisfied the evaluation criteria (i.e. all Year 6 children in HBC subject to Child in Need or CP plans); Table 3 gives an overview of the quantitative sample in terms of background characteristics. 40 children were on Child in Need plans and 15 on CP plans. Of the 55 pupils, 30 were boys and 25 were girls. A majority received free school meals (FSM).[15] Lastly, none of the children had English as an additional language.

Table 3. Quantitative sample overview

Sample characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Boys	30	55%
Plan		
Child in Need	40	73%
CP	15	27%
Free School Meal		
Yes	40	73%
No	11	20%
English as an Additional Language		

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[12] School collected the data through paper questionnaires, online or telephone surveys, or during a PCP meeting. The dataset was anonymised and shared with NatCen at two timepoints, in July (for data from primary schools) and December 2021 (for data from secondary schools).

[13] Pupils were asked to rate the following four statements before the transition: I expect to settle in well at secondary school with 'my work', 'with friends', 'with teachers and other staff', and 'to the new routine'. Pupils were then asked to rate the same four statements after the transitions.

[14] The questions are adapted from the School Transition and Adjustment Research Study (STARS). Although teachers and parents/carers responded to these questions in the STAR, both pupils and parents/carers responded to them in the TPPT data. This constitutes the main difference between the questionnaires. More information on STARS can be found from the following link: School Transition and Adjustment Research Study (STARS) | UCL Psychology and Language Sciences

[15] The information on FSM status was missing for four children, which constitutes 7% of our sample.

		Yes	0	0%
		No	55	100%

Base: 55 pupils. Source: TPPT data

Data management and processing

Interviews were digitally audio-recorded with permission from participants and professionally transcribed. We used Framework in Excel to facilitate thematic analysis of qualitative data (see below). Interviews were pseudonymised for analysis.

We used Stata 17 to manage the survey and administrative data.

Analysis

We used Framework in Excel to facilitate the thematic analysis of qualitative data. The Framework approach allows the data to be ordered systematically, and ensures the analysis is grounded in participants' accounts.

We used Stata 17 to analyse the pupil survey data and administrative data (in the TPPT). We conducted descriptive analysis using the administrative data to establish how many pupils completed the pilot and to identify any cohort-level changes in key outcome variables (e.g. academic attainment, attendance) over the pilot period (to measure direction of travel).[16] Pupil survey responses were used to calculate emotional difficulties, behavioural difficulties, and school engagement scores.[17] As the baseline data collection of the pupil surveys could not be completed, we could only create measures from the endline pupil survey, meaning we were unable to conduct null hypothesis significance tests.

The sample size for the quantitative analysis is small (n=55 at baseline, n=48 at endline, with smaller bases for individual measures). This means that the results need to be treated with caution and that sub-group analysis was not possible. It should also be noted that this is a pilot evaluation rather than a full efficacy trial with a comparison group. Therefore, we cannot establish the counterfactual, or 'what would have happened otherwise'. This would have allowed us to attribute changes in these outcomes over the evaluation period to the pilot itself. In summary, quantitative results are discussed below for transparency, but they should be treated with caution due to the small sample size, and no conclusion should be drawn from them about causal impact.

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[16] For individual-level numerical data (e.g. attendance), we calculated means at baseline and endline to compare them descriptively. Where we received ordinal data (e.g. academic attainment), we produced frequencies comparing baseline and endline data. The base for descriptive statistics varies between questions due to instances of item non-response. For comparing these measures descriptively, we only included pupils whose items were not missing at both baseline and endline.
[17] For missing item(s), we followed an independent process for each measure (see the study protocol at OSF | Pilot Evaluation of Transition Support). The following links include further details on scoring survey item responses: school engagement and emotional and behavioural difficulties.

FINDINGS

Evidence of feasibility

RQ: How is the pilot implemented in practice, and what adaptations are made to delivery?

Pilot implementation

Pre-delivery and continuous support

In interviews, school staff said that the pilot delivery team asked headteachers from participating schools to identify Transition Leads so that one person would be in charge of coordinating the pilot. They also appointed Designated Leads to support them in each school. Primary and secondary school staff reported that different types of staff members acted as Transition Leads, depending on staff capacity, skillset, and area of responsibility. These included Year 6 teacher, SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator), Deputy Headteacher, secondary school Inclusion Lead, and Head of Year 7.

Pilot leads, who developed the pilot and coordinated delivery across participating schools in Hartlepool, said in interviews that they offered continuous support to primary and secondary schools in pilot delivery. This involved half-termly transition network meetings with the Transition Leads and Designated Leads (i.e. nominated school staff who delivered pilot activities in their school), as well as support offered via email and telephone.

Training for schools and social workers

According to the logic model[18], the pilot includes whole-school training and targeted teacher training. We observed two types of training for schools: 1) a full-day online training on the person-centred planning (PCP) approach in February 2021 and 2) online training materials that were sent to schools in Spring 2021.

- **PCP training.** We observed that the full-day online training to schools offered an introduction to the person-centred approach and its benefits and included examples of how the PCP meetings should be run. Attendees were Transition Leads and their Designated Leads in participating primary and secondary schools. We observed that the training used a good mix of delivery methods and included lots of examples to keep the theory section interesting.

- **Online training links.** Pilot leads also sent Transition Leads and their designated teams online training materials. We observed that topics included: how to make children feel safe, Trusted Adult Principles, emotion-coaching, and Dan Siegel's Upstairs/Downstairs Brain theory to explain emotion or physiological elements of behaviour. They were also given guidance on how to fill in Transition Passports, which included the parent/carer, pupil and teacher's perspective of the pupil. Primary school staff also mentioned that pre-recorded training links were provided to them for the *Smart Moves* resilience programme offered to children in Year 6.

According to the logic model, social workers were also meant to receive training ahead of delivery. However, the two social workers we interviewed stated that they did not receive any training before the PCP meetings and that according to one view, they were uninformed of

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[18] This was developed in collaboration between NatCen and HBC (see Appendix B).

what was expected of them or what the plan was in the PCP meetings. In contrast, pilot leads reported that social workers received video training along with a follow-up meeting that covered the different pilot elements. It was therefore not clear from the interview data whether social workers received any training or not.

Transition Profile Planning Tool (TPPT)

According to the logic model, the pilot included completion and monitoring of the TPPT designed to help schools identify and prioritise vulnerable children as they transition from primary to secondary school. As evaluators, we received the TPPT data for pilot cohort pupils, and observed that it was completed by all pilot schools, though there was some missing data for individual pupils or measures (see 'Reach and dosage' section).

In interviews, primary school staff reported that a number of staff members filled in the TPPT. For example, Parent Support Advisers completed the social care details, teachers completed academic and behavioural information, and the SENCO completed the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) part of the TPPT.

> *"The best knowledgeable people in different areas were all involved in the [Transition Planning Profile] Tool".* **Primary school staff member**

Once they had received the TPPT data from primary schools, secondary school staff described using it as a starting point to understand pupil needs and matching pupils with the right support (e.g. tutors, extra support from the school nurse, a safeguarding lead). They also used the data to gauge the number of pupils who might benefit from activities, like summer schools.

Secondary school staff were aware during Round 1 interviews that they were expected to provide an update to the TPPT in Round 2. Our Round 2 interviews took place prior to the update so we could not ask about the process from their point of view.

Person-centred planning (PCP) meetings

In the logic model and protocol, PCP meetings are described as meetings intended to facilitate discussion about individualised transition plans and responses based on pupil's needs and vulnerabilities. While initial PCP meetings took place while children were in Year 6 (organised by primary staff), PCP review meetings were to be held in Round 2 (in the Autumn term, organised by secondary staff) once the children were at secondary school. Between one and three PCP meetings were planned for each pupil.

Attendance

In interviews, primary school staff reported that the PCP meetings could include a range of people, including: Transition Leads, other staff from both primary and secondary schools, parent/carer, child, educational psychologist, speech and language therapist, social worker, SENCO, and, in some cases, the child's friend.

Secondary school staff said that attendance varied greatly depending on which primary school the pupil attended. They expressed that it becomes challenging to gather all the threads of a pupil's transition if intended attendees are missing from the PCP meetings or do not engage effectively with them. Key information was lost in this scenario.

Primary and secondary school staff discussed how social workers' attendance was particularly inconsistent. One apparent reason was that some pupils no longer had a social

worker by the time the meeting happened. Another was that social workers experienced last minute social care emergencies that made it harder for them to attend the PCP meetings. Social workers who took part in evaluation interviews had taken part in a small number of PCP meetings (between one and three) and did not indicate that they had cancelled any meetings.

A less common perception among school staff was that parents/carers also did not always attend PCP meetings. It was not clear from interview data whether attendance was similar across virtual and face-to-face PCP meetings. Absences even occurred when meetings were arranged to fit their schedules. Interviewees were not able to provide a reason why parental attendance was inconsistent. We did not hear of cases of pupils not attending.

In addition, secondary school staff did not always attend PCP meetings. A key reason was that secondary schools had a very high number of PCP meetings to attend and faced time constraints. Primary school staff expressed that they felt 'frustrated' and 'disheartened' by this as they had put effort into organising the PCP meetings. In their view, it was important for primary and secondary schools to be 'on the same page' about the PCP meetings.

Implementation

We observed that the meetings were between 30-45 minutes long rather than the 60-90 minutes cited by pilot leads in the protocol. The meetings aimed to help the pupil 'map' their lives as it pertained to school on a large piece of paper. This included information about their home life as well as what they like or dislike about school. The pupils were also asked to discuss what their 'perfect' and 'nightmare' day at secondary school would look like. Once the pupil had presented their nightmare, secondary school staff discussed what they could do to help prevent that nightmare day from happening.

In interviews, primary school staff discussed that they aimed to make the PCP meetings child-centred. For example, they wanted the adult attendees of the PCP meeting to contribute by asking questions of the pupil rather than each other. They reported that creating an informal environment in the PCP meetings helped bring out the pupil and parent or carer voice. The perceived benefit of this approach was that it made the pupils, as well as parents/carers, feel more relaxed and therefore open up about worries or concerns that they otherwise might not have shared. Examples of how this was achieved included:

- Setting up the meeting so that everyone sat in a circle
- Having snacks available
- One member of staff sitting on the floor with the child to draw the PCP map
- Making jokes and approaching the conversation in a generally informal way.

PCP review meetings

The logic model states that pupils should receive one to three PCP meetings. In interviews, secondary school staff confirmed that a second round of PCP 'review' meetings took place in the Autumn term. However, secondary school staff made some adjustments to the PCP review meetings to make their delivery more feasible, including not offering them to all pupils in the pilot (see 'Adaptations' section). In addition, secondary school staff reported that parents/carers and social workers often did not attend the PCP review meetings, despite an invitation to do so, and that it had been difficult and time-consuming to engage these participants. Primary school staff were also not always invited or able to attend.

Targeted pupil support

In the logic model, targeted support is described as activities such as resilience programmes, one-on-one therapeutic interventions and Transition Passports. In interviews, pilot leads defined it as the 'actions afterwards' following discussions in PCP meetings.

Interviews with secondary school staff revealed that targeted support activities varied from school to school. At least one reason they gave was that pilot leads had not been sufficiently clear on what was expected. Another possible reason was that the pilot intention was for schools to at least partly use their existing provision (e.g. if a school already had counselling support, this could be offered as part of targeted support). Secondary school staff, pilot leads and pupils discussed the following activities taking place in the Autumn term:

- **Resilience programmes**. This includes *Smart Moves*[19], a programme carried out in all secondary schools (it was also used by primary schools with Year 6 pupils). It is a programme that aims to develop resilience skills in young people during their transitions to secondary school. It is made up of short sessions. In Hartlepool, all Year 6 pupils received the programme and it was delivered as a whole-class activity. In Year 7, only pupils who were part of the pilot took part in small groups. According to secondary school staff, the programme aimed to initiate conversations about what to expect from secondary schools. Staff had received training on how to deliver it.

- **Therapeutic interventions.** Secondary school staff reported counselling provision for anger and emotional issues. Pilot leads said that such therapeutic interventions were part of targeted support and that they planned for social workers to be involved in this. However, we did not capture examples of social worker involvement in planning therapeutic interventions or other types of targeted support.

- **Buddy systems.** In some instances, secondary schools devised their own buddy systems among the pupils. For example, in one school Year 7 pupils were buddied up for peer mentoring with Year 11 students. Secondary school staff also reported plans to buddy up pupils as pen pals.

- **Summer school.** According to the logic model, this was not one of the planned targeted support activities of the pilot. However, secondary school staff reported that they used the TPPT to identify pilot cohort pupils for inclusion in secondary schools' summer school programmes. Primary school staff also said that secondary school visits were identified as a follow-up action for children at PCP meetings.

- **Individualised support.** Primary school staff and social workers mentioned a number of more tailored actions arising from discussion at PCP meetings, including help with organising books for school the next day, and a 'time-out card' to use in lessons if needed.

Transition Passports

Transition Passports were designed to be additional documents to support information sharing on child needs between primary and secondary schools. According to the online training video (see 'Training for schools and social workers' section), the intention was for a

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[19] *Smart Moves* is based on the 'Resilience Framework' by Professor Angie Hart and collaborators at the University of Brighton and Boingboing; and 'The Resilient Classroom Resource Pack' written by Sam Taylor, Angie Park and Hove Park School.

primary school staff member to complete Passports for children who scored 'moderate' or 'high' in the RAG-rating of the TPPT. The Passports were intended to cover pupils' personal, social and attainment goals for Year 7 and include the pupil and parent/carer voice where possible.

Pilot leads said in the Round 1 interview (April 2021) that Transition Passports would not be delivered due to limited school capacity resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviews with primary school staff included references to this type of documentation for at least some children, though the data is not clear on the details. Due to the evidence given by the pilot leads, we have not evaluated their delivery in this report.

Adaptations

In interviews, pilot leads said that all training moved from in-person to remote due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This included the whole-school training (changed from in-person to remote) and targeted teacher training (changed to be online video links instead). In addition, the content of the online training videos was made more bite-sized and accessible for school staff who pilot leads knew had less capacity. In interviews, school staff did not comment on the online delivery mode being more or less successful than the expected in-person delivery.

Primary and secondary school staff did not report making adaptations to the TPPT. However, in both cases they reported making changes to the PCP meetings and review meetings. These included:

- **Additional meetings.** A view among both primary and secondary school staff was that some sensitive information or background information could not be covered in PCP meetings when the child or parent/carer was present. This meant that extra meetings had to be arranged in order to understand the full picture, with implications for time and workload. One view from primary school staff was that in order to discuss issues without the child present, they found it helpful to start the PCP meeting without the child, or continue the discussion at the end, after the child left.

- **Curtailed review meetings.** Secondary school staff discussed reducing the scope of the review meetings due to pressures on their time and capacity. For example, conducting shorter meetings or only arranging them for selected pupils who they assessed to have the highest needs for transition support. In the view of these staff members, other pupils were settling in well and did not require PCP review meetings.

- **Virtual meetings.** One adaptation by primary school staff was to conduct PCP meetings online due to COVID-19 restrictions. They mentioned that the virtual approach hampered interaction among attendees. Secondary school staff also reported that virtual meetings had a more formal feel than the in-person meetings, and that, in their view, this made it harder for pupils to relax during the meeting.

- **Shorter meetings.** Primary school staff mentioned that PCP meetings were adjusted when they felt that the pupils would be better suited to shorter meetings. For example, the PCP meeting was limited to 15 minutes for a pupil with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD/C).

Enablers and Challenges

RQ: What are the challenges and enablers to delivering the support as intended?

Key enablers to strategic and operational delivery

In interviews, pilot leads and school staff discussed the following factors enabling delivery:

- **Local need.** Pilot leads expressed that there was an existing need for better transition support in Hartlepool, and that this helped them to achieve school buy-in for the pilot right from its initiation. Primary and secondary school staff explained that children's social care needs are high in Hartlepool. They also perceived that transitions were not done well in Hartlepool pre-pilot, and that there was a shared understanding among schools that it needed addressing.

- **School staff engagement.** Interviews with primary and secondary school staff showed that their level of engagement was generally good, despite challenges caused by COVID-19 on workload and capacity. This potentially speaks to the fact that school buy-in to the pilot was strong. Positive engagement from school staff helped the delivery of key pilot activities, like the TPPT and the PCP meetings, as responsibility for administering and leading activities largely depended on them.

- **Pupil engagement.** Primary school staff found that pupils on the whole engaged very well with the PCP meetings. Social workers and secondary school staff also reported that the pupil-centric nature of the PCP meetings was effective in getting pupils to feel at ease and share their anxieties.

- **Ease of use of the TPPT.** Both primary and secondary school staff reported that the TPPT was easy to use. The Tool was easy for school staff to navigate and the information was easy to understand at a glance. However, school staff also reported challenges with the Tool not being filled in consistently (see 'Transition Planning Profile Tool' section).

Key challenges to strategic and operational delivery

In interviews, pilot leads and school staff discussed the following factors making the delivery of the pilot challenging:

- **Number of PCP meetings.** Secondary school staff reported that the number of PCP meetings was not sustainable for them to attend. In addition, one view from primary school participants was that it was hard to fit in all the meetings. While primary schools had to typically hold PCP meetings for a handful of pupils, the number was multiplied for secondary schools. Pilot leads recognised that this was a challenge for secondary schools and noted that the number of children in social care in Hartlepool was high. The number of meetings placed a significant burden on secondary school time and workload and affected their ability to attend PCP meetings.

  "We managed it as a team, but it took a lot of sacrificing of what we maybe had to do elsewhere. I don't think it is sustainable really." **Secondary school staff member**

- **COVID-19.** Secondary school staff reported that they were time-pressured due to the pandemic and this made delivery challenging. Primary school staff similarly reported that COVID-19-related staff shortages and reduced capacity made it harder to schedule PCP meetings. Pilot leads also noted that school capacity to deliver the pilot as recommended had been reduced due to COVID-19-related time pressures.

- **Additional support needs.** Pilot leads reported that the amount of support schools needed to deliver the pilot was higher than they had anticipated. They had planned for schools to have more responsibility over delivery, particularly the PCP meetings that they envisaged operating on a 'see one, do one, teach one' basis. However, in reality, schools needed more guidance and active support from the delivery team than this. They observed that this was likely due to COVID-19 and the higher workload that school staff faced during the delivery period.

- **Information sharing and consent.** Secondary school staff mentioned that parents/carers or school trusts within Hartlepool were not always willing to give GDPR consent for their children's details to be shared in the pilot. Pilot leads similarly said that GDPR consent issues slowed down the process of filling in the TPPT. A perception among secondary school staff was that because of these delays, primary schools shared the TPPT with them later than intended. This made it harder for secondary schools to arrange for adequate support for the pupils. In addition, pilot leads discussed how it was an administrative challenge for schools to keep track of which parents/carers had consented and which had not.

Reach and dosage

RQ: What is the school staff and child reach and dosage?

This section discusses the perceptions of interview participants on reach and dosage. It was not within the scope of this evaluation to collect quantitative data on these areas.

- **Training.** The logic model does not include details on the expected number of sessions or timing, so we cannot evaluate whether these elements were in keeping with expectations. We observed that the PCP training for schools had good attendance and interviews with primary and secondary school staff confirmed that schools had received the training materials. We also do not know how many school staff accessed the training links online. In addition, pilot leads mentioned that primary and secondary school staff did not always access training links. This was because the timing of when these were shared with schools coincided with a challenging time for schools in terms of the COVID-19 pandemic (Spring 2021). As discussed earlier, it was unclear if the training reached social workers as planned.

- **TPPT.** As evaluators, we received the TPPT data for analysis and observed that it was completed by all the schools in the Summer term for all Year 6 pupils, although not all measures had been completed for all pupils. For example, attainment measures were not always filled in if children had been out of school due to COVID-19-related factors, like lockdowns and self-isolation. In the Autumn term, the TPPT update included all pupils in the evaluation cohort who were still eligible, and where the parent had not opted out of sharing data (n=47), but some measures had missing data, and also some incorrect data (see 'Limitations' section).

- **PCP meetings and review meetings.** We did not collect data on how many meetings pupils received, and therefore cannot compare it to the intended reach and dosage (one to three PCP meetings for all pupils, as stated in the logic model). However, interview data suggests that PCP meetings took place for all children as planned but that pupils received different doses of the activity depending on school capacity. For example, attendance of different people varied and so did the mode of

delivery (virtual and in-person). In some cases, PCP review meetings were also kept short or they only targeted selected pupils assessed to have higher needs.

- **Targeted support.** The logic model does not specify the intended reach and dosage for targeted support. We also did not collect data on how many pupils received any targeted support activities, or each type of activity. Interviews with school staff showed that these activities varied greatly from school to school. This makes it challenging to evaluate achieved reach and dosage, but it does appear that pupils did not receive the same set of activities across different secondary schools. In interviews, secondary staff said that pupil attendance in the various activities had been positive. This is because the activities were organised during the school day.

Acceptability of support

RQ: Is Transition Support acceptable to school staff and children? How engaged are school staff and children with the support provided?

Views on teacher/school staff training

In interviews, primary school staff generally reported that training met their needs and was enjoyable. However, one view among primary school staff was that one day of training was not enough to cover what was needed to effectively chair and facilitate a PCP meeting.

> *"The ebb and flow that the main trainer demonstrated I think would be hard to replicate just after that very brief training session."* **Primary school staff member**

A contrasting view among primary as well as secondary school staff was that the one-day training was too lengthy and could have been made shorter. The rationale for this was that they found the training self-explanatory and familiar.

Another notion held by secondary school staff was that the training was not applicable to them as they did not lead the PCP meetings. Therefore, they did not see a need to attend it.

Views on the TPPT

In interviews, both primary and secondary school staff held positive views about the usability of the TPPT. Primary school staff described it as a comprehensive tool that collates all the required information in one place. Secondary school staff explained that the TPPT made it easy to filter pupils based on factors like prior attendance and SEND status. Having this pupil level information was a useful starting point and helped put in place the right support.

> *"It's helpful because we look at how we can prevent things from happening, rather than just reacting.*" **Secondary school staff member**

While secondary school staff overall liked the TPPT, they raised two issues with how primary schools use it. Firstly, they pointed out that staff members in primary schools can have different ways of ascribing numerical values to subjective assessments. For example, someone may find certain behaviour challenging and give it a high score on the TPPT, while another person may not. Secondly, they suggested that sometimes pupils may be identified as having certain behaviours in primary school that do not carry on in secondary school. These factors made it harder for secondary schools to take the TPPT data at face value.

Views on PCP meetings

In interviews, primary school staff reported liking the PCP meetings. They explained their rationale in the following ways:

- **Pupil-centric transitions.** PCP meetings made the transition process more pupil-centric. This element had been missed before in the transition process.

- **Good forum for discussion.** PCP meetings were a good way to address the anxieties that pupils and parents/carers had about transitions. In particular, the mapping exercise helped pupils understand what to expect from secondary school.

- **Meeting secondary school staff.** It was beneficial for both children and secondary school staff to meet before the start of term and begin building a relationship.

Secondary school staff agreed that it was helpful for pupils to meet staff and have them address any concerns before transitioning. They perceived that this would make pupils less anxious. They also noted that the pupil-centric approach to the meetings meant they got a fuller picture of the child than they would have got from the TPPT data alone.

However, secondary school staff overall had a more negative view of PCP meetings compared with primary school staff. They gave a range of reasons for this:

- **Too many meetings.** As already discussed under 'Key challenges to strategic and operational delivery', the high number of meetings secondary schools were required to attend had considerable implications for their workload and capacity.

- **Sharing sensitive information.** As discussed under 'Adaptations', secondary school staff perceived that there was a limit to the information they could receive in PCP meetings. For example, it was not always appropriate to discuss sensitive information about the child's background with them present. Also, they perceived that the presence of social workers may have made parents/carers withhold information. They perceived that meetings just among staff members would be more efficient.

- **Lack of right focus.** The focus of the discussion was not always useful for secondary school transition planning. For example, the emphasis on pupils' 'perfect' and 'nightmare' day often veered the discussion away from practical things that as a school they could implement. In some cases, primary school staff also brought up strategies that they perceived were not feasible or appropriate in a secondary school environment (e.g. setting up a tent for a pupil for when the pupil felt anxious).

- **Duplicating information.** For those pupils with SEND, the PCP meetings duplicated information from EHCP meetings (which were more detailed) and did not significantly add to the understanding of pupil needs for secondary staff. They therefore questioned the need to include pupils with an EHCP in the PCP meetings.

Views on PCP review meetings

There was a range of different views around PCP review meetings among secondary school staff in their Round 2 interviews (we did not interview primary school staff in Round 2). One view was that they were a useful way to summarise information and take stock of how transitions had gone so far, and what could be done differently. Secondary school staff also

found the review meetings less time-consuming than the initial PCP meetings as they took place at their own school. This saved time spent travelling to different primary schools.

A contrasting view among secondary school staff was that COVID-19 made it challenging for them to find time to organise PCP review meetings. This led to several different adaptations, as discussed in detail under the section 'Adaptations'.

Views on targeted pupil support

At the time of the interviews (November 2021), some targeted support activities had only just started and secondary school staff could only offer limited reflections on them. In addition, their role meant that they were not always closely associated with the delivery of these activities in their school. With these limitations in mind, secondary school staff held positive views of the delivery and reported that pupils enjoyed the activities.

A key targeted support activity that was common to all secondary schools was the *Smart Moves* programme. Secondary school staff reported that pupils had responded well to it. One reason for this was that *Smart Moves* in Year 7 was conducted in small groups. (In Year 6 it was delivered for all pupils as a whole-class activity.) Secondary school staff perceived that working in small groups made it easier for pupils to make friends and feel welcome in the new school. This was also beneficial as it helped formulate emotional and social skills.

Another view among secondary school staff was that the *Smart Moves* programme might only prove effective for the current Year 6 to Year 7 cohort. In their view, different cohorts have varying social/emotional needs, and it is important to adapt activities to meet the changing needs of new cohorts. While not directly stated, we can interpret that the secondary school staff consider this cohort to have higher social and emotional needs as they transitioned to secondary school during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Responsiveness

RQ: Is Transition Support acceptable to school staff and children? How engaged are school staff and children to the support provided?

School staff engagement

Interviews with primary school staff as well as secondary school staff showed that they had engaged well with the TPPT, and that its ease of use was a key reason for this.

In terms of PCP meetings, we observed that primary school staff led the meetings and secondary school staff mainly listened but also contributed at points to directly address queries or concerns from parents/carer or pupils. Other interview participants also perceived the same dynamic. The view from social workers and secondary school participants was that primary schools took the lead in PCP meetings. This made sense to them, since they were tasked with chairing the meetings and they also knew the children the best. Primary school staff themselves reported feeling enthusiastic about taking part in discussions.

Secondary school staff reported that PCP review meetings did not always take place and when they did, they were shorter and primary school staff were not always invited. These factors meant that they were not able to fully assess engagement in these meetings.

Pupil engagement

In interviews, primary and secondary school staff reported that pupils on the whole engaged well with the PCP meetings. Primary school staff noted that pupils were not used to reflecting on themselves, especially in front of unfamiliar adults. This could sometimes make them shy or not act like themselves in the meeting. But once they had 'warmed up', primary school staff reported being impressed by the children's maturity and ability to talk about themselves. In their view, the format of the meetings helped make pupils feel at ease.

> *"From a pupil perspective, by and large, they've interacted really well. A little bit apprehensive at first, naturally, but I think because of the nature of the way we've run them, they've then really opened up and been quite talkative."* **Primary school staff member**

In addition to the format of the meetings, primary schools investing time ahead of meetings to prepare the pupil was seen as key to helping pupils feel at ease. One view among secondary schools and social workers was that primary schools did not consistently do enough to prepare pupils. Pilot leads as well as social workers reported that more preparation beforehand could help pupils feel less overwhelmed and engage better.

We interviewed pupils for the evaluation. However, due to the timing of the interviews they found it difficult to recall details of the PCP meetings (see 'Limitations' section). With regard to the review meetings, one view among pupils was that they felt confused about why they had been taken out of class. This indicates that the purpose of the meeting was not clear to them. Secondary school staff also found that pupils were sometimes uncomfortable and unsure of what to say in the review meetings.

Parent/carer engagement

As discussed earlier (see 'Pilot implementation' section), parental attendance in PCP meetings was inconsistent. When they did attend, primary school staff perceived that parents/carers were generally engaged and made helpful contributions to the discussion around their child's needs. They perceived that the relaxed environment in the meetings enabled engagement. However, according to another view parents/carers could also be difficult to engage in discussion. Primary school staff reflected that the presence of social workers could be one reason for this; parents/carers may not have felt comfortable sharing the information.

However, there was a common view among school staff and social workers that PCP meetings worked best when they were focused on the pupils, rather than the parents/carers' voice. One view among primary school staff was that parents/carers sometimes dominated the conversation and spoke over or made critical comments about the child when staff tried to keep the mood positive. An additional view from secondary staff was that parents/carers were sometimes vocal about their demands from the secondary school and this took away from the child-centred nature of the meetings and hindered child engagement.

Parent/carer attendance in PCP review meetings was lower. Secondary school staff reported that engagement still proved helpful, but it was not as easy to get parents/carers to attend the review meetings. They reported that in some cases parents/carers had said that they 'forgot' to attend the meeting even when they had been arranged around their schedule.

Social worker engagement

In interviews, social workers reflected that they did not feel a part of the pilot. One reason was that they had not been given enough information about what was expected of them in terms of contributing to PCP meetings. After the meetings, they also did not receive updates about pupils from secondary schools. This was despite the fact that, according to the logic model, social workers were intended to work with secondary staff to plan targeted support.

In addition, both primary and secondary school staff said social worker engagement with the wider pilot was limited. Social workers did not always attend the PCP meetings. They also perceived that social workers did not engage in the meetings as much as they had hoped.

> *"They attended the meeting and they contributed minimally, but if I didn't know they were a social worker I wouldn't have a clue they were…. Maybe the fact that they were there as a familiar face in showing the child that they were there, I think that probably contributed to something, but in terms of giving us further insight and further knowledge, I didn't get any."*
> **Primary school staff member**

This sentiment was reflected in the views of social workers themselves who said that they did not always feel able to contribute in PCP meetings.

> *"I feel like I did contribute, but there were a lot of other people there, so if I wasn't there, it wouldn't be like, someone's missing."* **Social worker**

However, social workers were also able to cite occasions where they viewed themselves as an important part of the meeting. This was specifically in relation to helping the child feel at ease and find their voice in the meeting by offering suggestions.

Evidence of promise

The following section explores early indications that the pilot is making progress towards its intended aims. This covers key outcomes listed in the logic model including information sharing, knowledge and skills of school staff, ways of working between schools, social workers and families, and children's outcomes in terms of attendance, attainment, social and emotional outcomes and experience of transition.

Outcomes for school staff

RQ: What changes, if any, are made to school staff practice and school support for transition as a result of the pilot?

Information sharing

Before the pilot

In interviews, primary and secondary school staff described how information sharing before the pilot lacked detail. For example, schools had shared attainment details but omitted information about wider child needs. In addition, there was no single document that tied together all the relevant information. Instead, information sharing had taken the form of an informal chat or email exchange. In addition, primary school staff said that information was usually shared for those pupils with SEND, and not children with social workers.

In some cases, primary and secondary school staff reported that they had held meetings with a similar function to the PCP meetings. However, these had typically focussed on many

children at a time and might have only covered one aspect of a child's needs (e.g. SEND) as opposed to all relevant contextual information, like in PCP meetings. They said the format for these meetings lacked clear expectations for what was supposed to be shared. In contrast to PCP meetings, these meetings had also not included parents/carers or children.

Primary school staff described parents/carers feeling unsupported by the old system. In some cases, parents/carers would come back to the primaries for information that secondaries had either not received or taken account of. This breakdown in communication had knock on effects for example, exclusions, as children's needs went unaddressed in Year 7.

> *"Things weren't getting passed on, messages weren't being very clearly translated between both sets of people. Parents felt very unsupported."*
> **Primary school staff member**

Changes since the pilot – TPPT

According to both secondary and primary school staff, information sharing had been much more comprehensive during the pilot. The TPPT included a wider range of data than before, including Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), attendance, punctuality, family information, behaviour and behavioural triggers, and causes of anxiety. This was seen as valuable in giving secondary schools a more complete picture of the child.

> *"The ability to share that, just to share that whole picture of a child, it's not just a set of SATs results, which has pretty much been what we did before."* **Primary school staff member**

Secondary school staff found the format of the TPPT – one unified document with many data points – more digestible than what they had previously received from primary school staff. The format meant they could understand each pupil's needs 'at-a-glance', leading to faster decision-making on how best to support them in Year 7. For example, any pupil who had had attendance issues at primary school could be flagged with the Attendance Officer from the beginning of the school year.

Changes since the pilot – PCP meetings

In interviews, primary school staff described the pilot offering children with social care needs an additional layer of support. This was unlike the situation before the pilot, where information sharing about child needs had typically focused on children with SEND.

Secondary school staff said PCP meetings enabled them to gain a better understanding of child needs. In one case, a school mentioned a child who had appeared happy, to the extent they wondered why they needed transition support, but suddenly began exhibiting problematic behaviour. As a result of the PCP meeting, they were aware that this was a pattern in the child's behaviour and were ready to put appropriate support in place quickly.

> *"Now, the parents were invited in very quickly because we had a PCP meeting ... Whereas if we didn't have that ... We might have thought, well, it's a one-off."* **Secondary school staff member**

However, secondary school staff were overall more likely than primary school staff to question the effectiveness of information sharing in PCP meetings, particularly as attending them took up a lot of time. The different reasons are discussed in detail under 'Views on PCP meetings'; they include: presence of parents/carers and children being a barrier to

sharing sensitive information about pupils; discussions lacking the right focus to aid their planning; and meetings replicating existing processes (i.e. EHCP meetings for SEND pupils).

This perception about PCP meetings and information sharing among secondary school staff was reflected in concerns raised by the pilot leads. In interviews, they reflected that in future, the straightforward TPPT would be favoured as it could improve transition without the need for additional meetings and workload. However, they worried that the relationship-building, child-centred side of PCP meetings might be overlooked in this scenario.

One view from interviews with secondary school staff was that the opposing views about the PCP meetings reflected the different needs and priorities of the two types of schools.

> *"We've struggled with the PCP meetings because we don't think that we get an awful lot from that, but the primary schools really value those meetings. I just think it's just the difference between primary and secondary schools."* **Secondary school staff member**

Knowledge and skills of school staff to support transitions

In interviews, staff across primary and secondary schools were ambivalent on whether they had gained specific new skills and knowledge to support transition. Both sets of staff considered the one-day PCP training more of an introduction to the approach rather than something that improved their skills. One view among primary school staff was that the training was not focused enough on how to chair the meetings, while another view among secondary school staff was that the training seemed more relevant to primary school staff. Neither group commented on having gained additional knowledge and skills from the online training links. Pilot leads reflected that it was hard to judge the 'cut-through' of the training when delivering remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ways of working between schools and families

In interviews, primary and secondary school staff remarked that a chief issue the PCP meetings helped address was the anxiety parents/carers and children had felt in relation to transitions. Primary school staff, in particular, were pleased to see the relationship between parents/carers and secondary staff getting started at this early stage.

> *"Rather than me just explaining 'mum needs support with behaviour', [she] has her own anxieties, things like that, they've [secondary school staff] actually seen it."* **Primary school staff member**

Secondary school staff were optimistic that PCP meetings had started a relationship with parents/carers that would enable a good working relationship with school staff to support the child, though it was too early for them to comment on whether this had happened yet.

However, there was some evidence of barriers to improved working between schools and families. Firstly, while we did not interview parents/carers as part of the evaluation, social worker testimony mentioned a case where a parent/carer said that the support promised by the secondary school had not been put in place, and also that decisions were being made without her knowledge. Secondly, secondary school staff noted that relationships with families were compromised in some meetings because parents/carers had not attended.

Multi-agency working between schools and social care teams

In interviews, social workers and primary and secondary school staff did not report much change to their working relationship. Social workers said they had not been involved in any follow-up meetings to plan the support between primary and secondary school staff. This was corroborated by school staff, who had not seen much change to their relationship with social care teams. These limited outcomes in terms of relationships with social workers are likely due to the perceived minimal attendance and engagement of social workers in PCP meetings (see 'Evidence of feasibility' section).

Outcomes for children

RQ: What is the change in children's attainment and social and emotional outcomes?

Note on the quantitative data

This section of the report draws on the qualitative interviews and the quantitative data from the pupil survey and the TPPT. As discussed in the Methods chapter, the quantitative findings need to be treated with caution due to the small sample size and the lack of a baseline pupil survey.[20] There are also some concerns around the comparability and validity of some quantitative measures which reinforces the need for caution around the results (see 'Limitations' section). Due to the design of the evaluation, the quantitative results do not infer causality.

Attainment

In Round 2 interviews conducted in November 2021, secondary school teachers were positive, overall, on the outlook for children's attainment, but were clear it was too early to say if there had been a noticeable improvement as a result of the pilot (partly as data for assessments had not come in at the time of the interviews). They also mentioned that the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on schools made it especially difficult to measure any impact on children's attainment.

Our quantitative data included primary (baseline) and secondary teachers' (endline) assessments of the overall attainment level of pupils in terms of age-related expectations (ARE). In our analysis, we grouped pupils into two categories: working at or above ARE in all core subjects and working below ARE in at least one core subject. It should be noted that the base for this measure is particularly small (n=30), as this data was not returned for all pupils, so the findings should be treated with caution.

Our analysis compares the overall attainment level of pupils at baseline and endline (see Figure C1 in Appendix C). The results at the aggregate level suggest some improvement: a decrease in the proportion of pupils working below ARE in at least one core subject (from 57% to 50%), with an increase in the proportion working at or above ARE in all core subjects (from 44% to 50%) over the evaluation period.

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[20] In our protocol, we committed to the approach in The Office for National Statistics' rules for Statistical Disclosure Control (SDC) of not reporting results with a cell count of under 10 to minimise the risk of disclosure. Therefore, we do not report cells <10, and have collapsed some categories for analysis.

Social, emotional and behavioural outcomes

In interviews, secondary school staff and social workers said they had seen a positive impact on children's social and emotional outcomes as a result of the pilot. Secondary school staff also gave examples of pupils settling in more harmoniously than they had typically done in previous years, where there might have been arguments with teachers, and frequent problems staff needed to address. The discussions about the positive perceived impact of the pilot centred on three elements:

- **Addressing anxieties.** The child-centred nature of the PCP meetings helped to lay to rest children's anxieties about transitions. Typical anxieties discussed in meetings were around the new commute to secondary school and whether academic support (e.g. additional English sessions) would continue in the new school.

- **Focusing on the positives.** One view from primary and secondary school staff and social workers was that it was beneficial for children to hear about the positive and exciting aspects of moving schools in the PCP meetings. For example, children had found it exciting to hear about the new extracurricular activities available to them. This had the positive effect of getting pupils to look forward to secondary school.

- **Getting to know secondary staff.** Both primary and secondary school staff agreed that pupils had benefited from the chance to get to know their secondary teachers before moving into an unfamiliar environment.

  "It's given them more security because they've been able to meet somebody from the secondary school, and not just in a passing way, not just as part of a Year 6 class, in that very much more personal way, so that they know someone has heard their story and heard their point of view."
  Secondary school staff member

This perception was reinforced in the pupil interviews; one view was of having stronger relationships with school staff thanks to the pilot and feeling staff were approachable and cared about their happiness.

"They [secondary school staff] always tell you that you can come and see them when you're feeling sad or angry." ***Pupil in Year 7***

While secondary staff on the whole reported positive social and behavioural effects on pupils, it was also mentioned that some pupils had experienced difficult periods in their first term of secondary school. For example, social worker testimony mentioned a case where a pupil's behaviour was leading to serious consequences, including temporary exclusions.

Emotional and behavioural outcomes were also captured in the pupil survey and the TPPT data. The measures from the pupil surveys were based on the MMF questionnaire, while the emotional and behavioural measures in the TPPT were based on teacher's assessments. More details are given in the Methods section. For the pupil survey measures we present descriptive analysis using the endline data only (as there was no baseline survey).

Our analysis calculated the average (mean) score of the emotional and behavioural subscales using the endline pupil survey data (n=48).[21] As Table 4 shows, the average score

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[21] The emotional and behavioural difficulties subscales of the MMF had the following cut-offs: Emotional difficulty score: 0-9 'expected level of difficulty'; 10-11 'borderline difficulty'; 12-20

falls in the category labelled 'expected level of difficulty' for both emotional and behavioural measures (5.9 out of 20 with a standard deviation of 3.6; and 3.4 out of 12 with a standard deviation of 2.8, respectively). This means that at the time of the assessment after their first few weeks at secondary school, on average the pupils did not have an elevated level of emotional and behavioural difficulty (although some pupils were assessed to have an elevated level of difficulty on each scale). We cannot say whether there was any change in this over time, due to the absence of a baseline measure.

Table 4. Emotional and behavioural difficulties

Descriptive statistics of measures from pupil surveys in Autumn term 2021/22 (endline)

Measures	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Max	Number of pupils completed
Emotional Difficulties	5.9	3.6	0	13	48
Behavioural Difficulties	3.4	2.8	0	10	48

Base: 48 Source: Pupil survey (endline)

In the TPPT, teachers assessed the emotional development of pupils (see 'Methods' section). Forty-seven pupils were assessed at both baseline (by primary staff) and endline (by secondary staff). Over the evaluation period, the proportion of pupils with low-level emotional difficulties increased from 28% to 34% (see Figure C2 in Appendix C). There were small reductions in both the proportion with disproportionate or extreme difficulties (from 40% to 36%) and the proportion with emotional development typical for their chronological age (from 32% to 30%). Taken together, this suggests that there were mixed outcomes in terms of teachers' assessments of pupils' emotional development.

Teachers were also asked to assess behaviour difficulties experienced by pupils as part of the TPPT (see 'Methods' section). They assessed pupils for *internalising* behaviours (such as becoming withdrawn or isolated) and *externalising* behaviours (such as displaying challenging, disruptive, or disturbing behaviour).

The data on internalising behaviour (n=43; see Figure C3 in Appendix C) suggests a reduction in the *frequency* of these behaviours, but no change in the overall proportion of pupils with these types of behaviour. For example, there was a decrease in the proportion presenting internalising behaviours regularly or persistently (from 43% to 32%). This was mirrored in an increase in the proportion presenting these behaviours occasionally, from almost three in ten (28%) to almost four in ten (37%) in the evaluation period. However, the proportion of pupils not presenting internalising behaviours did not change.

The results for externalising behaviours (n=46) indicate improvement with an increase in the proportion not presenting externalising behaviours at all, from four in ten (41%) pupils to almost six in ten (57%) pupils (see Figure 1 below). This was reflected in a reduction of 15 percentage points in the proportion of pupils presenting these behaviours occasionally (from 30% to 15%). In contrast to the pattern found for internalising behaviours, there was no change in the proportion of pupils with more regular or persistent externalising behaviours.

'elevated difficulty'; Behavioural difficulty score: 0-5 'expected level of difficulty'; 6 'borderline difficulty'; 7-12 'elevated difficulty'.

Figure 1: Changes in externalising behaviour

Externalising behaviours of pupils in the Spring term 2020/21 (baseline) and Autumn term 2021/22 (endline)
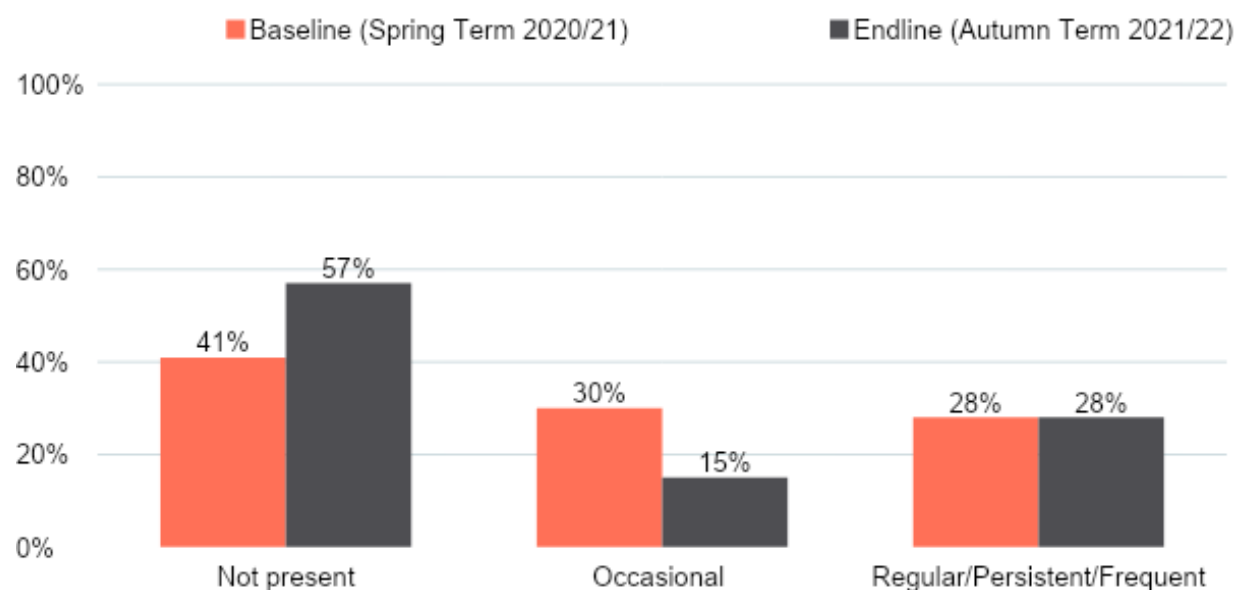
Base: 46 Source: Hartlepool Transition Planning Profile Tool (TPPT) data

Other child outcomes

Attendance and punctuality[22]

The TPPT captured pupils' attendance and punctuality over the evaluation period. The quantitative findings indicate that while attendance improved slightly in this timeframe, there was no clear improvement in punctuality. It should be noted that the baseline and endline measures are not strictly comparable due to how attendance was recorded when COVID-19 affected school attendance (see 'Suitability of outcome measures' section).

The TPPT data includes the attendance rate for 46 pupils at both baseline and endline. Our analysis suggests that attendance improved slightly (see Figure 2 below). The average attendance rate increased from 85% during the Spring term to 88% in the Autumn term. An alternative outcome measure that can be used to monitor attendance is the proportion of pupils having an attendance rate of 85% or above. Improvement can also be seen in this measure: the proportion with an attendance rate of 85% or above increased from 65% to 74% in the evaluation period.

These findings are reflected to some extent in interviews with teachers and pupils: though COVID-19 and its impact on attendance made it hard for teachers to comment, they did see some indication from the TPPT that attendance was better for some children than it had been in primary school.[23] When we asked pupils about this, one group of pupils said that they were attending school more often than they had been at primary school.

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[22] The TPPT did not include data on exclusions, nor in-year transfers (reductions in both are listed as outcomes in the logic model).

[23] However, this does not constitute additional information as we infer they were referring to the same TPPT data presented above.

Figure 2: Changes in pupil's attendance

Attendance rate in the Spring term 2020/21 (baseline) and Autumn term 2021/22 (endline)
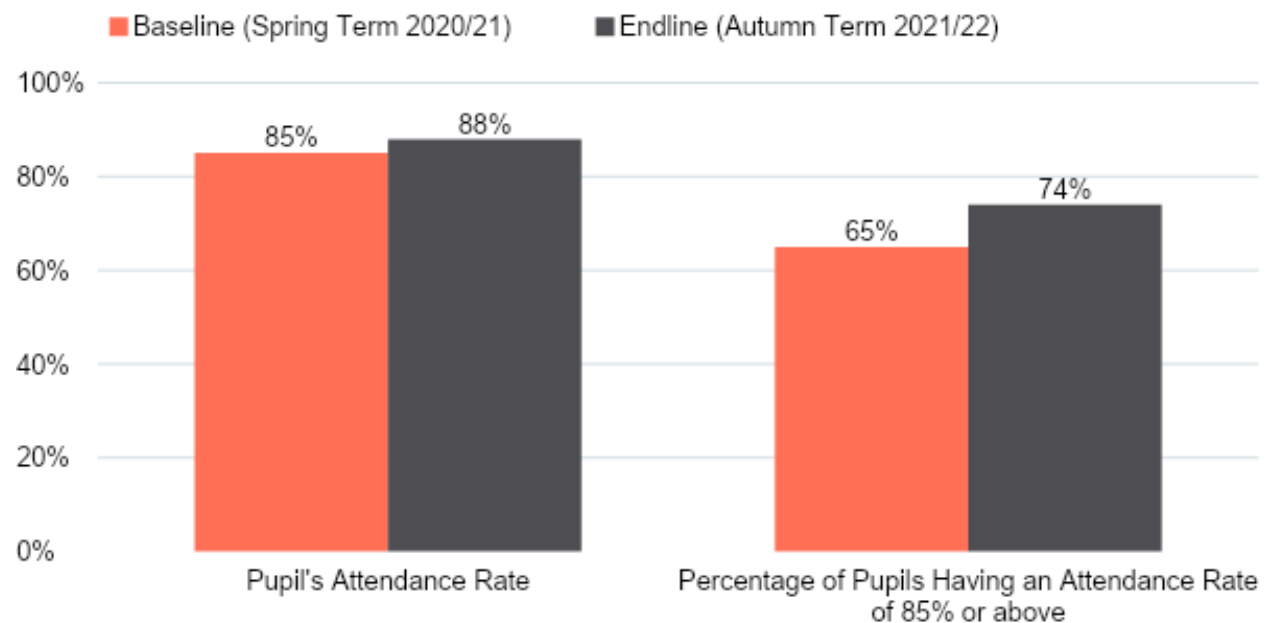
Base: 46 pupils. Source: TPPT data

In contrast, our findings indicate that punctuality, measured by the number of late sessions, worsened over the evaluation period (n=43). Although the majority of pupils had five or fewer late sessions in both terms, the proportion decreased from 74% (baseline) to 65% (endline). The proportions having six or more late sessions increased from 26% to 35% (see Figure 3); this may relate to children having longer journeys to secondary school than primary school.

Figure 3: Changes in number of late sessions (punctuality)

Pupil's number of late sessions in the Spring term 2020/21 (baseline) and Autumn term 2021/22 (endline)
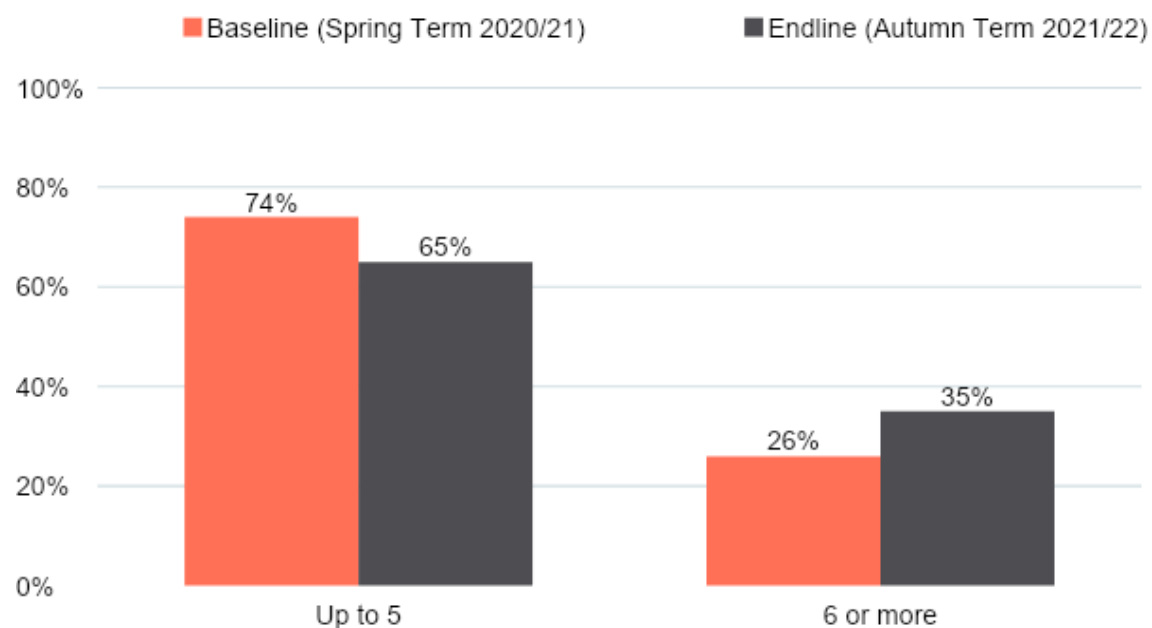
Base: 43 pupils. Source: TPPT data

School engagement

The pupil survey included the MLSS school subscale measuring children's feelings about and satisfaction with school (see 'Methods' section). Analysis of the distribution of the score (endline data only) from 48 pupils shows that almost all pupils (94%) have a score of 16 or higher, which indicates they do not have severe school engagement issues. The average school engagement score at the endline was 23 out of 32 (with a standard deviation of 5.3). As we do not have a baseline figure, we cannot say whether there was any change over time in this measure.

This chimes with findings from the pupil interviews, when pupils told us that they were engaging with secondary school overall; examples include appreciating a wider range of subjects at their new school, or regularly getting their homework done.

Children's experiences of transitions

Pupils generally said they had settled in well at secondary school when we interviewed them in November 2021. Pupils attributed this to having friends around, and having access to activities they enjoyed, like football at breaktime. However, they did not feel able to comment on the extent to which the pilot activities had helped with the transition.

When asked about PCP meetings, pupils generally struggled to recall details about the meetings (which took place in the Summer term). One view was that they did not remember feeling any better or worse about transition afterwards, while another was that the meetings had a positive effect on how they felt about the transition. In particular, pupils mentioned meeting secondary school staff as a key factor in reassuring them.

However, the quantitative data suggests that there was little change in concerns about transition to secondary school over the evaluation period. Pupils and parents were asked to answer statements about transition as part of the TPPT data, with the resulting scores

referred to as 'pupil's views' and 'parent's views'. The higher the score (ranging from 4 to 20), the more successful a transition to secondary school is expected/experienced.

Figure C4 in Appendix C shows the average score for both 'pupil's views' (n=33) and 'parent's views' (n=30) at the baseline and the endline. Results indicate that there was no change in 'pupil's views' over the evaluation period. The average score for 'pupil's views' was 15.2 and 15.1 at the baseline and endline respectively. Although the average score for 'parent's views' is slightly lower than that for 'pupil's views', there is also little difference in 'parent's views' over the evaluation period. The average score for 'parent's views' was 14.1 and 14.6 in the baseline and endline data, respectively.

These results do not show improvement in concerns (on average) about transition, something we would expect to see if the pilot was working as intended. However, if the scores are, on average, relatively high, there might be less need for them to reduce. We note that a report from the School Transition and Adjustment Research Study (STARS) indicated that scores of 12 or less represented the bottom 10% of their pupils and concluded that these pupils may need additional attention during their transition to secondary school.[24] However, while STARS figures were based on a teacher's assessment of a pupil, in our data, we collected a self-report of views from pupils and parents.

In our analysis, we identified the proportions of pupils scoring 12 or less based on 'pupil's views' and 'parent's views'. We might expect that, if the pilot has worked as intended, this proportion would be lower in the endline data. We cannot report the results based on 'pupil's views' due to cell sizes under 10. There is, however, a small decrease in the proportion of pupils scoring 12 or less based on 'parent's views', from 37% at the baseline to 30% at the endline.

Unintended Consequences

RQ: Are there any adverse or unintended consequences?

For pupils and parents

One view mentioned by primary school staff was a concern that pilot activities, particularly the *Smart Moves* programme, might risk making some pupils more anxious about the future. They described it raising issues for pupils about what it would be like at secondary school that previously they simply had not been considering. They suggested that this was particularly acute for children with social, emotional and mental health needs.

Linked to this, there were reports from primary school staff, social workers and pilot leads of disappointment for pupils and parents/carers when support was promised, but then not put in place. This was put down partly to high staff turnover in some schools. They were concerned that parents/carers and pupils had felt 'let down', due to the pilot raising expectations.

For schools

As discussed previously (see 'Key challenges' section), secondary school staff found one of the biggest challenges was increased workload due to the high number PCP meetings. Finding pilot activities hard to balance with their other duties, they questioned why they were

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[24] More details can be found from the following link:
https://www.ucl.ac.uk/pals/sites/pals/files/teacher_booklet.pdf

having to do it on top of other activities, such as EHCP planning, or planning for children with SEND.

Readiness for trial

The following section outlines the pilot's readiness for trial. This includes an assessment of the current logic model, outcome suitability and scalability of the pilot. The section incorporates pilot leads' views as well as researcher observations.

Logic model refinement

RQ: What changes, if any, need to be made to the logic model?

The 'Intervention' section of the current logic model lists targeted support activities as 'evidence-based resilience programmes' and '1:1 therapeutic work'. Our evaluation found that targeted support activities varied greatly between schools and do not all fit under these headings. We recommend that the logic model should include more details, including suggested reach and dosage, while retaining the tailoring to individual child's needs.

Outcome suitability

RQ: Have suitable outcome measures been identified?

In interviews, primary and secondary school staff did not generally comment on outcome measures but one view from primary school staff was that exclusions or behaviour sanctions in the first term of Year 7 should be key outcome measures (exclusions are listed in the logic model, but not captured in the TPPT). In addition, pilot leads said that the TPPT currently only captures 'hard' outcome measures such as attainment and attendance. While they appreciated that these were important, they noted that it does not capture 'softer' outcomes that measure the quality of transition from a child's perspective (e.g. asking how they felt about the transition before and after, asking if children have a trusted adult in the school).

In addition, as evaluators we have noted various limitations of the current TPPT measures (see 'Limitations' section). Suggestions for improving the quality and consistency of these data are discussed in the 'Future research' section.

Scalability

RQ: Can Transition Support be delivered at scale?

Pilot leads, in interviews, did not discuss plans to scale up the pilot to more children or more schools. Based on evidence from our evaluation, we recommend that these elements are given further consideration before scaling up:

- **PCP meetings.** Our evaluation suggests that the current number of PCP meetings is very challenging for secondary school staff to attend, and the review meetings were only possible with significant adaptations (i.e. shorter meetings, limited scope). In addition, they lack buy-in from secondary school staff who questioned the suitability of the format for sharing information. As PCP meetings are key pilot activities, we recommend that the current design is given further consideration before scaling it up.

- **Transition Passports.** These were part of the initial design, but COVID-19-related time pressures on schools meant that they were not delivered. We therefore recommend further developing this element before scale-up.

- **Support for schools.** Our evidence shows that schools have greater support needs than pilot leads anticipated. In interviews, pilot leads suggested that this was due to COVID-19 and higher workload for school staff. Nonetheless, we recommend that the current support package to schools is enhanced before scale-up. This is particularly in relation to administrative tasks (such as finding suitable meeting slots) that time-poor school staff may not feasibly be able to take on in the long-run.

- **Social worker role.** Our evaluation found that the role of social workers is not clearly defined in the current set-up and that they did not feel part of the pilot. On a basic level, social workers also found it challenging to attend the pilot activities. As increasing multi-agency working is a key outcome in the logic model, we recommend dedicating further resource and planning to securing social worker engagement.

- **Staffing and resourcing.** Pilot leads noted that the delivery team was small and that key individuals delivered activities on top of their day-to-day responsibilities. While this was manageable during the pilot, they discussed how in a larger set-up resourcing would need more attention. We agree that a larger trial would require increased staff resources, particularly as we found that schools had higher than expected support needs and more resources are needed to engage social workers.

Suggestions to support implementation

RQ: What changes are required to optimise delivery?

In interviews, participants discussed various ways the pilot could be improved:

- **Training for schools.** In interviews, primary and secondary school staff were generally positive about the training delivery and content. However, according to one view among secondary school staff, the day-long training was too long and could be delivered in half a day instead. Conversely, another view among primary school staff was that it could be more focused on the practicalities of chairing PCP meetings. While not directly discussed, this suggests that training would benefit from being more tailored to the different needs of primary and secondary school staff.

- **TPPT.** While primary and secondary school staff were generally positive about this pilot component, secondary school staff said in interviews that the TPPT data they received was not consistently the same across primary schools. They suggested that primary schools are given further guidance on how to effectively fill in the TPPT, to ensure consistency. In addition, one view from primary school staff was that March in Year 6 was too soon to complete the TPPT, and an update in the summer term would be helpful (to reflect any changes). There was also a suggestion that primary and secondary school staff could meet after sharing the TPPT to discuss it.

  PCP meetings. Social workers suggested that primary schools could be given more guidance on how to make the meetings focussed on pupils rather than the adults in the room. They also suggested that primary schools are given guidance to spend more time preparing the child (e.g. ensuring that they are aware of who will be attending and what will be discussed). Secondary school staff suggested that the attendance of everyone is secured to make the meetings more effective.

DISCUSSION

Discussion of Findings

Our evaluation assessed the delivery of the pilot against three key domains: evidence of feasibility, evidence of promise and readiness for trial. Here we summarise key findings for each of the domains, then discuss the implications.

Evidence of feasibility

- **Implementation, reach and dosage.** Training for schools was implemented and we observed good attendance for the one-day PCP training for schools. However, the interview data was inconsistent on whether social worker training happened as planned. As evaluators we received the TPPT data and observed that all schools had completed it, though some data was incomplete or inaccurate. We did not collect reach and dosage data on PCP meetings and targeted support activities, but feedback from interviews suggest that PCP meetings and review meetings took place as intended, but some meetings were shorter than planned and not all pupils had a review meeting due to time constraints at secondary schools. In addition, attendance of parents/carers, social workers and secondary school staff varied. Targeted support activities varied from school to school and included a range of different activities; this meant that pupils did not receive the same set of activities across schools. In addition, social workers did not appear to be involved in the planning of activities.

- **Adjustments to delivery.** A key adjustment was the need for additional meetings outside the required PCP meetings. School staff said it was not always possible to share sensitive information relating to pupils in the PCP meeting with the child and parent/carer present. This necessitated additional conversations outside the pilot activities, which was time-intensive. In addition, PCP review meetings were not held for all pupils, or were shorter and without some intended participants attending.

- **Enablers and challenges to strategic and operational delivery.** Qualitative interviews showed that these factors enabled delivery: a pre-existing local need for better transition support; good school staff and pupil engagement in pilot activities; and ease of use of the TPPT. On the other hand, a high number of PCP meetings for secondary school staff created a significant workload burden, while delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic was challenging. Schools also had unexpectedly high support needs. Lastly, gaining GDPR consent caused delays to delivery timelines.

- **Acceptability of support.** Training and the TPPT broadly met school needs, though secondary staff raised issues with the reliability of TPPT data. There were contrasting views on PCP meetings: primary staff valued how they made transitions more child-focused, while secondary staff found them insufficient for sharing information. Combined with the high workload burden for secondary staff, they also did not consider the approach sustainable. Views were also mixed on the PCP review meetings; on the one hand, they were helpful to take stock of the child's transition, but on the other hand, time pressure meant that organising them was a challenge for secondary staff, and attendance varied. It was too early for secondary school staff to assess the targeted support activities, as delivery was at an early stage.

- **Responsiveness.** School staff engagement with the training and TPPT was good, but secondary school engagement with the PCP meetings was not as high compared with that of primary schools, according to primary school staff and pilot leads. Primary school staff reported that pupils and parents/carers generally engaged well in the PCP meetings and review meetings. School staff said that social worker engagement was limited and that their attendance and contribution in the PCP meetings was variable. Social workers reported being unsure of their role in the pilot.

Evidence of promise

- **Information sharing between schools**. Staff from both primary and secondary schools perceived that the TPPT was a notable improvement on previous practice. It contained comprehensive and wide-ranging data in a format that staff found easy to use. PCP meetings involved a wider group of people than previously, including children and parents/carers, which allowed secondary school staff to gain a better understanding about children's needs. However, secondary school staff also questioned how effective PCP meetings were in terms of information sharing.

- **Ways of working between schools and families.** PCP meetings led to more encounters between schools and families. School staff perceived that parents/carers found it reassuring to have their queries answered by secondary school staff. However, the impact was limited by parents/carers not always attending meetings.

- **Knowledge and skills of school staff**. School staff were not able to articulate much change in their knowledge and skills due to the pilot. They were more aware of the difference that the pilot made to how information was shared.

- **Ways of working between schools and social care teams.** There was little evidence of difference in ways of working between schools and social care teams, in part due to limited engagement of social workers in PCP meetings. This may also relate to a lack of clarity on the role of social workers in the pilot.

- **Outcomes for children.** Evidence of positive outcomes for children is limited, which may partly be due to data collection being completed in the pupils' first term of secondary school. Qualitative data pointed to evidence that pupils were reassured about concerns, knew a staff member at the new school and felt positive about changing schools. However, the quantitative data on social and emotional outcomes was mixed, and there was little change in pupils' level of concerns about transition. The quantitative findings do suggest that both attainment and attendance improved a little, however, we cannot attribute these changes to pilot activities.

- **Unintended outcomes.** One possible unintended outcome for pupils was feeling more anxious about transition after pilot activities (due to an increased focus on transition), though it was also the case that PCP meetings could reassure pupils about their concerns. For secondary schools, the increased workload from PCP meetings was a key unintended outcome.

Readiness for trial

- **Logic model refinements.** The logic model would benefit from more detailed information about targeted support activities, to help measure reach and dosage.

- **Scalability.** Various refinements would improve the scalability of the current design, including a redesign of PCP meetings to reduce the time burden on secondary school staff, greater support for schools, and increased staffing resource at LA level.

- **Outcome measures.** One view from primary school staff was that exclusions or behaviour sanctions in the first term of Year 7 should be key measures. Exclusions are listed in the logic model (see Appendix B). Pilot leads suggested including some 'softer' measures to measure children's transition, such as having a trusted adult in the new school.

- **Suggestions to support implementation.** Suggested changes included providing primary school staff with more guidance on how to fill in the TPPT, making the training for schools shorter and more focused on chairing the PCP meetings and giving more guidance to schools on how to make PCP meetings child-centred.

Discussion

This section considers cross-cutting themes across the findings:

- **Primary and secondary schools.** The current pilot design relies on the two types of schools working together and sharing the same objectives in relation to transitions (i.e. making them more child-centric, and also improving information sharing between schools). However, we found that while primary schools valued the improved focus on child voice in PCP meetings, secondary schools found the meetings an ineffective forum for sharing information. These findings suggest that primary and secondary schools may have different needs and expectations in relation to transition support.

- **Information sharing.** The PCP meetings have two aims: sharing information between schools and elevating the child and parent/carer voice during transitions. Our findings suggest that these aims are potentially contradictory. This is evident in schools adapting the intended model and holding additional meetings to discuss sensitive information without the parent/carer or child present. The potentially contradictory aims may also be one explanation for staff from primary and secondary schools having contrasting perceptions of these meetings, as discussed above. On the other hand, pupil and parent/carer engagement in meetings were good, indicating that the approach was broadly acceptable from their point of view. However, more qualitative data collection with these participants would be needed to verify this.

- **Capacity and resourcing**. Lack of capacity from different participants was a recurring theme. For example, secondary school staff adapted key activities (e.g. PCP review meetings) to fit them in. Support needs from schools to deliver activities were also greater than pilot leads had anticipated. COVID-19 undoubtedly stretched people's capacity. However, it is also true that the current design relies on time-poor individuals, like teachers, to take on administrative tasks (e.g. arranging meetings) that they would arguably struggle with even outside the COVID-19 context.

- **Social workers**. Attendance of social workers at PCP meetings was difficult to secure and their engagement in meetings was also perceived as inconsistent. In addition, it was not clear whether they received the planned training and guidance. They also did not take part in planning targeted support. These challenges speak to a wider point about their role in the pilot, which was not clear to them or school staff.

- **Outcomes**. The limited findings on outcomes should be caveated by the significant limitations to the quantitative and qualitative data collection in this evaluation. In addition, the data collection was completed early in Year 7 which made it challenging for participants to evaluate outcomes. The qualitative data showed positive perceived outcomes on ways of working between schools and on social and emotional outcomes for children. These provide some early evidence that the pilot was working as intended. However, these early findings would need to be confirmed by future research. Lastly, we note that the logic model would benefit from further detail on the different activities (in particular, reach and dosage) to aid future evaluation.

- **Readiness for trial.** The findings suggest that the pilot would benefit from further development work before scale-up to a full trial, including refining the logic model, refining the scalability of the current design and finalising outcome measures.

Limitations

This is the first evaluation of the *Transition Support Pilot*. The mixed-method approach draws together views and evidence from a range of participants and sources and provides a basis for future research. This section discusses limitations to the evaluation, including COVID-19.

COVID-19

The pandemic had a significant impact on schools' capacity to deliver the pilot and as a result, several pilot activities were adapted or not delivered (e.g. training was moved online, Transition Passports were not implemented). It is unlikely that the pilot would be delivered in the same way outside the COVID-19 context. This is an important caveat to our findings.

Quantitative data collection

The data collection and analysis had several limitations:

- **Sample size.** The small sample (n=55) had implications for the type of analysis that was possible (for example, we could not carry out subgroup analysis) and the extent to which conclusions can be drawn from the quantitative findings.

- **No baseline pupil survey.** This survey could not take place due to COVID-19, meaning we could only carry out descriptive analysis of the endline pupil survey, and could not compare baseline and endline data nor conduct null hypothesis tests.

- **TPPT data issues.** There were two key issues: missing data (for individual pupils and for particular measures); and questions about the validity and comparability of measures[25]. In addition, some data provided in the endline update was incorrect.[26]

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[25] Validity and comparability was relevant for two key measures: attendance (baseline and endline data were not strictly comparable, due in part to how attendance was recorded when COVID-19 affected attending school); and attainment (some primary schools did not complete the baseline assessment due to lockdowns meaning less contact time with pupils; the autumn update had missing data, and schools gave comments which did not match the numeric scores).

[26] In our analysis we found that the 'parent's views' data in the endline TPPT matched the data from the baseline TPPT exactly. From subsequent discussions with HBC it appears that the autumn term TPPT was supplied to secondary schools pre-filled with the primary schools' data. The idea was this

We also note that teacher assessments of attainment and other measures are subjective, and judgements are likely to vary by teacher and/or by school. This raises questions of comparability of baseline and endline measures more generally for an evaluation that spans Year 6 in primary school and Year 7 in secondary school, and which uses teachers' assessments for key outcome measures.

Qualitative data collection

The qualitative element included eight staff from four primary schools and five staff from two secondary schools; eight pupils in Year 7 from the same two secondary schools; two social workers; and two pilot leads. Limitations included:

- **Pupil interviews.** Our interviews took place in November 2021 when pupils were in Year 7. Children were able to answer questions about their transition generally, i.e. how they had settled into the new school. However, they struggled to answer questions about pilot activities. They could not clearly recall what the PCP meetings involved, who was present and how they felt about transition during and after the meetings. The meetings took place 3-4 months prior to our interviews, so in hindsight, it may have been better to hold interviews earlier to facilitate recall.

- **Adult interviews**. With hindsight we think it would have been beneficial to interview parents/carers as well as staff from more secondary schools, and more social workers, to capture a wider range of experiences from these participants.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Supporting transitions for vulnerable children is important and participants agreed that there was a need for a programme like *Transition Support Pilot* in Hartlepool. This mixed-method evaluation provides first early evidence on the new approach.

First, our evaluation found some key activities to be feasible in the current design, notably training for schools and the TPPT, but that PCP meetings require further development to make them feasible. Taken together, the different needs and expectations of primary and secondary schools in relation to transition support was a key cross-cutting finding. Related to this was the potentially contradictory aims of PCP meetings in both aiding information sharing and elevating the child and parent/carer voice. Lastly, lack of capacity from different participants and lack of clarity about the role of social workers was a recurring theme.

Second, our evaluation found limited evidence of intended outcomes for children, though it should be noted that there were significant limitations to both the qualitative and quantitative data collection. In addition, the evaluation took place early in Year 7 which made it challenging for participants to evaluate outcomes. Participants in interviews generally perceived that the pilot had improved transition support for this cohort of pupils, with school staff noting improvements in pupils' social and emotional outcomes. The quantitative data

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could save time (as secondary schools would only need to update the TPPT where there had been a change). However, in some cases the update was overlooked. This process makes it hard for us as evaluators to ascertain the validity of the endline measures.

(based on small samples) gave a mixed picture overall, though there was a little improvement in attainment and attendance.

Third, the findings suggest that the *Transition Support Pilot* would benefit from further development work before scale-up to a full trial.

Finally, the pilot was designed in 2019 and took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. This had a significant impact on delivery. Overall, it is unlikely that the pilot would have been delivered this way outside the COVID-19 context; this is an important caveat to the findings.

Recommendations

The findings suggest a number of refinements to address issues of feasibility and scalability:

- Consider whether the needs and expectations of secondary schools in relation to transition support are currently met and find ways to secure their buy-in.
- Consider targeting PCP meetings at a smaller subset of pupils with greater needs in order to make the number of meetings more feasible for secondary schools to attend.
- Review the current format of PCP meetings so that information sharing amongst school staff is given equal weight to making the meetings child-centred. For example, by only including parents/carers and children in part of the planning meeting.
- Consider alternatives to PCP review meetings that are less time-intensive ways of sharing the same information. This could include having virtual meetings, sharing the information in a document, and targeting a subset of children with higher needs.
- Review training and guidance for schools. We suggest making part of the training focused on chairing PCP meetings and making this available to primary schools. We also suggest giving guidance to primary schools about TPPT data completion to ensure data are comparable, complete and consistent across schools.
- Clarify the role of social workers in the pilot and find ways to secure their engagement and attendance. Ensure that training for social workers takes place.
- Clarify expectations for secondary schools around the types of targeted support activities they are expected to deliver, including guidance on the ideal number of sessions/hours. This would be alongside meeting individual children's needs.
- Increase capacity in the central delivery team to take some of the administrative burden away from individuals, such as arranging PCP meetings. This extra capacity could also be used to develop relationships with local social care teams.

Directions for Future Research

For any potential future efficacy trial of the *Transition Support Pilot*, the evaluation would need to compare baseline measures when pupils are at primary school, with endline measures when pupils have moved to secondary school. This is a key challenge for a potential future evaluation, as primaries and secondaries are very different environments, and it is likely that pupils' experiences, and teachers' assessments of pupils, would reflect this. This raises questions about how comparable the data would be at the two timepoints.

We recommend changing administrative data collection in a number of ways to aid a potential future evaluation. First, collecting additional data in the TPPT to measure a wider set of outcomes from the logic model (e.g. exclusions). Second, having a TPPT update to collect outcome measures later in Year 7, as the current timing is too soon after the transition to secondary school to fully capture impacts. Third, reviewing the validity of measurements

in the TPPT: where possible, a future trial should use more objective and standardised assessment data. Lastly, reviewing the process for collecting data. In our view, the current approach, where schools complete the TPPT and HBC collates the data, means that the evaluator lacks sufficient oversight.

We also suggest that potential future evaluations of the *Transition Support Pilot* include interviews with a wider range of adult participants and more data collection with pupils and parents/carers. We recommend having interviews with pupils earlier, to aid recall of pilot activities, and delaying the final round of interviews to allow more time for the assessment of outcomes. The perception from secondary school staff that behaviours seen in primary school did not necessarily present at secondary school could usefully be investigated further.

Lastly, we recommend refining the logic model for a more effective future evaluation, in particular, adding more details to the targeted support 'intervention' section, including suggested reach and dosage, while retaining the tailoring to children's individual needs.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Fieldwork documents

Transition Support research
Information for Year 6 pupils

What is this about?
Year 6 pupils across Hartlepool are taking part in a project called Transition Support. We are doing research to find out what pupils think about the project, including what they liked and didn't like.

You are invited to take part in a questionnaire about your feelings. You'll do it in class.

The answers will be shared with the researchers, so they can write a report of the findings. Your name or any information that could identify you or your school will not be included in the report.

Do I have to take part?
No, it's up to you. You can stop taking part at any time.

Who is doing the research?
Val, Helena and Padmini are researchers at **NatCen**, and your school is helping us.

Thank you for your help!

Transition Support research

Information for Year 7 pupils

What is this about?
Year 7 pupils in Hartlepool are taking part in a new project called Transition Support. We are doing research to find out what pupils think about the project and their transition to secondary school.

What does it mean for me?
You are invited to take part in a questionnaire about your feelings.

Next month, you might also be asked to talk to a researcher. They'll ask about the support you got before and after moving schools, including what you liked and didn't like about it.

If you are invited to talk to a researcher, school staff will give you details of when and where this will take place.

What will you do with the information?
The answers will be shared with the researchers, so they can write a report about what they found. They will not include your name, your school's name or anything else that could identify you.

Do I have to take part?
No, it's up to you. You can stop taking part at any time.

Who is doing the research?
Helena, Enes and Miranda are researchers at an organisation called **NatCen**. Your school is helping us do the research.

Where can I find out more?
You can read more about the research here.

Thank you for your help!

NatCen Social Research · **HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL** · What Works *for* Children's Social Care

Dear Parent/Carer

I hope that you are all well, lockdown has been a challenging time for us all.

All schools in Hartlepool are taking part in a new Transition Support programme. It aims to help all year 6 children have a good start to secondary school. As part of the programme all year 6 pupils completed a questionnaire called 'How are you?' about how they feel generally and about school.

The Transition Support programme is funded through a foundation called What Works for Children's Social Care. To understand if it helps children and schools, and learn how to best prepare children for secondary school, it is being evaluated by NatCen Social Research.

As part of the evaluation we have been asked to share pupil questionnaires with NatCen. We will also share some other information like school attendance, learning progress and pupil needs, which the researchers will review together with the questionnaires. They will only use this information to understand how the programme supports children and schools. They will not share it with anyone else.

All information will be shared securely, and totally anonymously as no child or school names will be shared. It will not be possible to identify any child or where they go to school. Nonetheless, it is important that we check you are happy for this to happen.

If you do NOT want your child's questionnaire to be shared with NatCen for evaluation, please let your school know. If we have not heard from you by 19 April we will assume that you are happy for this information to be shared.

I do **NOT** want my child's questionnaire shared with NatCen for the Transition Support programme evaluation

Your child's name...

Your child's class...

Your full name..

Your signature..

Date.......................................

Please return this slip to the Transition Lead at your child's school.
You can sign electronically and return in response to the email you received.

NatCen
Social Research

HARTLEPOOL
BOROUGH COUNCIL

What Works *for*
Children's
Social Care

Dear Parent/Carer

All schools in Hartlepool are taking part in a project called Transition Support. It aims to help all children have a good start to secondary school and gives extra support to those children who have a social worker. Researchers at NatCen Social Research are evaluating the Transition Support project to understand if it helps children with social workers and schools.

As part of the research, some Year 7 pupils in Hartlepool are asked to complete a questionnaire called 'How are you?' about how they feel generally and about school. Schools are asked to share the questionnaires for those children with social workers with NatCen. Schools are also asked to share some other information, like attendance, learning progress and pupil needs. The researchers at NatCen will review this information and the questionnaires together to understand how the Transition Support project is helping pupils. A full description of the evaluation can be found here.

The information will only be used for research purposes. It will not be shared with anyone outside the research team at NatCen. All information will be shared securely. No child names will be shared with NatCen, which means that it will not be possible for the researchers to identify any child. Nonetheless, *it is important that you are happy for this information to be shared.*

If you are happy for your child's information to be used in the research, you do not have to do anything. If you do not want your child's information to be shared with NatCen, please fill in the form below and return it to the school by 22 October 2021.

If you have any questions about how the research team will use your child's data, you can contact the NatCen team at transition-support@natcen.ac.uk or on 0808 196 1468.

The Transition Support project was developed by Hartlepool Borough Council. It is funded through a foundation called What Works for Children's Social Care.

I do **NOT** want my child's information shared with NatCen for the Transition Support evaluation.

Your child's name: _____

Your child's class: _____

Your full name: _____

Your signature: _____

Date: _____

Please return this slip to school. You can type your name to sign and return in response to the email you received.

Transition Support Pilot
Information for schools

The **What Works Centre for Children's Social Care** (WWCCSC) has funded Hartlepool Borough Council to pilot the Transition Support programme. We at the **National Centre for Social Research** (NatCen) are evaluating how the pilot is delivered in schools and how children with social workers are supported during their transition from primary to secondary school.

Last school year, NatCen carried out early research activities in some schools. Now that pupils have moved to Year 7, we will carry out further evaluation activities with secondary schools in October and November 2021. A report about the findings will be published in March 2022.

What does taking part involve for your school?

All secondary schools

Pupil questionnaires. All secondary schools will be asked to administer a paper questionnaire called 'How are you?' to some Year 7 tutor groups or PSHE class groups in October 2021. Only the questionnaires for pupils with social workers will be shared with NatCen for analysis. The questionnaire asks how pupils feel generally and about school. It is age-appropriate, child-friendly and standardised, and takes around 15 minutes to complete.

Transition profile planning tool (TPPT). All secondary schools will update the TPPT for Year 7 pupils. The data will be shared with NatCen for analysis in November 2021. The analysis will look at measures such as attainment and attendance and assess progress over time.

Selected secondary schools

Staff interviews. Staff from two secondary schools will be invited to take part in interviews with NatCen in November 2021. The interviews will be with the Transition Lead and another staff member closely associated with transitions. They will explore the staff members' views of the Transition Support pilot and what it is like supporting children with transition to secondary school. Interviews will last up to 60 minutes and can be done by telephone or online.

Pupil interviews. The same two secondary schools will be asked to help arrange interviews with four Year 7 pupils who have a social worker in November 2021. Interviews will explore pupils' views of the support they received and how they feel about secondary school. We will work with schools to identify pupils who can take part in an interview, taking into consideration pupils' needs and vulnerabilities. Interviews will take place face-to-face at school (if possible) or using video-conferencing software while pupils are at school. They will last up to 45 minutes.

What happens next?

The Transition Support delivery team will be in touch with schools to organise the pupil questionnaires in October 2021. NatCen researchers will be in touch with the two secondary schools to arrange interviews with staff and pupils in November 2021.

What will happen to the information collected?

NatCen will receive and analyse pupils' answers to the questionnaire and the data supplied in the Planning Tool (TPPT). Interviews with staff and pupils will be audio-recorded (with permission), transcribed and analysed. All data will be stored securely and only NatCen researchers will be able to access it. The information will be used to write a report about the findings. The report will be available online on the WWCSC website. Names of teachers, pupils, schools or any other identifiable details will not be included in the report.

What if parents/carers and pupils do not want their information shared?

Taking part in research activities is voluntary. Parents/carers can withdraw their child from the survey and/or interviews without giving a reason. We will provide schools with information sheets for parents/carers that explain what the research involves and that they can contact the school to withdraw their child from the research activities. Details of pupils whose parents/carers have withdrawn them should not be shared with NatCen. We will also provide schools with information sheets for pupils that explain that taking part is voluntary and they can stop taking part at any point. These can be printed and shared ahead of pupils completing the 'How are you?' questionnaire.

GDPR and data security

NatCen and WWCSC are the joint data controller and processor on this project. For the use of personal data to be lawful, we need to meet one (or more) conditions, as set out in Article 6(1) of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). For this research project, the legal basis for processing data is 'consent'. This means that we will ask for consent to process personal data.

You can read more about how NatCen processes personal data in our Privacy Notice.

What does NatCen's evaluation aim to find out?

- How is the Transition Support programme delivered in practice?
- How do schools, teachers, social workers and children experience the programme?
- Does the Transition Support programme help teachers and children as intended?

The findings from the evaluation will help Hartlepool Borough Council to shape the future delivery of the programme. A full description of the evaluation can be found here.

Who are NatCen?

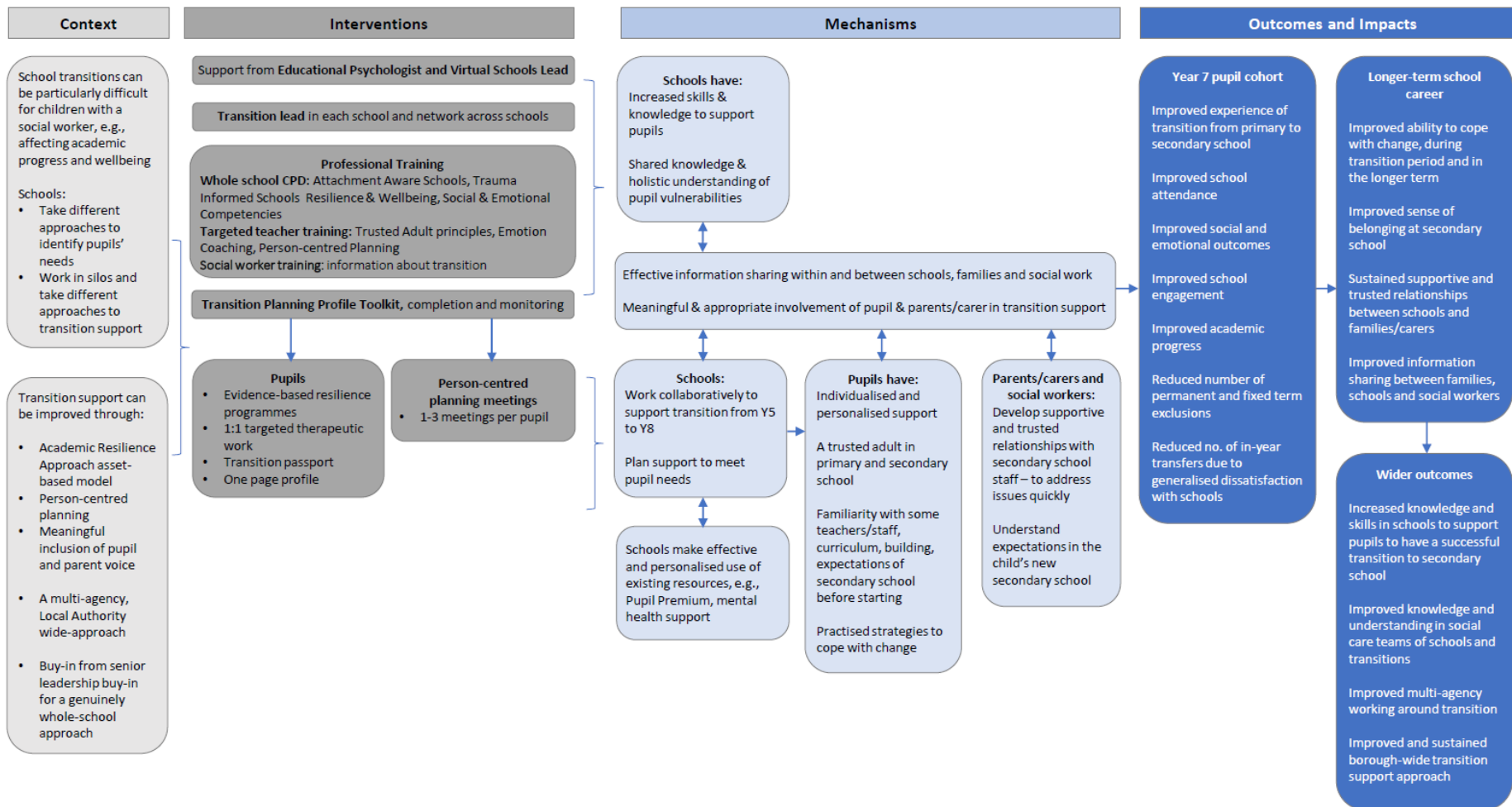NatCen is an independent research organisation working to improve people's lives through research. You can find out more about us by visiting www.natcen.ac.uk.

Who do I contact if I have questions?

You can contact the research team at transition-support@natcen.ac.uk or on 0808 196 1468.

The NatCen research team are: Miranda Phillips, Research Director; Enes Duysak, Senior Researcher; Helena Takala, Senior Researcher.

Appendix B: Logic Model
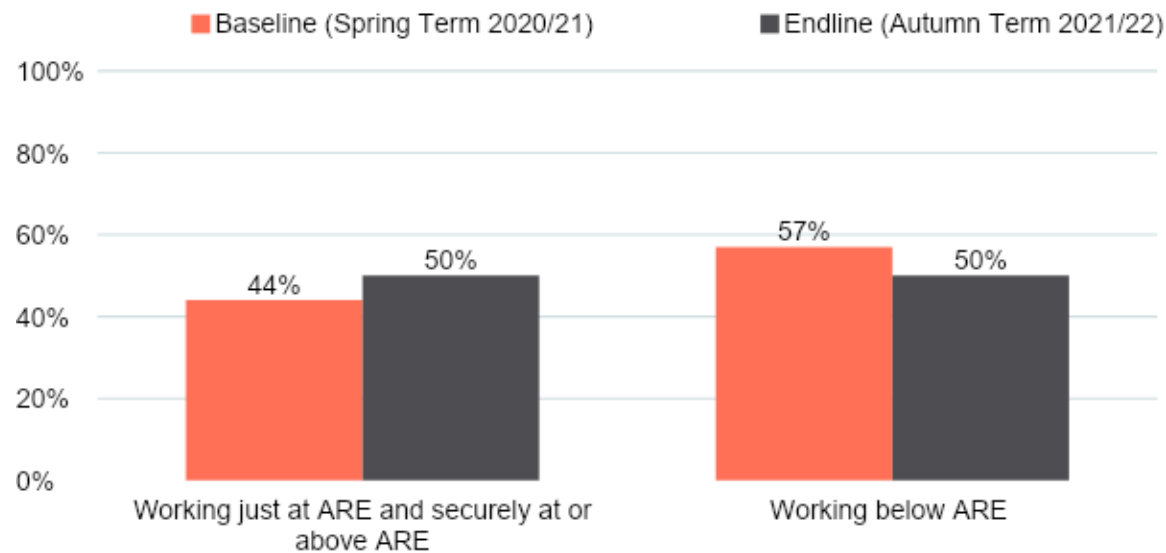
Context	Interventions	Mechanisms	Outcomes and Impacts

Context

School transitions can be particularly difficult for children with a social worker, e.g., affecting academic progress and wellbeing

Schools:
- Take different approaches to identify pupils' needs
- Work in silos and take different approaches to transition support

Transition support can be improved through:
- Academic Resilience Approach asset-based model
- Person-centred planning
- Meaningful inclusion of pupil and parent voice
- A multi-agency, Local Authority wide-approach
- Buy-in from senior leadership buy-in for a genuinely whole-school approach

Interventions

Support from **Educational Psychologist and Virtual Schools Lead**

Transition lead in each school and network across schools

Professional Training
Whole school CPD: Attachment Aware Schools, Trauma Informed Schools Resilience & Wellbeing, Social & Emotional Competencies
Targeted teacher training: Trusted Adult principles, Emotion Coaching, Person-centred Planning
Social worker training: information about transition

Transition Planning Profile Toolkit, completion and monitoring

Pupils
- Evidence-based resilience programmes
- 1:1 targeted therapeutic work
- Transition passport
- One page profile

Person-centred planning meetings
- 1-3 meetings per pupil

Mechanisms

Schools have:
Increased skills & knowledge to support pupils

Shared knowledge & holistic understanding of pupil vulnerabilities

Effective information sharing within and between schools, families and social work

Meaningful & appropriate involvement of pupil & parents/carer in transition support

Schools:
Work collaboratively to support transition from Y5 to Y8

Plan support to meet pupil needs

Schools make effective and personalised use of existing resources, e.g., Pupil Premium, mental health support

Pupils have:
Individualised and personalised support

A trusted adult in primary and secondary school

Familiarity with some teachers/staff, curriculum, building, expectations of secondary school before starting

Practised strategies to cope with change

Parents/carers and social workers:
Develop supportive and trusted relationships with secondary school staff – to address issues quickly

Understand expectations in the child's new secondary school

Outcomes and Impacts

Year 7 pupil cohort

Improved experience of transition from primary to secondary school

Improved school attendance

Improved social and emotional outcomes

Improved school engagement

Improved academic progress

Reduced number of permanent and fixed term exclusions

Reduced no. of in-year transfers due to generalised dissatisfaction with schools

Longer-term school career

Improved ability to cope with change, during transition period and in the longer term

Improved sense of belonging at secondary school

Sustained supportive and trusted relationships between schools and families/carers

Improved information sharing between families, schools and social workers

Wider outcomes

Increased knowledge and skills in schools to support pupils to have a successful transition to secondary school

Improved knowledge and understanding in social care teams of schools and transitions

Improved multi-agency working around transition

Improved and sustained borough-wide transition support approach

Appendix C: Additional charts
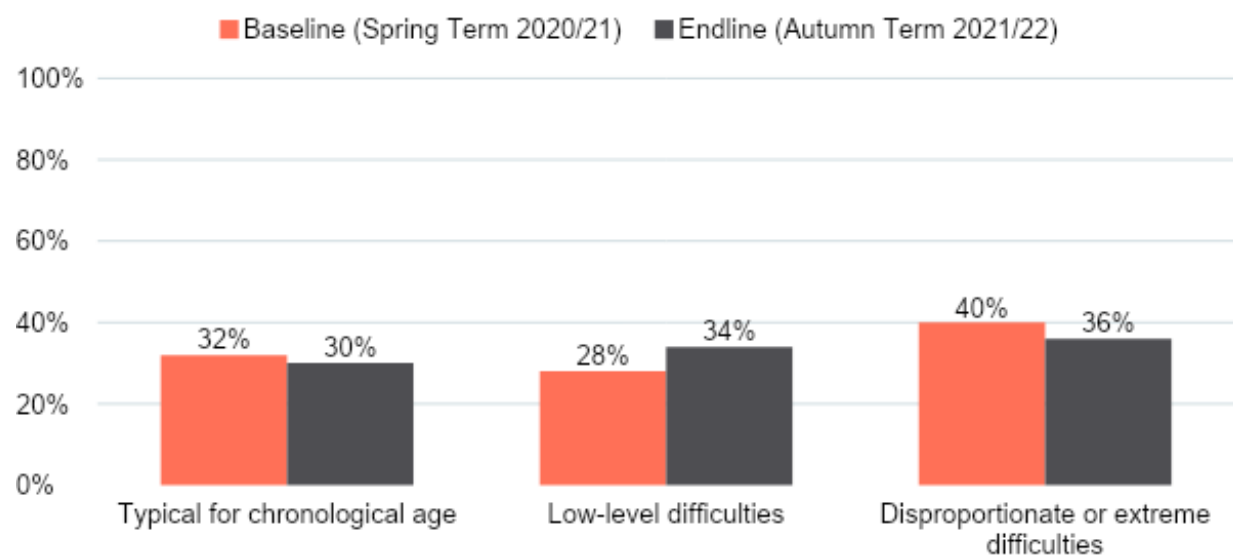
FIGURE C1: CHANGES IN ACADEMIC ATTAINMENT

Teacher assessed academic attainment of pupils in the Spring term 2020/21 (baseline) and Autumn term 2021/22 (endline)

Base: 30. Source: TPPT data
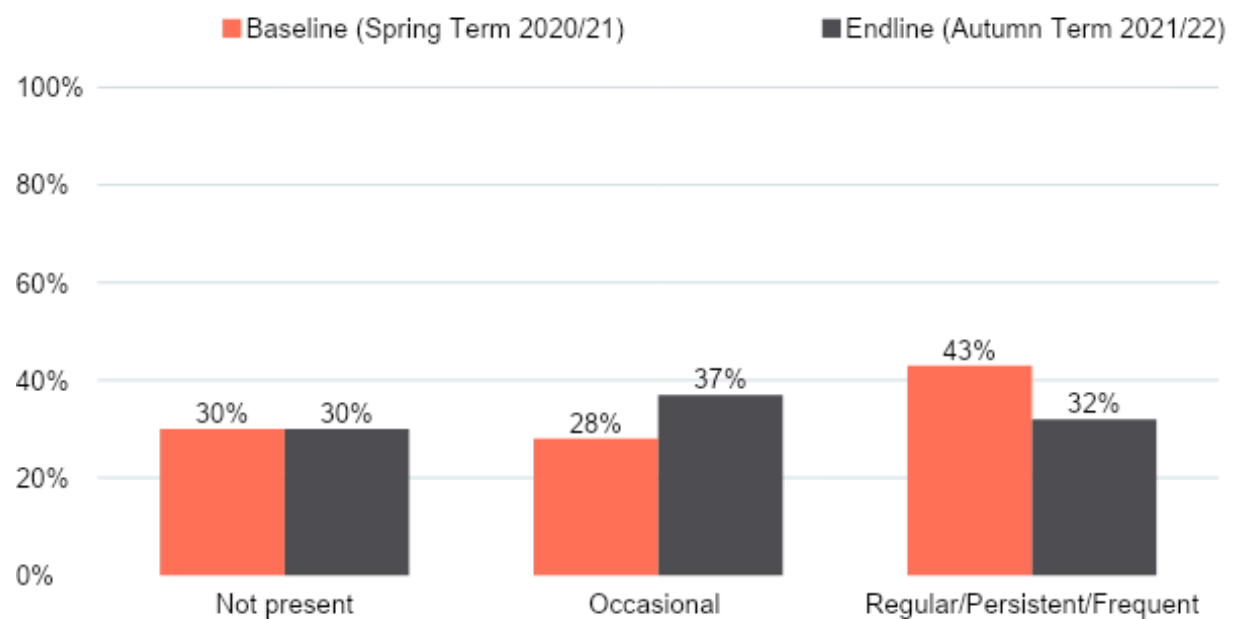
FIGURE C2: CHANGES IN EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Emotional development of pupils in the Spring term 2020/21 (baseline) and Autumn term 2021/22 (endline)

Base: 47 Source: TPPT data
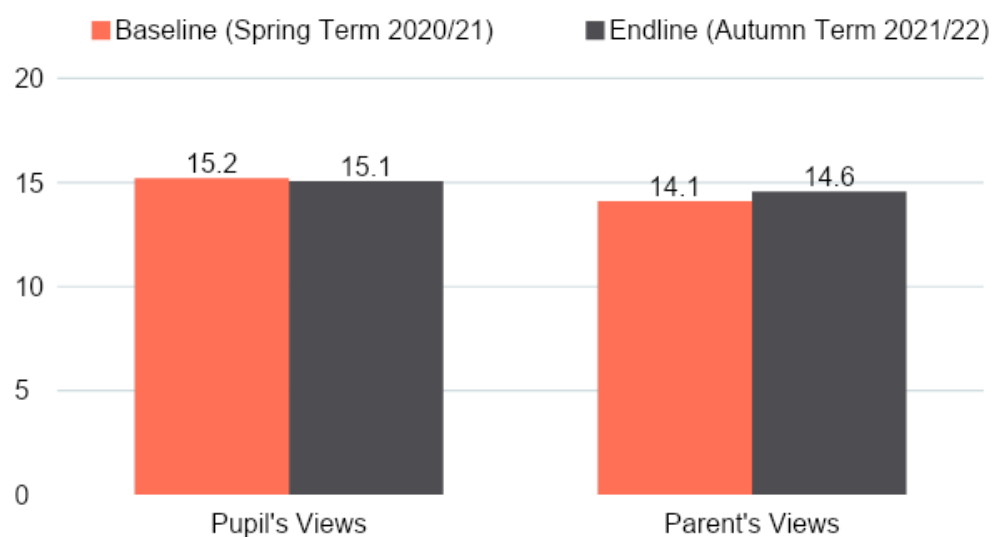
FIGURE C3: CHANGES IN INTERNALISING BEHAVIOUR

Internalising behaviours of pupils in the Spring term 2020/21 (baseline) and Autumn term 2021/22 (endline)

Base: 43 Source: TPPT data

FIGURE C4: CHANGES IN 'PUPIL'S VIEWS' AND 'PARENT'S VIEWS' OF TRANSITION

Scores for pupil's views and parent's views in the Spring term 2020/21 (baseline) and Autumn term 2021/22 (endline)

Base: 33 pupils and 30 parents. Source: Hartlepool TPPT data.