



## Schools and communities

# Narrowing the gap in educational achievement and improving emotional resilience for children and young people with additional needs

## Key messages

- In order to narrow the gap for children and young people with additional needs, services should both address the barriers to learning and support emotional resilience.
- Some approaches, under the right circumstances, show promise. They include:
  - addressing several goals simultaneously and working at multiple levels (individuals, families and communities, including schools)
  - providing group work and individual support, and building on the strengths and interests of children and young people
  - strong partnership between schools and other services
  - focusing on early intervention
  - using the common assessment framework (CAF) to facilitate service integration and early intervention
  - strong strategic leadership and clear aims to guide schools and services in developing their own approaches
  - embedding new initiatives aiming to narrow the gap and encourage emotional resilience into schools' wider approaches and systems to improve the environment, curriculum, support, and teaching and learning for all children and young people.
- Children and young people with 'additional needs' do not form a homogenous, stable or clearly-defined group.
- It is important to tailor services and interventions to address local circumstances and individual needs.
- Strategic managers need good evidence, not just of 'what works', but of 'what works locally'.

There is evidence that some programmes and interventions have achieved positive outcomes. These include full service extended schools, multi-agency teams working with schools, alternative curriculum schemes, and social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL).

This summary is taken from the research review, which identifies what works in narrowing the gap in educational achievement and improving emotional resilience for children and young people with additional needs. It is based on a rapid review of recent research literature, involving systematic searching, and an analysis of key data. The review focuses on generic issues to do with service organisation and delivery. Literature on teaching interventions has not been considered. The review was carried out by the Centre for Equity in Education at the University of Manchester on behalf of C4EO. The data work was carried out by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER).

The research review complements the work of the Narrowing the Gap programme\* (2007–09) which looked in detail at:

- moving towards early intervention and prevention (so that fewer children fall behind)
- engaging and supporting parents and carers in helping their children to succeed
- what children's centres and early years settings can do to 'narrow the gap'
- what schools can do to 'narrow the gap'
- links between children's centres, schools and extended services to 'narrow the gap'
- effective leadership and governance necessary to 'narrow the gap'.

## Who are the key stakeholders?

- children and young people with additional needs
- parents and carers of children and young people with additional needs
- head teachers, principals and leaders of extended services in schools
- children's services strategic managers
- national policy makers.

## Their contributions are valuable in the process of improvement

- **Children and young people with additional needs** respond to broadly based, flexible interventions that build on their strengths and interests to enable them to learn effectively and develop as individuals.
- **Parents and carers** need to be engaged by schools and other children's services to help them support their children's development.
- **Head teachers, principals and leaders of extended services in schools** play a key role in developing and coordinating interventions for children and young people. They involve a wide range of school provision and practices in these interventions, develop partnerships with other agencies which can supplement the work of the school, and monitor the impacts of those interventions.
- **Children's services strategic managers** support and challenge schools in developing their responses, broker relationships between schools and other frontline professionals, and develop forms of service organisation that fit local circumstances. They have a key role to play in monitoring the impact of services on outcomes for children and young people.
- **National policy makers** create a supportive framework within which school responses and local forms of service organisation can develop and share positive practices. They have an important role in commissioning research at national level that is sufficiently powerful to address the many unanswered questions in this field.

\* Further information about the Narrowing the Gap programme can be found at: [www.c4eo.org.uk/narrowingthegap](http://www.c4eo.org.uk/narrowingthegap)

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## What data is available to inform the way forward?

Data on educational achievement is available both by area and by some categories of pupil need (e.g. for those with special educational needs (SEN) and for looked after children). Data is limited on the educational outcomes of many young people with ‘additional needs’ who do not fall into these categories.

Data on emotional resilience is less widely available, though some longitudinal surveys include some measures of children’s self-esteem and confidence.

There is no available national data on the impact of the common assessment framework (CAF) in relation to early interventions; the use of the CAF is still a relatively new process. Once the eCAF becomes more widely used, there may be greater potential for obtaining and accessing aggregated information on the impact of interventions.

## The evidence base

The review is based on 52 key sources, chosen because they focus on generic issues to do with service organisation and delivery.

There is relatively little robust research of this kind. What is there points to what works under particular circumstances rather than what will reliably work anywhere. There is, therefore, a good deal of work for strategic managers to do in ‘translating’ findings into their own contexts.

## Review methods

Research literature was identified through systematic searches of relevant databases and websites, recommendations from our Theme Advisory Group, and citations in identified studies (‘reference harvesting’). The review team used a ‘best evidence’ approach to select literature of the greatest relevance and quality to include in the review.

Data contained within the data annexe was obtained by a combination of search methods but primarily by obtaining online access to known Government publications and access to data published by the Office for National Statistics.

## Next steps

Further information will be published in autumn 2010, including validated local practice examples and views from children, young people, parents, carers and service providers.

Two other Schools and Communities research reviews *Ensuring that all children and young people make sustained progress and remain fully engaged through all transitions between key stages* and *Strengthening family wellbeing and community cohesion through the role of schools and extended services* are also available on the C4EO website. Local decision-makers and commissioners working in local authorities and Children's Trusts may also find it helpful to read the schools and communities directors' summary, which presents the key messages from all three reviews. [www.c4eo.org.uk/themes/schools](http://www.c4eo.org.uk/themes/schools)

C4EO is using the main messages from the three schools and communities reviews to underpin its knowledge sharing and capacity building work with Children's Trusts, and through them the full range of professions and agencies working with children with additional needs.

## Research summaries

This summary is a concise and accessible overview of the key messages from the research review on this topic.

Please go to [www.c4eo.org.uk](http://www.c4eo.org.uk) to download full and in-depth versions.

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