



Evaluation of Engage in Education – A Department for Education funded pilot programme delivered by Catch22 and partners (2011-2013)

Report prepared by Paul Ellis (TSRS)

Published by Prevista



Third Sector Research Solutions (TSRS)

Contents

		Page
X1	Executive summary	3
X2	Key findings	8

X1 Executive summary

- X1.1 The Department for Education (Dee) funded Catch22 from April 2011 to lead the delivery of Engage in Education (EiE) as a pilot programme for two years. The programme was delivered in secondary schools in Croydon, Bristol, Harlow and Newcastle, (the core model) and provided a variety of partnership-based interventions aimed at helping learners at risk of exclusion from schools to improve their attendance and attainment. A variant of the programme was also delivered in parts of Greater Manchester, aimed at supporting the sustained engagement of “at risk” learners in education, employment or training (EET).
- X1.2 This report presents the final results from the evaluation of the EiE programme, and supplements the findings of the interim report. It presents information on the extent to which progress has been made in terms of the delivery process, and focuses on the benefits which the programme has had for learners. There have been significant improvements in the attendance, attainment, behaviour and softer outcomes for learners taking part in the programme. These can be summarised as follows:
- 58% of learners increased their attendance in the core model
 - 61% of learners increased their attainment in the core model
 - In Greater Manchester 91% of learners were sustained in EET months after the intervention
 - Volume targets of 1050 in the core model and 600 in Greater Manchester were exceeded, with 1082 and 611 learners respectively having received interventions
 - There has been a decrease from 115 to 91 fixed-term exclusions over the course of the programme. Overall 55% of those learners who had previously been subject to at least one fixed-term exclusion at the beginning of the intervention had no further exclusions by the end of the programme
- X1.3 Overall the results are generally very positive, showing that the programme has delivered a significant impact in relation to improving attendance and attainment amongst learners, as well as increasing self-confidence, addressing communication difficulties and developing more positive attitudes towards school and education in general. Learners taking part in the programme could be characterised as being “school phobic” (lacking in motivation, significantly at risk of exclusion, poor attendees with a high number of disciplinary referrals and a range behavioural issues, and with a variety of support needs). Evidence from this evaluation suggests very strongly that the positive outcomes detailed above would not have happened without the EiE programme.
- X1.4 The substantial benefits which learners had experienced were confirmed by data from Rickter assessments, qualitative research and case studies.
- Approximately 50% of learners reported an increase in their happiness with life and their home environment
 - Approximately 50% of learners reported an increase in confidence in their own future
 - Approximately 50% of learners said that they now give more thought to their education

- Approximately 65% of learners felt they had improved their communication skills, and were more likely to ask for help

X1.5 Learners gave a range of reasons for the success of the programme:

- It gave them much better opportunities (compared to school) to address their issues and to explore the reasons for their current position
- Emotional support made them feel more comfortable - there was more trust and a more relaxed environment
- One-to-one mentoring interventions from key workers and peer mentoring were very helpful
- Group work facilitated learning, with the role of EiE teachers seen as very important
- The variety of activities provided by EiE were motivating and facilitated the acquisition of team working skills and increases in confidence and aspirations

X1.6 School staff, programme staff and parents likewise reported that there had been positive impacts for learners in key areas such as confidence and communication skills, as well as in attainment and attendance. They also confirmed that these outcomes were mainly attributable to the EiE programme interventions.

X1.7 Parents reported that they themselves were benefiting from the programme by being able to address their child's problems more effectively in relation to school. Overall, they found the support very useful and were very satisfied with the support for their children and themselves.

X1.8 The programme comprised a multifaceted set of interventions which were delivered by local partnership teams in each of the five locations. Overall, the programme was seen as unique. The blended and flexible multidisciplinary partnership approach has facilitated the progress of a significant number of learners in behavioural, emotional, personal, social and educational terms. Key partners were I CAN, Dyslexia Action, Pupil Parent Partnership (PPP) and Rathbone UK. The programme has facilitated capacity building of the organisations and staff involved and has forged stronger collaborative partnerships for the future by bringing together knowledge, expertise and resources. Catch22 has also benefited enormously through participation in the pilot programme by building its own capacity and knowledge in the alternative education provision arena.

X1.9 Research conducted with programme and school staff identified the following key success factors in the programme:

- one-to-one mentoring interventions by key workers
- communication support for learners and staff (especially regarding hidden communication)
- group-based projects
- the skills, professionalism and expertise of individual team members
- the sharing of practice and skills amongst team members
- positive and open relationships with senior management in schools
- flexibility of support provision
- reflective practice amongst staff
- a healthy degree of autonomy in terms of local delivery

- integration with other support services in schools
- X1.10 The EiE programme has moreover contributed to the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of practitioners. For example, after the first year of the programme 80% of staff pointed to an increase in their awareness of hidden communication needs and their ability to devise practical strategies to help respond to these challenges, indicating that this would change the way they worked in future. School staff also reported that they now felt more able to set appropriate targets, and that learners more frequently met these targets.
- X1.11 In terms of the planned activities and interventions, all of the key operational milestones and outputs were met as set out in the delivery plan. As with most pilots, whereby testing the feasibility of approaches and interventions is necessary, the programme has been subject to continuous development and improvements. For the second pilot programme year, Catch22 initiated an improvement programme designed to address many of the issues which had been identified in the interim report:
- greater clarity and understanding of the programme's USP
 - better communications between local teams and the national team
 - better communications between school staff and project teams
 - improving the referral process
 - improving the assessment tools
 - development of the programme's curriculum offer
 - clarifying the role and securing the commitment of schools through stronger Service Level Agreements
- X1.12 Most schools felt that projects in their schools had progressed more slowly in the first year than they thought it would have done, mainly because of the administrative burden which was placed upon them by the referral process and assessment tools (these were largely seen as time consuming and inappropriate). Similarly there were problems with ensuring that schools were effectively recording and monitoring data. In response, the new EiE programme model features less onerous referral and assessment mechanisms and a more streamlined approach to data collection and management and adheres to full quality assurance systems.
- X1.13 It was also reported at the interim stage that poor communication between programme staff and school staff (especially a lack of responsiveness from schools) had sometimes led to misunderstandings and unclear expectations. For example, access to learners was sometimes restricted by schools because of timetabling logistics. However, these issues did improve as the programme progressed and relationships began to mature.
- X1.14 Another strong development was the increasing involvement of learners in the direction and design of the programme, and particularly in youth-led evaluation and the design of research methods. As a result some learners have benefited enormously and in some cases have become Young Advisers. Young Advisers (learners who have been or are at risk of being excluded from school) work with the wider student body and school staff to undertake a piece of social action over a 12 week period. They then evaluate the impact of the action before planning how they would start to commercialise it and go on to explore sustainability options. This element of EIE is still in its infancy at the time of writing the current report.
-

- X1.15 A key objective of the programme was to achieve sustainability beyond the pilot funding. Here there has been limited success with only a small proportion of pilot schools agreeing so far to continue with the programme, though Catch22 has only recently begun a marketing drive. Schools referred to the cost of the programme as being the main deciding factor in them choosing to continue or not. However, it should be noted that, at the interim stage, some schools had suggested that EiE was given less priority than it perhaps merited because it was being provided free of cost. This suggests that will be difficult in the future to find the right balance in terms of pricing.
- X1.16 Nevertheless it is also important to recognise that EiE has already established the foundations for sustainability. It has recruited some 386 volunteers and mentors who have so far helped deliver over 10,000 hours of project and group work for learners, and who now constitute a valuable local resource pool for future projects. Several ongoing projects have also emerged from the programme, engaging learners in a wide range of diversionary activity including drama, art, gardening and other leisure pursuits. These are contributing gradually to the development of local civil society as well as to the personal development of the participating learners.
- X1.17 The interim report noted that the EiE programme was still developing and was yet to reach its full potential. One of the main challenges identified was to align the programme more clearly and closely with the relevant national policy frameworks, including OFSTED requirements and some of the recommendations in the Taylor Review¹ of alternative education provision.
- X1.18 Going forward, EiE now sits within Catch22's wider educational offer and is embedded in a new Catch22 education strategy. There has also been a re-structuring at Catch22, which includes the development of a new Education Directorate. A new EiE prospectus has been designed and the newly-remodelled programme is currently being marketed to schools. That said it will be a significant challenge to gain entry into a highly competitive and fast-changing market. The learning offered by the funded pilot programme should provide a useful resource to help Catch22 with this task.
- X1.19 The clear message of this evaluation is that EiE has the potential to deliver positive outcomes and significant impact for learners at the risk of exclusion and of underachieving. The future model may want to explore a "payment-by-results" approach whereby payments would be contingent on the independent verification of results and outcomes. This strategy might appeal to schools given the current economic context in which they are operating. Indeed there is a growing propensity for school clusters to purchase specialist provision as a consortia and this would 'fit' with the new model of EiE.
- X1.20 Finally, delivering a programme of this scale has been a major challenge for all of the participating partners at an operational and strategic level. It is right that targets should be set very high, in terms of both participant numbers (1650 learners) and the Key Performance Indicators (e.g. 75% of participants to have improved their attendance and attainment, and 75% in Greater Manchester to be sustained in Education, Employment and Training). At the same time, given the importance to EiE's success of building

¹ DfE. Taylor Review of alternative provision: Improving alternative provision 2012

relationships and partnerships (which takes time), and also given the impact it has already had, the pilot programme should be regarded as a substantial investment on which future success can be built, with strong partnerships offering an innovative and effective approach..

X2 Key findings

X2.1 Vital statistics

62% of learners had increased their attendance, or it had stayed the same

84% of learners had increased their attainment, or it had stayed the same

Fixed term exclusions had decreased by **21%** as a result of the programme

1693 learners have benefitted from the programme

Overall the programme has recruited **386 volunteers**, who have contributed a total of **10,104** hours

Overall the programme generated over **1000 project sessions** supporting some **1250** learners

XX projects were implemented throughout the programme

The programme has delivered **3640** one-to-one support sessions which equates to **3922** hours in total

There have been **5615** group sessions comprising **7838** contact hours with programme staff.

There have been **154** accredited courses delivered to learners

The programme has recruited **386** volunteers

Volunteers have contributed a total of **10,104** hours

X2.2 What programme and school staff told us

58% programme and school staff identified improvements on learners **attainment** to either a large or to some extent

62% of programme and school staff identified improvements on learners' **attendance** to either a large or to some extent

72% of programme staff identified increases in teachers' awareness of **hidden communication** needs

86% of programme and school staff identified improvements in learners' **confidence** to either a large or to some extent

76% of programme and school staff identified **reductions in adverse behaviour** in learners to either a large or to some extent

Across all of these indicators some **93%** reported that these improvements were attributable either solely or partially to the programme.

X2.3 **What learners told us**

71% of learners thought that the main element of the programme which was most useful was **having someone to talk to who understands them**

66% of learners reported that the **one-to-one sessions** with 'key-workers' was very useful

63% of learners reported that having a **mentor** was very useful

66% of learners agreed 'a lot' that the **smaller groups** made it easier for them to learn

48% of learners reported that the programme was helping them **not get excluded** from school

62% of learners agreed 'a lot' that the things they learn with Catch22 are interesting

62% of learners reported that they had improved their **confidence** either very much or quite a lot

60% of learners reported that they had improved their **communication skills** and **attendance** either very much or quite a lot

59% of learners reported that they had improved their **behaviour** either very much or quite a lot

52% of learners reported that they had improved their **attitude towards teachers** either very much or quite a lot

Overall, **75%** felt that all these improvements above would not occurred without the support from the programme

On average **80%** of learners who were interviewed after completing the programme reported that they had improved their confidence, behaviour, communication skills, and attitudes towards teachers, attendance and school work.

52% of learners reported increases in happiness with life and were more **confident about the future**

47% reported that they were **happier with their education** since taking part in the programme happiness with their home environment

55% noted that they had experienced a **decrease in stress** since they took part in the programme

72% of learners noted that since they had received support that **coming to school** was better

X2.4 **What parents told us**

95% of parents reported that their child's **attendance** at school had improved either a lot or quite a bit

74% of parents reported that their child's **behaviour** at school had improved either a lot or quite a bit

83% of parents found that the support to improve their child's attendance was very useful

77% of parents found that the support given to access parenting courses/training was very useful

68% of parents said that they were very satisfied with the support they were getting from the programme

This report was written by Paul Ellis of Third Sector Research Solutions (TSRS) 2013

The report was published by Prevista

www.prevista.co.uk

If you require any further information please contact Paul Ellis

paul.ellis@tsrs.org.uk

www.tsrs.org.uk