

Evaluation of the Mayor's London Schools Excellence Fund

Final Report

March 2016

The logo for SQW, consisting of the letters 'SQW' in a bold, dark red, sans-serif font.

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	Director		

1. Introduction

Outcome of the
Mayor's Education
Inquiry 2011/12

1. The London Schools' Excellence Fund (LSEF) is a major element of the Mayor's Education Programme, a programme that was established by the Greater London Authority (GLA) following the Mayor's Education Inquiry in 2011-12¹. The wide-reaching Inquiry made a series of 12 recommendations, relating to three themes: *'Promoting excellent teaching in all London schools'*; *'Preparing young Londoners for life and work in a global city'*; and *'A good school place for every London child'*².
2. Under the first of these themes, the Inquiry noted that London schools tended to perform better than the national average at Key Stages 2 and 4, that London schools were particularly effective in their work with more disadvantaged pupils (such as those eligible for Free School Meals) and that a high proportion of London schools were rated as 'outstanding' by Ofsted. Nonetheless, it also noted that, when considered alongside other high performing jurisdictions, internationally, standards in reading, mathematics and science could be still higher.
3. The Inquiry suggested, therefore, that the Mayor should establish a '**London Schools Excellence Fund** [...]' to help schools make substantial progress on the most pressing education priorities in the capital, namely literacy, numeracy and raising standards in science, technology, engineering and maths' (Recommendation 2). This recommendation had, at its heart, the concept of raising standards and expectations through promoting continuing professional development for teachers and school-to-school self-improvement. The programme subsequently established under the Fund also incorporated some of the other elements set out in the Inquiry's recommendations, including an emphasis on 'consolidating and deepening subject knowledge' amongst primary school teachers and 'specialist networks and events that bring together secondary school teachers from across schools and boroughs to share good practice and develop effective collaborative links' (Recommendation 3). **The London Schools Excellence Fund** (LSEF) was established alongside two other school-focused programmes, the **London Schools' Gold Club** (Recommendation 1) and the **London Curriculum** (Recommendation 5), both of which are the subject of separate, focused evaluations³.
4. This report focuses specifically on the impact of the funded projects and the learning that has occurred as a result of the LSEF, in relation to the outputs and outcomes that the funded projects identified and to the implications of those findings for the commissioning of similar projects; the conditions necessary to ensure that projects

London Schools
Excellence Fund,
London Curriculum
and Gold Club

¹ Greater London Authority (2012) The Mayor's Education Inquiry Final Report: Findings and Recommendations [Online] Available: <http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/The%20Mayor's%20Education%20Inquiry%20Final%20Report.pdf>

² Three of these (the London Schools Excellence Fund, the London Gold Club and the London Curriculum) were the subject of an evaluation commissioned by the GLA and undertaken by SQW.

³ See <http://www.sqw.co.uk/insights-and-publications/evaluation-of-the-london-schools-gold-club> for the evaluation report of the London Schools Gold Club programme.

can be effective; and the strategies and activities that appear to be associated with the most robust outcomes.

About the LSEF

*Foci for the LSEF:
raising subject
knowledge and
supporting the
sharing of
knowledge*

5. The over-arching theory of change for the Mayor's Education Programme (that *'improving teacher capability and providing regional support to the London schools system will raise educational attainment'*) highlights the two main foci for the LSEF. These are **raising subject-specific knowledge** amongst teachers in the capital (through training, the development of resources and tools and opportunities to work with other local teachers or subject experts) and **providing mechanisms** by which the dissemination of subject knowledge and expert pedagogy can be shared.
6. In setting up the Fund (as well as the Gold Club and the London Curriculum), the GLA intended it to be a 'bottom-up' approach, which would focus on issues of priority to schools. The LSEF sought to test three distinct hypotheses, namely:
 - Investing in teacher subject knowledge and subject-specific teaching methods/ pedagogy will lead to improved outcomes for pupil's attainment, subject participation and aspiration.
 - Effective school networks and partnerships support improved schools and teacher collaboration which impacts on pupil outcomes.
 - A focus on teachers and subject expertise supports cultural change and helps raise expectations in the London school system.
7. The programme of activity that was funded through the LSEF involved a range of high-performing schools, higher education institutions, learned societies and other organisations working with a range of other primary and secondary schools in order to develop a self-sustaining learning community, leading to in-depth subject knowledge and raised pupil attainment. Bidders were encouraged to form active partnerships in order to support improvements in subject knowledge and the quality of teaching (especially in those subjects identified as a priority)⁴, build on emerging promising practice and evaluate their work so that it might be possible to transfer learning, raise expectations and promote cultural change.
8. The LSEF (amounting to a total of just over £24 million, with £20 million of that coming from the Department for Education)⁵ was disbursed over three funding rounds, as set out here:
 - The first round focused on the **larger projects** (grants of between £75,000 and £500,000), with an emphasis on projects that sought to **scale-up activities** that **drew on an existing evidence-base** of effectiveness, whether locally in the partnership or through pilots or trials elsewhere in the world. There was no requirement for matched funding, but LSEF funding

Funding of the LSEF

⁴ Namely, English, mathematics, biology, chemistry, computer science, physics, history, geography and languages.

⁵ One of the project elements (*English: the key to integration in London*) attracted additional funding – see text.

could not be used to replace or duplicate any existing funds. Applications for these projects opened in March 2013, with the aim that the projects would be delivered over two academic years (preferably, though not necessarily, starting in September/October 2013). This round of funding was managed directly by the GLA and was disbursed over two periods or windows.

- The second round of funding focused on **smaller grants** of between £30,000 and £75,000. Applications opened in June 2013. The priorities remained the same as in Round 1, that is of improving subject knowledge and teaching quality, encouraging partnership working (of between at least two schools) and evaluating practice. This smaller round of funding was managed by Rocket Science, in partnership with the Teacher Development Trust, on behalf of the GLA, and was also disbursed over two windows.
- The final full round of funding was announced in March 2014. This round encompassed a number of themes, including a specific focus on English as the Key to Integration in London⁶ and on Children in Care (funding for the latter including support for schools and foster carers in enhancing children's readiness for learning, better reflecting their needs and enabling foster carers to engage effectively in their children's education)⁷. Projects ran for one year between summer 2014 and summer 2015. This round of funding was managed directly by the GLA.

9. Every successful bidder (of which there were 95 in scope for this meta-evaluation) was expected to **monitor** and **evaluate**⁸ their project, both to support their own learning and in order to provide the GLA with material that would enable it to learn from the different approaches and activities, and to assess the impact of the disbursed revenue. Since many of the institutions bidding for funding were new to the process of monitoring and evaluating a research project (though they may well have been very familiar with activities such as monitoring pupil progress, for example), or to disseminating effective practice, the GLA set up **two distinct support elements** for the Fund. These were:

- **The provision of support to LSEF funded projects in their use of evaluation and the Self-Evaluation Toolkit.** At the outset, the GLA had designed templates to capture each project's theory of change and evaluation plan (this latter included an example evaluation framework with metrics), as well as a series of reporting templates to capture project outputs and

GLA support for funded projects: Project Oracle and the London Leadership Strategy

⁶ *English: the key to integration in London* was part-funded by the European Integration Fund (EIF), which allocated £1.5 million (of the £2 million disbursed to the programme) under Strategic Priority 3. Eight of the projects (those working directly with mothers) received most of their funding through the EIF and were the subject of a separate independent evaluation. The six projects (working directly with teachers) that were fully funded under the LSEF are included in this current evaluation.

⁷ Funding for this work (£500,000) supported the London Fostering Achievement Programme (a programme of activity delivered by the Fostering Network in partnership with Achievement for All) is being evaluated by the Rees Centre for Research in Fostering and Education at the University of Oxford, in partnership with the Centre for Child and Family Research at Loughborough University.

⁸ Project Self Evaluation Reports can be found at www.london.gov.uk/LSEFresources

outcomes. **Project Oracle**⁹, were appointed by the GLA to provide assistance to the projects (through workshops and one-to-one advice) during the start-up phase, to enable projects to complete the overview of their theory of change and evaluation plans, and were subsequently commissioned by the GLA to provide additional support (including some face-to-face activities) to projects in preparing their interim and evaluation reports. Their work has incorporated a number of different phases:

- Helping projects, at the outset, to document their research to enable them to achieve validation to *at least* Standard 1 of the Project Oracle Standards¹⁰. This meant commenting on and responding to projects' theories-of-change (these set out the links between project activities, intended outcomes and aims and the assumptions that lie behind them) and their outline evaluation plan of when and how they would measure the impact of their project. This triggered projects' initial milestone payments from the GLA.
- Supporting projects in submitting their interim and final reports, setting out what had been done under the project, what had been achieved (in terms of outputs and outcomes) and the evidence for this (see below).
- **The provision of support to disseminate project findings.** The GLA appointed the **London Leadership Strategy**¹¹ (LLS) to provide this support to projects. They worked with projects to help them identify the messages that could and should be shared with schools and other projects to enable them to build on effective and promising practice.

Bringing together learning from the LSEF

10. In order to learn from the range of projects commissioned under the LSEF, the GLA commissioned SQW to conduct a **meta-evaluation**, drawing on the documentary information provided by the funded projects. The meta-evaluation was designed to interrogate the methodological integrity, process and reliability of the project evaluations (looking closely at the **quality** of the project evidence and the extent to which we can rely on the findings) and to bring together the body of robust project **evidence** (both qualitative and quantitative) to inform policy and practice¹². The

The meta-evaluation

⁹ Project Oracle is a children and youth evidence hub managed and implemented by The Social Innovation Partnership (TSIP) and London Metropolitan University (LMU) and funded by the GLA, the Mayor's Office for Police and Crime (MOPAC) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

¹⁰ See <http://project-oracle.com/standards-of-evidence/standard-one/>

¹¹ London Leadership Strategy is a not-for-profit organisation led by serving head teachers. It owed its development to London Challenge, and is one of the largest providers of school-to-school support in London. It incorporates an extensive network of National Leaders of Education (NLEs) and a network of outstanding schools in every borough. The role of the LLS in the LSEF is being evaluated through a separate independent evaluation conducted by LKMco an education and youth think tank.

¹² Traditionally, and as summarised by Cooksy and Caracelli, 2009, meta-evaluations have variously been conducted to study the nature of evaluation; to interrogate the methodological integrity, process and reliability of evaluations; or to bring together a body of evidence to explore and test the implications for policy and practice. There is a growing body of work (see, for example, Dabelstein & Patton, 2012; Patton 2012; Gough et al. 2012) that highlights the value of making use of meta-evaluation not only as a means of

meta-evaluation was supplemented by a series of **thematic studies** (focusing on different models of delivery and examining projects across different school phases) and these are included in a separate report.

Conducting and reporting the meta-evaluation

11. The documentary analysis for the meta-evaluation drew on each project's individual theory of change and evaluation plan as well as on their final evaluation report. In order to provide an early indication of progress and to support programme development, SQW completed a mid-project review of 46 of the Round 1 and 2 funded projects¹³ in December 2014. The technical review highlighted some early messages about the quality of the evaluations being conducted by projects and the nature of the reporting that informed the subsequent content, focus and targeting of support provided to the projects funded by Project Oracle and the GLA. It is evident from the nature, content and coverage of the submitted final reports that projects had benefitted from this support.
12. In assessing the quality and credibility of the projects' self-evaluation, we collated the written evidence from each of the **78 projects** that had submitted complete documentation (theories of change, evaluation plans and final reports) by the end of November 2015. This constitutes **82%** of the projects in scope for the meta-evaluation.
 - The 78 projects included in the meta-evaluation are made up of 51 round 1 projects, 21 round 2 projects, and 6 English for Integration projects.
 - 14 self-evaluation reports had not been received by the meta-evaluation deadline and 3 projects ceased delivery before completing a self-evaluation.
13. A further eight projects¹⁴, which were part of a parent project '*English: the Key to Integration in London*' (this was part-funded by the LSEF, and part-funded by the Home Office), submitted case studies to the GLA and were the subject of a separate independent evaluation and so are not included here. This is also the case for a further Round 3 project '*Fostering Achievement*', which is being evaluated separately.
14. All of the 78 projects had been validated to Standard 1 of the Project Oracle Standards, 66 of them had put themselves forward for assessment under Standard 2 and six under Standard 3 (three projects chose not to seek validation)¹⁵. At the time of the meta-evaluation, projects were still being assessed in relation to the higher standards and this meta-evaluation report is based on the evaluation reports submitted and agreed by the GLA prior to the validation process. Some of these

Identifying project characteristics

aggregating evaluation information to inform project development but also as a systematic means of ensuring the quality of programme-related evaluation studies.

¹³ These were projects for which completed theories of change, evaluation plans and interim reports were available.

¹⁴ These focused on improving the English of non-EU mothers who had been in the UK for less than 10 years.

¹⁵ Data from Project Oracle shows that a total of 77 projects put themselves forward for validation at Standard 2 and seven for Standard 3. A further 10 were recorded as not putting themselves forward for validation. A number of the funded projects (under English as the Key to Integration and Fostering Achievement) were being evaluated separately and so have not been put forward for validation.

projects may have amended their self-evaluation report, following feedback from Project Oracle, in order to achieve validation at Standard 2 or Standard 3. The descriptive material from these documents was first used to understand the nature, focus and delivery model of each of the projects (discussed in Section 2), and to provide a limited assessment of value for money.

15. A full Value for Money analysis was not possible, in the main because, given the ambitious multi Key Stage and multi-subject scope of the LSEF there were few common cross-LSEF outcome indicators against which the efficiency or cost-benefit of the participating projects could be calculated and compared. For the 78 projects that were reviewed for the meta-evaluation, information on outputs and overall spend was available from the evaluation reports for 66 projects, allowing us to explore the relative *economy* or costs (per school, per teacher, per pupil – see Section 2) associated with the projects, and *efficiencies* (in relation to cost per output) though these could not be translated into metrics related to teacher or pupil outcomes (meaning that *cost-effectiveness* could not be calculated).
16. The second stage of the assessment was conducted using a framework of 16 indicators that reflected the nature and context of the LSEF against which projects were reviewed¹⁶. This process was adopted in order to ensure a systematic, consistent and comprehensive analysis. Reviewers were asked to make a judgement of the quality of the evaluation evidence against a number of key questions. These judgements contributed to the calculation of a total score for each indicator and each evaluation phase (Evaluation Set Up, Evaluation Conduct and Evaluation Reporting) for all 78 projects. The scores for each of the indicators was generated on a five-point scale, with a score of 5 indicating a high level of clarity, credibility and consistency in the evidence presented. This enabled us to calculate the overall strength of the evaluation evidence for individual projects (discussed in Section 3), and subsequently to reflect on the outputs, outcomes and impacts from the projects for which there was credible and robust evidence, giving an indication of the impact of the programme as a whole (discussed in Section 4).
17. Finally, we explored the lessons that had been learnt in relation to programme set-up (what did this indicate about the nature and scope of the evidence base on which funded projects need to be based to ensure objectives can be met), implementation (what needs to be in place to ensure that projects can be effective) and context (including the ways in which projects are evaluated). These lessons are explored in Section 5.
18. A detailed description of our evaluation approach and methodology is provided in the supporting Technical Annex.

The process of
meta-evaluation:
assessing
credibility, clarity
and reliability

Learning the lessons

¹⁶ This framework was based on indicators developed by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (JCSEE) based at the University of Iowa. More detail on our approach to the meta-evaluation is provided in the supporting Technical Annex.

2. Information about the projects

1. This Section provides an overview of the main characteristics of the projects funded through the LSEF. Of the 95 projects that are in scope for the meta-evaluation, **78** have been reviewed for this study¹⁷. In particular we consider;
 - What was the scope and scale of funded activity?
 - What were projects trying to achieve with their funding, with whom and in which subject areas?
 - What approaches were adopted by projects to achieve their anticipated outcomes and what types of organisational structures were adopted in order to deliver these activities?

Scope and scale of the projects

2. Based on an investment of £24m, a total of 110 projects were successful in attracting funding from the LSEF, of which 95 are in scope for this meta-evaluation. Of these 95, **78 submitted sufficient documentation to be considered as part of the meta-evaluation** by the end of November 2015. As discussed in Section 1, applications to LSEF were accepted in three rounds. Fifty-one of the 78 projects considered as part of the meta-evaluation were from Round 1 (a total of 58 projects received funding in this round). Round 2, which had the same focus as Round 1, but a lower budget ceiling, was designed to provide an opportunity for smaller school-led projects; a total of 21 of the 78 projects we reviewed came from this round. Six projects of a possible 10¹⁸ funded under Round 3 were considered as part of this review.
3. Reflecting the aims of the fund to harness expertise from across the education system, funded projects were led by a range of different types of organisations, from individual schools through to charities and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The variation in the character of the lead organisations is shown in Figure 2-1. This provides information from the 78 submitted reports, augmented by information from the GLA on a further 15 projects that had not submitted their evaluation reports in time to be included in the meta-evaluation.¹⁹
4. Of these 93 projects, just over two-fifths were led by schools (this was also true for those included in this meta-evaluation) although, in some cases, the projects were delivered in partnership with other organisations. Other agents responsible for leading LSEF projects included not-for-profit organisations (one quarter of the 93 funded projects), learned societies/subject associations (13%), Local Authorities

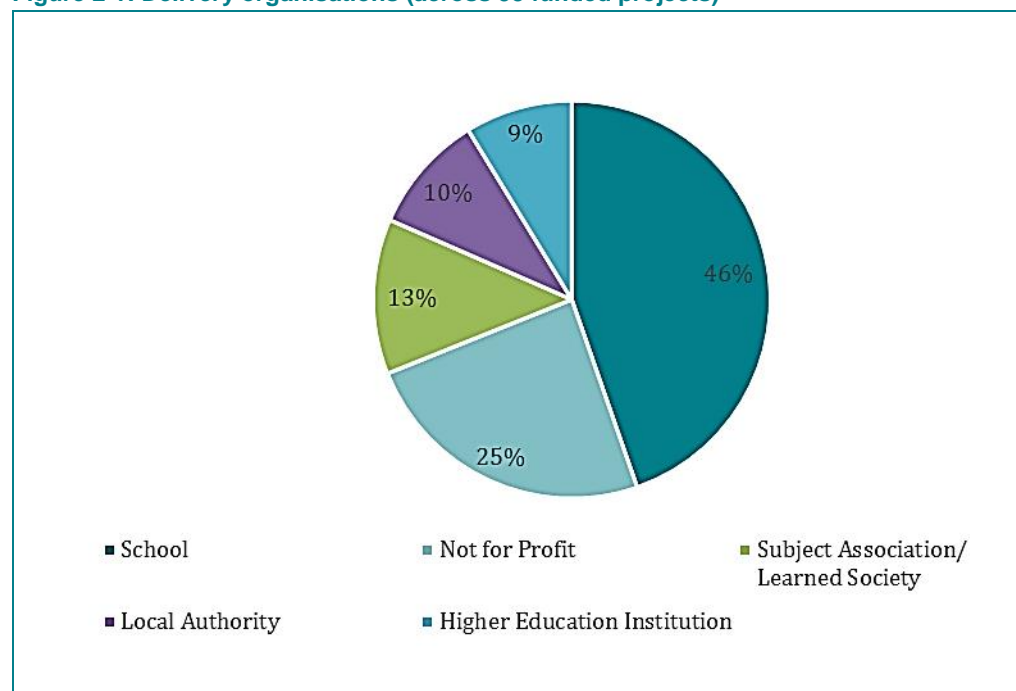
¹⁷ Note that eight others were the subject of a separate independent evaluation.

¹⁸ This total excludes the projects identified above (the English the Key to Integration projects targeted at improving mothers' English and Fostering Achievement).

¹⁹ One project had stopped delivering prior to this stage and one was ongoing and not due to submit its evaluation until later in 2016.

(10%) and Higher Education institutions (9%). This pattern was reflected in the 78 projects included in the meta-evaluation.

Figure 2-1: Delivery organisations (across 93 funded projects)



Source: Analysis of LSEF project reports. N=93

Project funding

5. Within their project reports, projects were asked to record the total amount of grant funding received through the LSEF, and, where appropriate, the other sources of funding that had been available to them (either cash or in-kind). Of the 78 projects reviewed as part of the meta-evaluation, **66 provided such financial information** in the Evaluation Report provided to SQW. Consideration of this data reveals that these 66 projects received a total of just over £13,600,000 in grant funding from the LSEF.
6. Leveraging this funding from the LSEF, some projects supported the delivery of their intervention with other funding sources. In most cases, such funding came from either other 'public' sector organisations or 'private' sources such as charitable foundations. In reviewing the final reports, 17 projects stated that they had received funding from such sources. Seven projects stated (in their final report) that they were in receipt of other sources of 'public' funding. The level of other public funding per project was found to vary markedly and ranged from £11,000 to £259,549 (with a median of just under £34,900). In total eleven projects indicated that they had accessed 'private' funding, with amounts varying from £990 to £112,588 (with a median of just under £32,000). In total, the combined value of other public and private funding across all 17 of the projects that had been successful in leveraging additional funding was just under £825,000 (a mean of £48,529).

7. In addition to the 'cash' funding accessed by LSEF projects many had also accessed 'in-kind' support. This could include, for example, inputs from delivery partners, or from participating schools. Thirty-one of the 78 projects specified that they had received 'in-kind' support. Given the difficulties in capturing and monetising this data (projects had taken different approaches to 'monetising' in-kind resources, including the time dedicated by participating teachers) it should be treated with caution. Nonetheless, analysis of the data provided by the 31 projects shows that projects accessed just under £2,000,000 of 'in-kind' resources with amounts ranging from £3,860 to £291,602. The median amount of 'in-kind' support received by these projects was just over £33,700.

Numbers of schools, teachers and pupils involved

8. LSEF projects used their funding to implement a variety of approaches (with some interventions focussed on individual practitioners, while others were designed to support whole-school change). Depending on their approach, the 78 reviewed projects were found to adopt varying ways to assessing the 'outputs' of their intervention (such as how many schools/individuals were 'affected' by their project). As a result any findings resulting from the analysis of these data should be treated with caution. Having said this, at an aggregate level, the **78 projects** estimated that they had reached a total of around **4,000 schools**²⁰ (a median of around 20 schools per project). Consistent with the different delivery models/approaches adopted by the projects, variability in the number of schools supported by individual project was high, ranging from a minimum of two schools to 542 schools.
9. Variability in the number of teachers supported by individual projects was also found to be high. The lowest number of teachers supported by a project was nine, while the highest was estimated to be 1,928. Such variation can be explained in part by project scale but there also appears to have been some differences in how projects assessed the contribution of peer-to-peer or networking activity. Such activity often engaged a large number of practitioners from outside the 'direct' intervention group (that is, those who were able to access a targeted programme of support). Given this level of variation any measure of the 'average' should be treated with caution. Nonetheless, the median number of teachers supported by the projects included in this meta-evaluation was assessed as just over 80. The total number of teachers supported by these 78 projects was estimated as just under **15,000** (although there is evidence to suggest that some practitioners may have had the potential to benefit from or have chosen to access support from more than one project).
10. Projects were found to have faced similar challenges in estimating the number of pupils who might have benefited from project activity. Further to this, and given the nature of the data, it was not possible (from the documentation) to assess whether individual pupils had the potential to benefit from more than one project.

²⁰ Some schools may have been involved in more than one project and so counted by more than one project. Given the way in which data was presented in Evaluation Reports submitted to SQW, it is not possible to be exact as to the total number of schools across these 78 projects. Please note that the GLA holds data on how LSEF supported individual London schools.

Nonetheless, analysis of this data indicates that the total number of pupils that may have benefitted from project activity to support improvements in the educational experience was around **621,000 across the 78 projects** (although one project estimated that it alone reached 368,157 pupils.). If we remove this figure (which appears anomalous when considered alongside the data from the other 77 projects), the total number of pupils reached by the 77 projects stands at just over **253,000**, with a median of around 1,200 pupils per project.

Costs at school, teacher and pupil level

11. As might be expected (given the different budgets and foci of the three funding rounds), analysis of the cost data provided by LSEF projects revealed a high level of variation in the amount of funding accessed by projects in each round. In summary (and based on available data) the median amount of funding received by Round 1 projects was just under £305,000 (based on data provided by 45 of the 51 projects we reviewed in this round). On average, and as would be expected, Round 2 projects accessed a much lower amount of funding (a median of around £81,000, based on data provided by the 21 projects we reviewed in this round). Round 3 projects accessed a median of around £124,000 per project (this assessment was based on data from four of the six projects we reviewed in this round).
12. Round 2 projects received comparatively lower funding from the LSEF than Round 1 projects. The 18 projects for whom we received Round 2 funding data had also obtained just under one quarter of their total funding from other sources. Using the median value, over three-quarters (77%) of the total amount of funding accessed by these 18 Round 2 projects came from the LSEF. In comparison, a higher proportion of the Round 1 project spend (82%) came from the LSEF (an assessment based on data from 45 projects). Given the nature and requirements of the funding provision under Round 3, projects did not seek additional funding.
13. Having established the degree of funding received by projects in the three rounds, it is useful, where possible, to explore the relationship between the relative cost of activity and the reported outputs of different projects. The level of variation observed between the funding attracted by projects varied across the different rounds, so that any programme-wide assessment should be considered with care. However, based on the data to which we had access, the median cost per school involvement (based on data from 63 projects) was just over £7,000. Considered round by round, the cost per school for Round 3 English for Integration projects was found to be just under three times higher (at a median cost of just over £20,000 per school) than for Round 1 or Round 2 projects (a median cost of just under £7,000), and this may reflect the very targeted and intensive nature of in-school activity, since the median cost per teacher was, on average, lower (see below).
14. Perhaps reflecting the challenges faced by projects in accurately assessing the number of teachers with the potential to benefit from support from their project, the median cost per teacher for Round 3 projects (just under £1,000) was around one third of the median cost per teacher of Round 1 and Round 2 projects (around £3,000). Overall, the median cost per teacher participant across all three rounds was

calculated to be around £2,000. Although, clearly such figures should be considered with care, they nonetheless provide an indicative benchmark for the efficiency of projects of this type.

15. Using the data provided by projects, it was possible to estimate the average cost per pupil (60 of the 78 provided the necessary information to do this). Given the level of variation between projects in terms of their estimations of pupils reached, the reliability of any such measure may be low. Nonetheless, the analysis of available data indicates that the median cost per pupil was around £100 (this assessment was based on data from 60 of the 78 projects). Considered by funding round, the median cost per pupil for Round 1 projects was found to be around £300 per pupil (based on data from 39 projects), for Round 2 this fell to around £100 per pupil (based on data from 17 projects). The median cost per pupil for Round 3 projects was similar to those for Round 2.

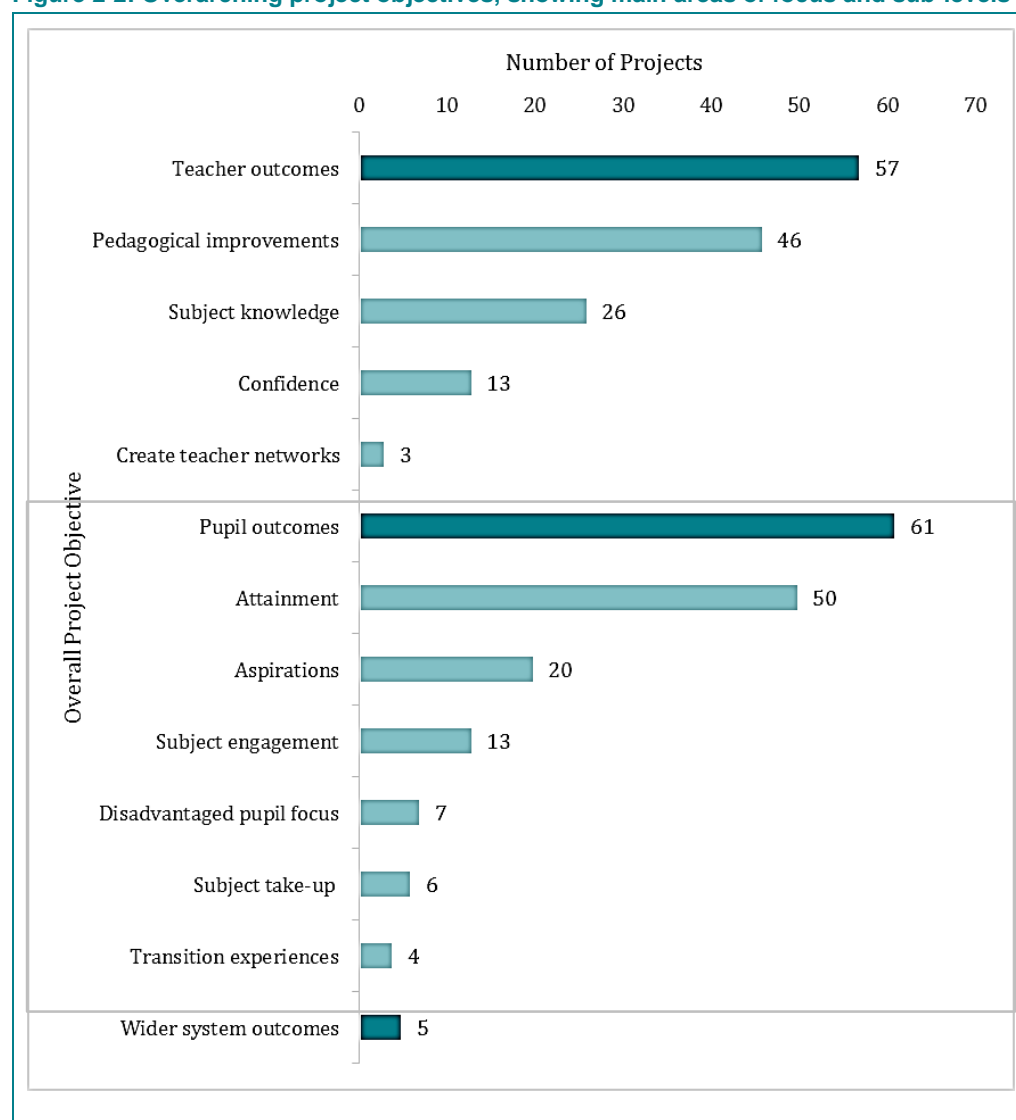
What were the projects trying to achieve?

Overarching project objectives

16. In developing a theory of change for their intervention, projects were asked to identify what they hoped to achieve (their aims/objectives). As noted in Section 1, the GLA provided an Evaluation Framework template to guide projects in their definition of outcomes. Of the 78 projects reviewed, two-thirds (49 projects) made it clear what these aims and objectives were. In around one third of the projects (29 projects), however, their intended goals were not clear from the Final Evaluation Report documentation submitted to SQW, so further recourse was made to the GLA to obtain this information from their records.
17. The 78 projects in the meta-evaluation set out a wide range of aims and objectives, as demonstrated in Figure 2-2. These identified foci can be grouped into three broad categories, as described in the Evaluation Framework template: **teacher objectives**, (the focus of 57 projects and including improved teacher subject knowledge, confidence and pedagogical skills); **pupil objectives** (the aim of 61 projects and including goals such as improved attainment, raised aspirations and increased subject engagement and take-up) and **wider school change** (which was the focus of fewer projects - five in total - recognising the relatively short time over which funding under the LSEF would be available).
18. Within these three categories, projects reflected the broader intentions of the LSEF, with aims for the improvement of teacher pedagogy (46 projects), teacher subject knowledge (26 projects mentioned this explicitly) and the collection of pupil attainment evidence (50 projects) sitting at the top of the agenda. As mentioned, some projects demonstrated an interest in more than one overall objective. For example, 41 projects identified *both* teacher and pupil outcomes as central to their intervention, representing two-thirds of all projects with a primary objective identified.

19. As set out in Figure 2-2, other aims were also considered, which could provide an interim focus in order to create proxies for longer-term improvement. Amongst these interim objectives were a focus on raising teacher confidence in their practice, and encouraging pupils to engage in different subject areas and raise their aspirations for the future.

Figure 2-2: Overarching project objectives, showing main areas of focus and sub-levels



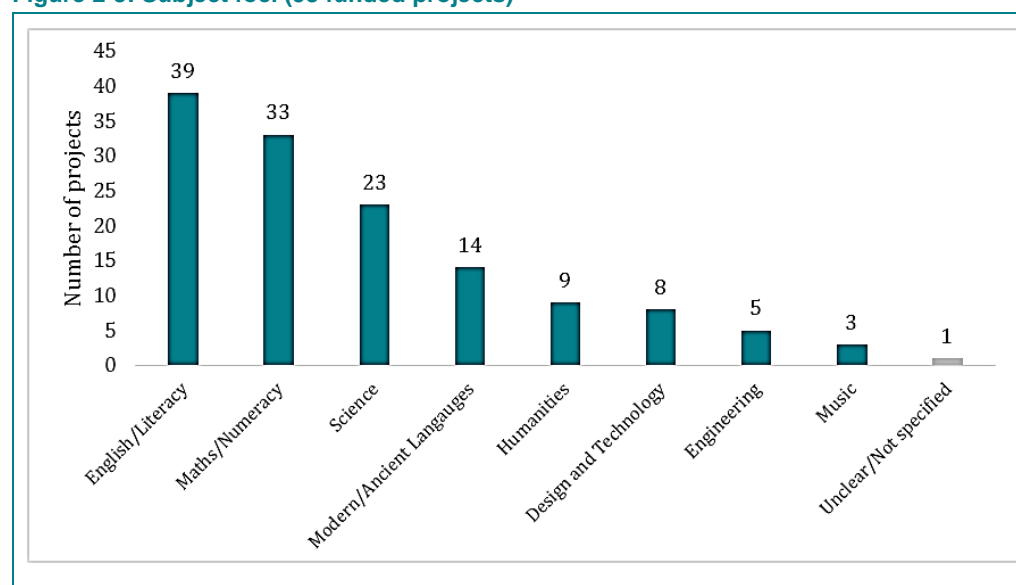
Source: Analysis of LSEF project reports. N=78

Subjects targeted by the projects

20. The main subject foci for the LSEF are English and literacy, mathematics and numeracy, and (primarily, but not exclusively) at secondary level broadened to include science, technology, engineering, humanities and modern and ancient foreign languages. In the data provided to SQW, 68 of the 78 projects were clear and overt when reporting their subject focus (projects could have more than one focus). Additional data from the GLA was sought to augment this information and Figure 2-3 provides an overview of the subject areas that were prioritised by the 93 in-scope projects. The priority areas reflect the recommended criteria from the LSEF. English/literacy was the most prioritised subject area, representing 39 of the 93

projects. Maths/numeracy was identified by 33 projects, while others focused on science, modern and ancient languages, engineering, technology and humanities. The ratio of subjects was the same across the 78 projects included in the meta-evaluation.

Figure 2-3: Subject foci (93 funded projects)

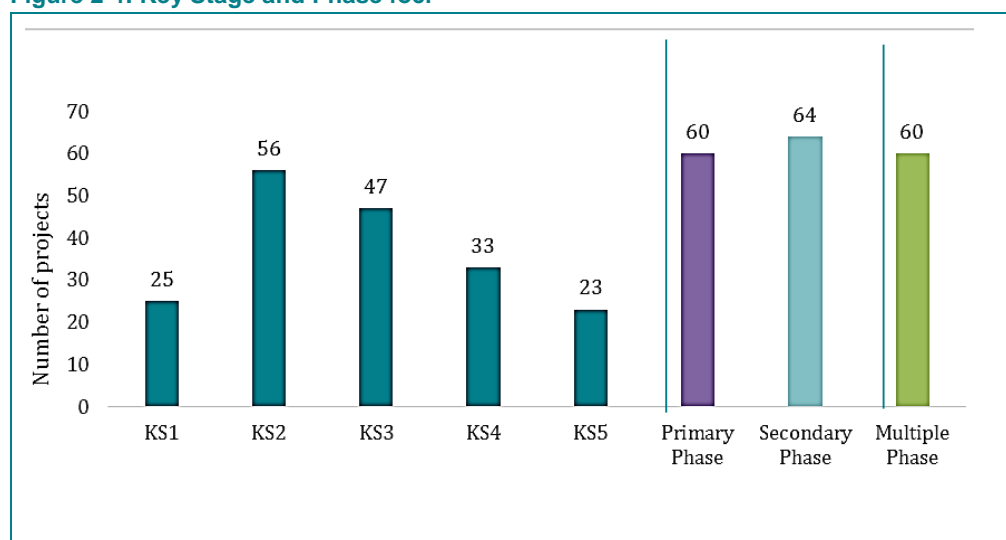


Source: Analysis of LSEF project reports. N=93

Key Stages targeted by the projects

21. Reflecting the objectives of the fund, funded projects targeted activity at a range of different Key Stages. Of the 78 projects considered as part of the review, 50 explicitly set out, in their submitted evaluation report documentation, the Key Stage(s) or phase(s) at which they were working. In order to develop a clearer picture of funded activity across all 93 funded in-scope projects, information was obtained from the GLA on the 28 projects where Final Evaluation Reports were unclear about their target stages and on the 15 projects that had not submitted an evaluation report in time to be included in the meta-evaluation.
22. Figure 2-4 shows the spread of Key Stages and the number of projects working in Primary and Secondary phases. It also shows the number of projects that were engaged in multiple-phase activity, which refers to a project that targeted their activities at both Primary and Secondary schools (though not necessarily adopting a cross-phase approach).
23. Consideration of this analysis reveals that Key Stage 2 (56 projects) and Key Stage 3 (47 projects) were the target of the highest numbers of projects, although some projects targeted more than a single key stage. Sixty projects targeted the Primary phase and 64 projects targeted the Secondary phase, while 60 of the projects worked across more than one phase (including, for example, Key Stage 1 and 2 or Key Stage 3 and 4, as well as projects working with Key Stages 2 and 3).

Figure 2-4: Key Stage and Phase foci



Please note projects could target more than one Key Stage and/or more than one phase
Source: Analysis of LSEF project reports. N=93

Pupil and teacher beneficiaries

24. Twenty of the 78 projects in the meta-evaluation specified a particular sub-group of pupils who would benefit from the intervention. Eight projects sought to improve the educational experience of pupils who were performing above national expectations, for example, whilst the same number were focussed on those pupils who had English as an additional language. Other target groups included those pupils who were performing at levels lower than the national average, or underperforming relative to their ability, as well as children with special education needs.
25. A greater number of projects (42) identified a particular group of teachers around whom they had designed their intervention. In particular, there was a focus on subject specialists, with 28 projects noting this. Meanwhile, some projects used the level of teacher experience (five projects for example mentioned NQTs) as a means for targeting their intervention.

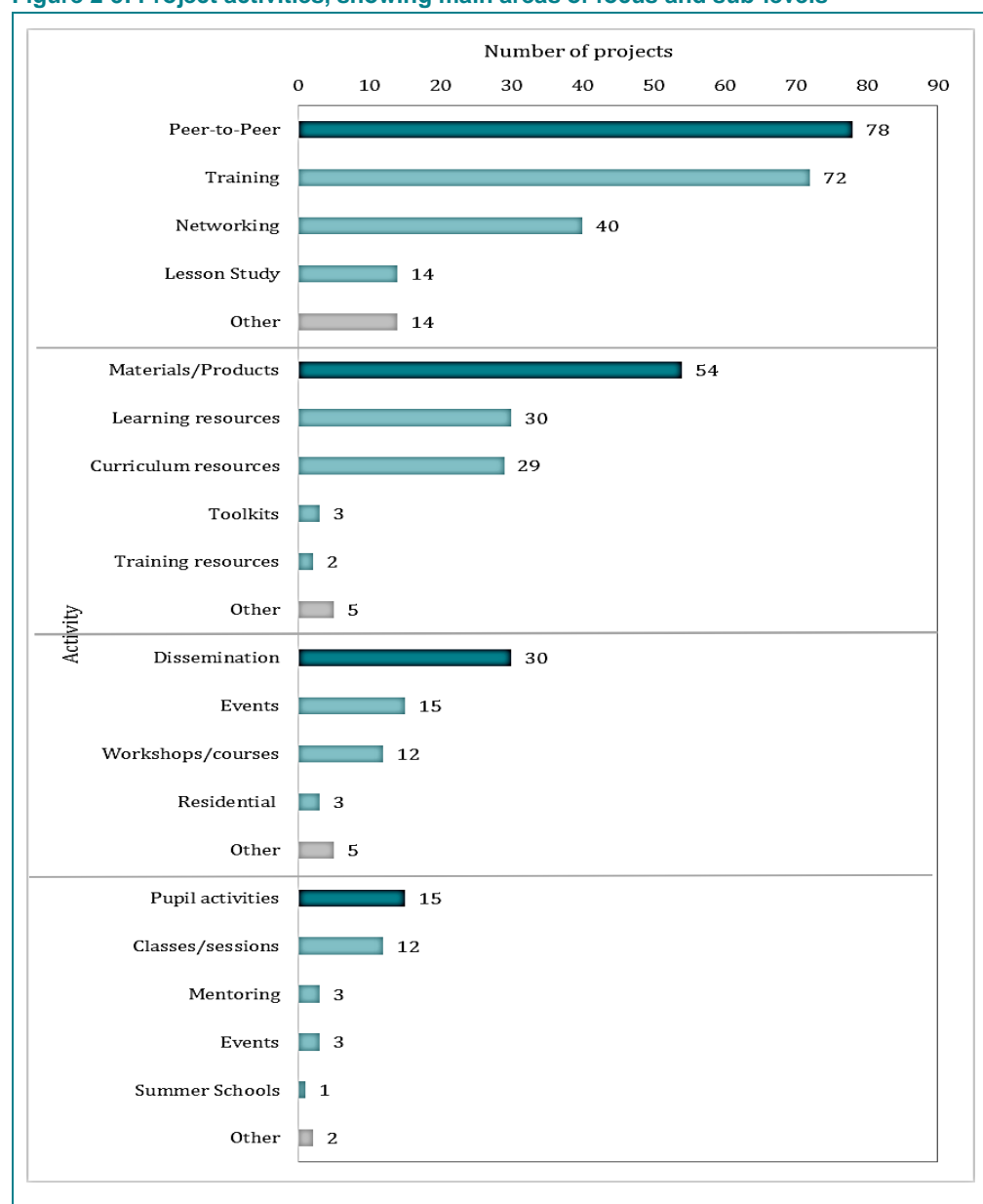
How were projects trying to achieve their aims?

Project activities

26. To achieve their stated objectives projects adopted a range of different approaches. In total, 76 of the 78 projects clearly set out in their Final Evaluation report what activities they intended to support through the programme. As noted above, the overall aim of the LSEF was to improve the teaching in all London schools through raising teachers' subject knowledge and upskilling teachers' pedagogical awareness and capacity. The underlying theory of change for the LSEF is that improvements in teacher subject knowledge will support improvements in pupil attainment. Largely, therefore, projects reflected this interest in activities linked directly with teachers; the key areas of **peer-to-peer activities**, the design and production of **materials and products**, and the **dissemination** to teachers and schools beyond the

intervention group reflect this. A breakdown of the different activities supported by the 78 projects in the meta-evaluation is provided in Figure 2-5²¹.

Figure 2-5: Project activities, showing main areas of focus and sub-levels



Source: Analysis of LSEF data. N=78

27. Notably, all 78 projects included some form of peer-to-peer intervention. Chiefly, this consisted of training opportunities for teachers within the intervention group, though not necessarily outside their own institution. Training opportunities generally took the form of structured training, including training delivered by experts, “train the trainer” models and support for teachers in acquiring new qualifications. That said, 32 projects also implemented some form of coaching or mentoring, reflecting the peer-to-peer approach.

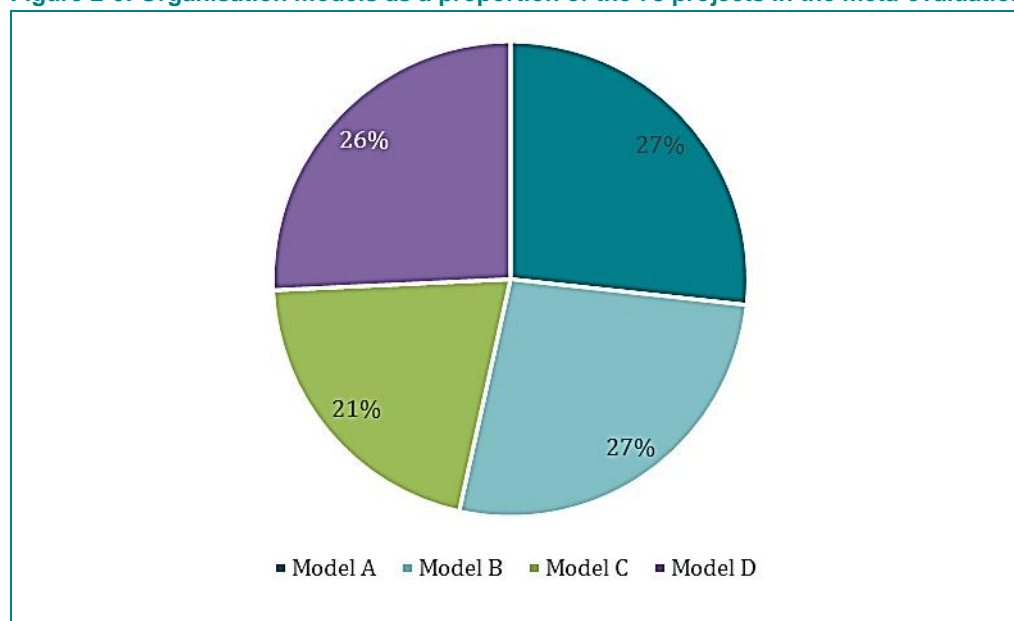
²¹ Note that additional information was obtained from the GLA to collate the data for this table

28. Outside these areas, reviewers identified that projects had supported a range of different networking activities. These networks performed a variety of purposes, such as bringing together practitioners to meet and share effective practice or co-develop lessons plans. Forty projects were involved in this type of activity.
29. Many projects also invested in the design, creation and production of materials and products to support the sharing and implementation of effective teaching practice. Learning resources were mentioned by 30 projects, reflecting an interest in providing teachers with materials to support lesson planning and activities within the classroom. Curriculum resources were also a preferred option, with 29 projects demonstrating an interest in equipping teachers to keep up-to-date with the curriculum. This was particularly relevant in several subject areas which have seen curriculum changes over the past few years. Some projects also created other types of resources, including toolkits and training resources.
30. Dissemination activity refers to dissemination of training and concepts to practitioners outside of the original intervention groups, in keeping with the LSEF aim to generate wider system change. Over one third (38%) of projects specified some form of dissemination activity; these activities mainly focussed on holding events (15 projects) and organising workshops and seminars (12 projects).
31. Although the majority of projects focussed exclusively on activities designed to support practitioners, a small proportion (just under one fifth) also supported pupil activities. Particularly noticeable was the interest in specific classes and sessions for pupils (12 projects) as a means of supporting the work undertaken in training practitioners.

Models of project organisation

32. In order to support the delivery of activities, projects adopted a range of different organisational models. Establishing the manner in which projects were structured will be a helpful tool in understanding whether or not this has had a bearing on their ultimate effectiveness. Through consideration of the projects' final reports, reviewers identified four different models in operation, and each of the 78 projects has been assigned one of these. The models reflected the ways in which institutions and individuals interacted in the implementation of project activity.

Figure 2-6: Organisation models as a proportion of the 78 projects in the meta-evaluation



Source: Analysis of LSEF project reports included within the meta-evaluation. N=78

Model A

33. These projects were characterised by a linear, uni-directional support model, in which a single delivery organisation provided support or training to a range of teacher recipients. These recipients, in turn, implemented the training in their classrooms, but, crucially, did not take part in any further peer-to-peer activities outside their school. The focus of many of these projects was on enhancing teacher subject knowledge and/or on pedagogical content knowledge, whether of individual beneficiaries or a whole staff group in a school.
34. An example of a project operating under Model A included one project in which the lead organisation delivered modern foreign language training to teachers in eight primary schools, both by deploying a specialist teacher into the classroom, and by engaging teachers in subject-specific training. These schools then used the outcomes of this training internally, but did not become part of an extended peer-to-peer network.
35. In total, some 21 projects appeared to operate using the Model A approach and of these, eight were based in primary schools, seven were based in secondary schools and three were working across phase (but were not involved with a wider network).

Model B

36. These projects were also delivered by a single organisation, with coordinated activities for beneficiaries. However, and often following a successful beneficiary engagement strategy (see Section 5), support was then provided in order to facilitate ongoing peer-to-peer working. Such work was designed to encourage beneficiaries to adopt the behaviours and/or practices they had learnt with their peers.

- 37. In one such example, a lead organisation delivered a CPD programme for subject-specialist teachers across six subject areas, for a select group of schools. They also organised subject-specialist networking and events which enabled teachers from the intervention group to share learning amongst themselves and also with a wider group of schools.
- 38. A total of 21 of the 78 projects operated under Model B, with five primary-based projects, 10 secondary-based projects and seven cross-phase projects.

Model C

- 39. These projects included those for whom a delivery organisation (often comprising of multiple partner organisations) was able to support the creation of a number of functioning peer-to-peer networks, following the delivery of training and support to beneficiaries from a range of settings.
- 40. For example, several universities and subject specialist organisations partnered together in one project in order to provide a programme of CPD for teachers and also a range of pupil-focused activities. A particular effort was made to organise events which enabled peer-to-peer learning, strengthening both the networks between schools and between delivery partners. The aim was for these networks to become self-sustaining.
- 41. In total, we identified 16 projects operating Model C. Of these, 12 were primary-focused, nine were secondary-focused and six worked across-phases.

Model D

- 42. These projects were characterised by the presence of multiple delivery centres, which were themselves responsible for delivering training and support in a range of settings, coordinated by one or more organisations working in partnership.
- 43. In one example project, a large Teaching Schools Alliance hired several subject specialist organisations to intervene in each of its member schools, and coordinated and managed the interventions. Elements of leadership development were incorporated in order to build sustainability in the system and within individual member schools.
- 44. Of the 78, 20 projects were operating under Model D and, of these, seven were primary-focused, seven were secondary-focused and seven worked across-phases.

3. Evaluation quality and credibility

1. This section presents an assessment of the quality and credibility of the self-evaluations of the 78 projects available for review, following the approach set out in Section 1²². The main objective of this phase of the meta-evaluation was to review all of the evaluation materials presented by the projects in order to identify the projects that produced the most rigorous and robust evaluation reports, in whose findings (whether indicating successes or challenges) we could have confidence. These reports, in turn, were then used to identify effective project approaches, organisation and activities and to draw out cross-project learning relating to the achievements of the LSEF.

Meta-evaluation scores

Projects understanding of good practice in evaluation appeared to have been increased throughout the life of the project

2. The review of projects' final documents revealed noticeable progress in the quality and conduct of their evaluations as well as in their reporting, compared with the interim point in December 2014. This trend highlighted the journey that the projects had been through in the process of implementing and evaluating their interventions. For many of the practitioners, evaluation of a research project was a new element of practice, and was one with which they had little or no prior experience. This was most apparent in the early documentation received from projects' about how their evaluations had been set-up²³.
3. The review, for example, identified gaps in the clarity and comprehensiveness of projects' initial evaluation plans and in their theories of change, a large sample of which were reviewed at an interim stage, in December 2014 (see Section 1)²⁴. The quality of the subsequent documentation and the ways in which evaluations were conducted and reported indicated a marked improvement among practitioners in understanding of good practice in undertaking project evaluations.
4. This suggests that many of the projects have learnt from the support that was provided to them both by the GLA and by Project Oracle, following the interim reviews. This is one of the notable outcomes of the programme of developmental activity under the LSEF and highlights the value of providing targeted support to projects required to conduct self-evaluations.

²² A detailed summary of our methodology approach for the meta-evaluation is provided in the supporting Technical Annex

²³ Projects produced detailed evaluation plans and a summary of their underlying theory of change at the outset of the project. Plans were reviewed and validated by Project Oracle (with a number being revised at that point). Once projects were implemented, any changes to these plans were captured in their interim and final reports.

²⁴ As part of their self-evaluation each project was required to develop a theory of change which was intended to summarise their intended outcomes, the activities that are linked to achieving each outcome and the assumptions behind their theory. More detail about the Theory of Change and the documents relating to the projects' self-evaluations are provided in the supporting Technical Annex.

5. As set out in Section 1, the meta-evaluation process (full details of which are set out in the supporting Technical Annex) involved scoring each of the projects against a series of indicators related to set-up, conduct and reporting, in order to establish the extent to which project findings could be regarded as credible and robust and thus contribute to overall programme learning. Table 3-1 below summarises the average meta-evaluation scores achieved across all 78 projects whose documents were received for review²⁵.
6. The overall average score across all 78 projects was 3.2 out of 5.0. The scores obtained reflect the learning journey noted above. The relatively low average score in the indicators relating to evaluation set-up (an overall average score of 2.7) reflect the fact that a large proportion of the projects were new to evaluating research and faced challenges during this phase²⁶. That the projects gained in evaluation skills and understanding is reflected in the relatively high scores in indicators relating to evaluation conduct (an overall average score of 3.4) and evaluation reporting (an overall average score of 3.1).

Table 3-1: Meta-evaluation scores (N=78)

Evaluation phase	Minimum (mean score)	Maximum (mean score)	Average (mean score)
Set-up	1.2	4.6	2.7
Conduct	1.7	4.6	3.4
Reporting	1.1	4.8	3.1
Overall credibility / quality	1.9	4.5	3.2

Source: SQW

7. The scores for evaluation conduct and reporting indicated relatively high levels of clarity and credibility for many projects around the performance data they provided and the ways in which they presented and interpreted their data. That said, the review of the final evaluation reports highlighted a number of issues (see below), which limited the extent to which the outcomes and conclusions provided by some of the projects can be regarded as robust and reliable. In the following sub-sections we discuss in more depth the findings for each of the three evaluation phases (evaluation set-up, evaluation conduct and evaluation reporting), prior to examining project outcomes and Programme-level learning in the sections that follow.

Evaluation Set-up

Project tended to score highly in setting out their aims and objectives, and intended outcomes.

8. The review of the indicators relating to evaluation set-up considered whether projects had set out clearly why they had been developed and the problems, issues or challenges they wished to address or the hypotheses they wanted to test. In addition,

²⁵ Reviews of 22 projects were not included in this report, because either they had not submitted their final report by the cut-off date (31 November) by which they needed to be uploaded for analysis, or because they had not produced a final report at all.

²⁶ The lack of experience was not universal, however, and, as indicated in the table, some projects scored very highly at this stage.

our review assessed the extent to which projects provided evidence of need, the clarity of their theories of change, and the consistency between the assumptions that were set out in the Theory of Change document and the development of their evaluation plan. In other words we sought to understand (from their presented documentation) why each of the projects had been developed and why they had targeted specific teacher or pupil groups and particular subjects. Having a clear answer to these questions is of vital importance when establishing the intended outcomes of each project.

9. The majority of the projects provided information on the issue that they wished to address and, in most cases, this information was relatively clearly set out. This relative clarity was also apparent in the way in which projects set out their aims and objectives²⁷. Project A provided a specific example of good practice in the documentation of evaluation set up. The main objective of Project A was to secure higher attainment of children in English and maths (focusing on the Early Years and Foundation Stage) and to reduce the attainment gaps between children from disadvantaged backgrounds and those from more affluent backgrounds. From the outset, the project's documents provided a clear logic chain, linking the issues observed to the delivery model adopted and with a clear identification of the theory underlying the project's approach. The project clearly identified the critical contextual issues and the problems that needed addressing, with a particular focus on tackling variations in attainment between children from different backgrounds. The project supported these claims by reference to wider evidence, citing research evidence to show that these gaps are often pronounced through preschool, and become further entrenched throughout primary schools; and that children from deprived background who perform poorly at the age of seven, are less likely to catch up with their peers than children from more advantaged backgrounds.
10. Other projects were less clear about their **evidence base** and fewer still appeared to have carried out (or, to be more exact, had specifically recorded the outcomes of) a

Project A

The project set out a clear theory of change, setting out their anticipated long and short terms outcomes and highlighting their intended routes for change, linking activities to outcomes. For example, one of their underlying assumptions of the theory of change was that '*an increase in skills and confidence leads to improved teaching and consistent teaching*'.

Linked to this assumption, the project set out two short-term outcomes: improving teachers' confidence and skills, and ensuring that teaching was delivered to a more consistent standard.

The activities that were linked to achieving these outcomes were clearly set out and included: developing a curriculum (for consistency in standards); a core training programme for all staff and training for nominated excellence champions (for improving teachers' skills and confidence).

One key gap identified was an apparent lack of evidence of need.

²⁷ As indicated above, this reporting was also markedly clearer than it had been at the interim review stage, with some projects revisiting their documentation following additional guidance and tailored support from the GLA and Project Oracle, which was informed by SQW's review.

needs assessment to inform project targeting. Projects' assumptions (which would be expected to provide insights into the underlying theory that supported project design) tended to focus on their goals (for example, increased confidence amongst teachers) or outputs (for example the establishment of a wider school network), rather than on why they believed that their project might lead to these results.

11. Where such gaps were apparent, there were generally a number of inconsistencies between projects' evaluation plans and their summarised theory of change, generally in terms of the target groups with whom they intended to work and the anticipated outcomes listed in each. These inconsistencies suggested that (at least at the outset) projects were not always clear as to how their project was going to affect their potential beneficiaries. Some projects found that their assumptions regarding their potential beneficiaries were incorrect, and they subsequently revised their project delivery in order to achieve the project objective. Many of these projects, once they had started implementing and reporting, realised the gaps in their evaluation plan, and made changes (including changes to evaluation tools, to the intended beneficiaries, or to project metrics and data collection approaches) to improve the relevance and value of the data that they were collecting. We discuss this further in the section below.

Evaluation conduct

12. The review of the indicators relating to the conduct of the evaluations considered the appropriateness of the ways in which projects carried out their evaluations. Across the three different phases that were considered in the review (set-up, conduct and reporting), projects scored highest on the indicators relating to evaluation conduct, demonstrating that, even when initial planning had been weak, many had subsequently learned and adapted their approach, particularly in relation to clarifying their anticipated outcomes, identifying their target groups, refining their evaluation and measurement approach and planning and carrying out a systematic collection of the data.
13. Consistent with the aims of the projects, most, if not all, of the projects we reviewed had developed an evaluation framework that explored the effect of activities on three principal stakeholder groups; teachers, pupils and schools. In assessing the relative strength of the approaches adopted by the LSEF projects we have been guided by HM Treasury's Magenta Book (the UK's primary authority on the evaluation of public sector programmes)²⁸, and, in particular, considered how projects had assessed the counterfactual in their evaluations²⁹. The review indicated that many of the projects had found it particularly challenging to establish a reference group of teachers, with few opportunities to obtain data from non-participants. Instead, a large proportion of

Across the three different phases, projects scored highest on indicators relating to the evaluation conduct.

²⁸ HM Treasury (2011) The Magenta Book (Online) Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/220542/magenta_book_combined.pdf (Accessed: 04/02/2016)

²⁹ Further details on our assessment of the projects' evaluation methodology are provided in the supporting Technical Annex.

the projects had sensibly adopted a pre-/post- approach for measuring outcomes amongst participating teachers, using a range of different evaluation tools.

14. The tool most commonly used by the projects in measuring teacher outcomes were self-completion surveys, followed by observations of teachers in the classroom and teacher interviews (or focus groups). Both teacher surveys and teacher interviews rely on self-reporting and personal perceptions and, while they provide good qualitative evidence, are considered relatively weak in terms of the robust evidence they can provide on

Key evaluation approaches used (in assessing outcomes amongst teachers):

Teacher survey	70 projects
Teacher observation	48 projects
Teacher interview	39 projects
Resource audit ³⁰	35 projects
Teacher test	35 projects

progress (other than in relation to assessing changes in confidence and self-esteem). Recognising this, many of the projects used these self-completion tools in conjunction with other less subjective tools, such as tests (nearly half of the projects used these) and peer-led or subject-expert led classroom observations (both of which have the potential to provide more robust or objective evidence). This strengthened their evaluation approach and the credibility of the data that they collected.

15. Project B provides an example for good practice in evaluation conduct, particularly in terms of the evaluation approach adopted. The key objective of this project was to improve pupils' attainment in early literacy through improving teachers' subject knowledge in Phonological Awareness. The project's evaluation approach appeared to have been both reliable and effective in providing information on the effects of the intervention on both pupils and teachers. The project adopted a pre-/post- approach for exploring the impact of the project on teachers and used a historical reference group (the previous cohorts of pupils in the same schools) for measuring pupils' outcomes. Data collection was carried out in three points in time during the life of the project, allowing for a robust pool of evidence. The project also used a range of qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques.

³⁰ The resource audit involved a review and assessment of the quality of the resources used in the classroom. In most cases this was done by an independent reviewer.

Project B

The project measured performance amongst teachers utilising a range of qualitative and quantitative tools including:

- A test to measure subject knowledge (phonological awareness) administered once before the start of the training and at the end of each project year (to assess changes in knowledge)
- A survey to measure teacher confidence in teaching literacy, administered prior to project implementation and at the end of each project year
- Expert observations in the classroom assessing the quality of teaching in relation to phonological awareness, conducted prior to the training and at the end of each year
- An independent audit of a sample of existing subject specific resources

In measuring the project performance amongst pupils, a reference group had been established (the previous cohort of pupils in the school) and a number of evaluation tools were used, including:

- A test to measure pupils' levels in reading, administered to the intervention group *only* prior to the start of the project (for the reference group scores from a similar test that had been conducted by the schools in the previous year were collected)
- Teachers' assessments of the performance of pupils collected on the intervention group prior to the project implementation
- Attainment levels data including phonics screening scores at the end of each intervention year for both intervention and reference group

One key gap identified was in setting out an effective monitoring infrastructure for ensuring the quality of the data collected

16. Our review of the documents suggested that some of the main challenges for projects were around establishing an effective **infrastructure for the collection of data**, and for the **management** of the evaluation. This included difficulties in achieving good response rates to surveys (a growing challenge in research in schools) and, in particular, obtaining relevant data on teachers and pupils from schools, both on those who participated in the projects and (where these had been set up) on those in any designated reference groups. Low response rates and gaps in the data obtained reduced the size of the evidence base for many of the projects. This in turn, reduced the confidence that could be placed in the robustness of the data in relation to projects' performance. Encouragingly, many of the projects clearly identified these gaps in their evaluation data and sought to address them by changing their approach to data collection or by using alternative sources of information, where these were appropriate.

17. Project C provides an example of good practice in addressing evaluation limitations and in managing the challenges that were associated with this. The project aimed to

Project C solutions to the methodology limitations and challenges:

- The project initially intended to compare historic achievements of pupils in the relevant year group in the participating schools against national expectations. However, due to variations in the format of the historic data between schools, the comparison between datasets was not appropriate. Instead the project decided to use the KS1 SATs scores from the participating schools and compare them to nationally available average attainment data as a comparison group
- Creating a bespoke end of year test for pupils in the intervention group to tackle the challenge that participating schools did not provide pupil attainment data, which could have meant there would have been no data on pupils' performance
- Use of a pre-intervention survey in conjunction with a head-teacher satisfaction survey to measure teaching quality rather than relying solely on an Ofsted audit. This was to tackle any sensitivities and a potential risk of misinterpretation in using the latter alone
- Use of social media channels (e.g. posting blogs on the project website and using tweeter) to engage stakeholders and measure the wider system effects of the project

improve the teaching of maths in primary schools through a focused professional development programme for teachers. The project faced a number of challenges relating to their planned evaluation approach. In order to address these, the project changed a number of elements, which appeared to have resolved their issues effectively.

18. No evaluation is without its limitations. The challenge is to correctly identify the limitations and, where possible, to identify suitable solutions to address them. The review of the final reports suggested that many projects put a considerable amount of thought into first identifying the limitations of their chosen evaluation approach, and then understanding the implications of these on their evaluation conduct. In many cases, the projects suggested suitable solutions to address the limitations they identified, and it was clear that, in many cases, this had enabled them to collect robust and reliable data for assessing the performance of their project. Where projects were not successful in addressing these gaps, many of them acknowledged this weakness and the limitations of their evaluation plan and referred to these in their reporting, as we discuss further below.

Evaluation reporting

Projects tended to score highly in the indicators relating to the clear presentation of the evidence, and in credible interpretation of the findings, while providing appropriate caveats

19. The review of the indicators relating to the evaluation reporting focused on projects' final reports and considered the clarity, validity and credibility of the evidence provided as well as the way in which it had been interpreted to draw conclusions on project performance and delivery. By and large the quality of projects' final reports was good, with around one third of the projects achieving an average score of 3.5 and above (out of 5.0), suggesting a good quality of performance data and a credible and reliable interpretation of the findings.

20. In many of the reports the evidence was presented clearly, allowing the reader to interpret it relatively easy. Where data tables or charts were presented, they were generally clearly labelled, indicating, for example, the target groups, the type of data and the phase of the evaluation to which it referred, as well as the size of the respondent base. That said, where projects had data gaps, or had faced challenges in collecting certain information, a number of projects, rather than stating this, had presented the data less clearly and concisely, and the outcomes were less easily interpreted.
21. The authors of the majority of project reports provided appropriate caveats when presenting their data, though to a lesser extent when interpreting it. As noted in the section above, most authors clearly identified the limitations of their evaluation and provided detailed explanations as to how the project sought to address these, and whether they have been successful or not in addressing the issues. That said, the ways in which they drew out their conclusions was often not as transparent or robust. While the majority of the authors appeared to have included appropriate caveats in their commentary on their evaluation, these caveats were not carried through to the conclusions section in more than half of the reports. This ranged from overlooking any data that was incomplete or unclear to rejecting or disregarding any evidence that suggested that the implementation or delivery of the project was unsuccessful or ineffective implementation, thus not fully exploring the implications of the evidence base that was available to them. In some cases, this overlooking of data led to reports overstating the level of change that they had observed.

One key gap identified related to the credibility of the conclusions, where the careful consideration of the evaluation limitation that was apparent throughout the report, did not seem to carry through to the conclusions section

Project D

Project D sought to promote excellent teaching of maths in both primary and secondary schools, through a Research Lesson approach. This project scored particularly well in the indicators relating to the reporting phase. The report was clear, internally consistent and provided a good level of detail in relation to the evaluation approach, analytical techniques, project outcomes and conclusions. Examples of good practice included:

- Clear and detailed information about the analytical techniques that were used (e.g. matched pair analysis, descriptive statistics and inferential statistics, including appropriate significance testing).
- Good synthesis between the quantitative and qualitative data, where the qualitative data was themed and used effectively to back up conclusions drawn from the quantitative data.
- Methodological limitations were cited throughout and commentary was appropriately caveated (for example, the timing of questionnaire's administration, which meant that the baseline was measured after the intervention started; limitations of the teacher questionnaire which had not been validated for primary school teachers).
- The evidence was used effectively, analysed reliably and all conclusions were supported by evidence, with no overstatement of outcomes (for example the conclusion section noted a difference between beneficiary groups in terms of the outcomes achieved, and provided consideration for the reasons why some groups benefited more than others).

22. It is possible to learn a great deal from projects, even when data is incomplete or indicates that some aspects of the intervention are ineffective or that robust conclusions cannot be drawn at the reporting stage. A consideration of Project D illustrates how a careful consideration of project data can be used to highlight both success and areas where further exploration may be required.
23. The review highlighted a further gap relating to the analysis of the data. In some reports the analysis of the **quantitative** data was inappropriate (such as the comparison of pre- and post- survey data to demonstrate a change in attitudes over time, but where the respondents were drawn from different cohorts). In some cases it appeared that the **qualitative** data were not analysed in any systematic way, nor was there synthesis between the quantitative and the qualitative data, though some projects used the qualitative data to complement the findings from the quantitative data. That said, in around one third of the reports the authors carried out a good analysis making use of appropriate analytical techniques, conducting good syntheses between qualitative and quantitative data and demonstrating a high level of understanding of different analytical approaches. Project C (below) and Project D above provide examples of good practice in this area. Nonetheless, this remains a gap in a large proportion of the reports, which suggests that in any similar future research programme, projects might benefit with further support in this area.

Project C

The author of this report (which, as set out above, clearly addressed the initial limitations of their evaluation approach) demonstrated good practice in their analytical approach when using triangulation and synthesis between the qualitative and quantitative data to strengthen outcomes attribution. For example, in discussing teachers' outcomes, the author considered the increase of test score results as well as findings from discussions with head teachers on their assessment of any improvement in quality of teaching, and findings from teachers' observations.

Furthermore, the report provided summaries of a number of case studies to reinforce the report's conclusions.

Summary

24. The assessment of the projects' documentation identified a number of the projects that had produced self-evaluations of good quality, with robust and credible evidence in support of projects' performance. As noted above this reflects well on the GLA-funded support that was provided to the projects in conducting their self-evaluations, which appears to have been effective for these projects.
25. The proportion of projects categorised in this way is indicated in Table 3-2, below. This shows that 29 of the 78 projects scored a mean of 3.5 and above (with eight of these scoring over 4.5, indicating a very effective evaluation). These 29 projects achieved a high or fairly high level of clarity, credibility or consistency in the information in the documentation provided and, as a result, we can discuss their conclusions relating to the performance of the projects with a reasonable level of confidence.

Table 3-2: Evaluation quality (hence credibility) scores

Banding	N of projects	% of projects
1-1.9	2	3
2-2.9	23	29
3-3.4	24	31
3.5-3.9	21	27
4-5	8	10
<i>Total</i>	<i>78</i>	<i>100</i>

Source: SQW

26. In the sections that follow we will give closer consideration to the achievement of these 29 individual projects (in terms of the outcomes they achieved and their views on why their approach was successful, or not) in order to draw out the lessons about what works and for whom. We will also draw on all 78 projects (with a particular focus on the 29, where appropriate) to identify what wider system learning (at institution, project and overall Fund level) has emerged from the LSEF.

4. Assessment of projects' outcomes

1. This section presents an assessment of the volume of the evidence presented in the projects' final evaluation reports, and focuses on the findings relating to the projects' outcomes. This follows the methodology approach set out in Section 1³¹.

Projects' intended and achieved outcomes

LSEF underlying assumption – investment in teacher subject knowledge, pedagogical awareness and confidence, as well as promoting teacher collaboration lead to improvement in pupils' attainment scores

2. In assessing the outcomes of the projects, and the level to which they appear to have been effective, it is important to reflect back on the GLA's three hypotheses for the LSEF fund:
 - Investing in teacher subject knowledge and subject-specific teaching methods/ pedagogy will lead to improved outcomes for pupil's attainment, subject participation and aspiration.
 - Effective school networks and partnerships support improved schools and teacher collaboration which impacts on pupil outcomes.
 - A focus on teachers and subject expertise supports cultural change and helps raise expectations in the London school system.
3. The underlying assumption behind these hypotheses is that investment in teacher subject knowledge, confidence and pedagogy awareness, as well as in a development of effective school networks that promote teacher collaboration, will contribute to an improvement in pupils' overall attainment.
4. This assumption is supported by research evidence in this field. In reviews of national and international literature, Leu (2004)³² and Goe and Stickler (2008)³³ identified common elements related to teacher characteristics that are most likely to improve pupils' outcomes. These include **knowledge of their subject; content-based pedagogical knowledge** (including a range of appropriate and varied teaching methodologies) and the ability to build good relationships within the school. This last was further elaborated in Goe and Stickler, who noted that teachers' willingness to **collaborate with their peers** was found to be positively associated with pupils' achievements (specifically in maths and reading). Leu also emphasised the need for teachers **teaching with confidence**, while Goe and Stickler highlighted the importance of teacher participation in mentoring or induction programmes and **professional development** that is sustained, aligned with the curriculum and focused on instruction.

³¹ A detailed summary of our methodology approach for the meta-evaluation is provided in the supporting Technical Annex.

³² Leu E., (2004). Developing a Positive Environment for Teacher Quality. Working paper #3 under EQUIP1's Study of School-based Teacher In-service Programme and Clustering of Schools. U.S. Agency for International Development

³³ Goe L., and Stickler L. M., (2008). Teacher Quality and Student Achievement: Making the Most of Recent Research. National Comprehensive Centre for Teacher Quality

5. When discussing any learning that can be drawn out of the project's outcomes, consideration must be given both to the **quality of the evidence** and the extent to which they appeared to have been **effective in achieving their objectives**. Each of the 78 projects were assessed (using a consistent scoring system)³⁴ as to whether or not they had achieved their aims. As set out in Table 4-1, the 29 projects were divided fairly evenly between those that were successful and those that considered they had not met their aims.

Table 4-1: LSEF project groups

Group	Description	No. of projects
Group 1	Projects with good quality evaluation and which report that they have been effective in meeting their objectives	16
Group 2	Projects with good quality evaluation and which report that they have been less effective in meeting their objectives	13
Group 3	Project with fair quality evaluation and which report that they have been effective in meeting their objectives	8
Group 4	Projects with fair quality evaluation and which report that they have been less effective in meeting their objectives	15
Group 5	Project with low level quality evaluation and which report that they have been effective in meeting their objectives	5
Group 6	Projects with low level quality evaluation and which report that they have been less effective in meeting their objectives	21
Total number of projects		78

Source: SQW

6. In our assessment of what learning can be drawn out from the LSEF outcomes in terms of what worked well, we have, therefore, focused primarily on the 16 projects in Group 1, which have each produced a credible evaluation and which appear to have been effective in making progress against the majority of their objectives. In order to understand the barriers to effective progress, we also considered the findings from the 13 projects in Group 2 that produced clear and credible evaluation reports, but which noted less progress towards their objectives.

What worked well?

7. Consistent with the underlying hypotheses of the programme and in line with recent research in related literature, the majority of the projects stated improvement of teacher subject knowledge, pedagogical awareness and confidence, as well as improved pupil attainments, as their key objectives. When looking at the achieved outcomes of the 29 projects that presented robust evaluations, it appears that projects have been effective in achieving some level of progress in teachers' confidence and in teachers' subject knowledge, with a number also noting improved

LSEF key achievements were improvement in teachers' confidence and teachers' subject knowledge

³⁴ Details of our approach to grouping the projects is provided in the supporting Technical Annex and included considerations of the projects findings and the quality and credibility of the evidence they presented.

pedagogical skills or better overall teaching (though not necessarily identifying the specific skills gained).

8. In terms of outcomes relating to pupils, over half of the projects appeared to have identified some level of improvement in pupils' attainment, even over the short time-scale. Not surprisingly, fewer projects made reference to achieving outcomes relating to the wider school system, with just a few of the projects recording progress in this area. Nonetheless, seven of the 29 projects felt that they had made marked progress in

Achieved outcomes relating to teachers:

Confidence	13 projects
Subject knowledge	10 projects
Pedagogy skills	6 projects
Better teaching	6 projects
Better use of resources	2 projects

Achieved outcomes relating to pupils:

Improved attainment	18 projects
Better engagement	5 projects
Improved subject uptake	2 projects

either creating or making better use of school and teacher networks. These outcomes are discussed below.

Improvements in teachers' confidence

9. Ten of the projects in Group 1 achieved a positive outcome in terms of increasing teacher confidence (see for example, **Project E** below). The review of the projects' final reports showed that in all ten projects the training for teachers included specific subject matter as well as practical pedagogical skills, suggesting that both were viewed as equally important in promoting good teaching. The content of the training in these projects included **specific subject-knowledge** topics (such as phonological awareness, reading comprehension and 'Maths Talk'). Alongside these, the pedagogical sessions focused on **theories of learning**, improving teachers' knowledge and understanding of how learners learn, and provided **practical skills** for teaching the related subject matter in the classroom (e.g. the use of manipulatives in maths, or the 'rehearsal room technique' as a practical approach for teaching English).

Focused and practical training content appeared to promote positive outcomes amongst teachers

Project E

The aim of the project was to improve teacher subject knowledge in literacy through systematic CPD collaboration across phases. The project worked with eight primary and three secondary schools.

Teachers who participated in the project provided highly positive feedback, stating an increase in their own confidence and endorsing and improvement in pupils' outcomes. This is reflected in the project's achievements as shown in the evidence provided in their Final Evaluation Report.

Teachers' confidence levels were assessed with reference to the National Curriculum Assessment Framework (2013). Teachers filled in a questionnaire to assess themselves on a scale of 1-5 (1='not at all', 5='very much so') in relation to their confidence in teaching different skills. Questionnaires were filled in by the teachers prior to the intervention and at

the end of the project. The results show an increase of between 0.8 and 2.7 score point in teachers' confidence in teaching different aspects of the curriculum. This included, for example, an increase from a mean score of 1.7 to a mean of 4.4 in confidence in teaching Level 6 reading (primary teachers); an increase from a mean score of 1.8 to 4.8 in teaching Level 3-4 reading (secondary teachers). The only skill in which there was little self-reported progress was in secondary teachers' confidence in teaching handwriting skills (an increase from a mean of 2 to 2.8).

The project collected teacher-assessed attainment data from the schools and these recorded average point score gains of 2.4 in reading and 4.6 in writing amongst primary pupils; and gains of 4.9 points in reading and 3.5 points in writing amongst secondary pupils. Ofsted guidance state that progress (over the same period) of 3.5 in average point score in standardised tests is considered 'Good' and a progress of around 4 points is considered 'Outstanding'. These improvements in pupils' point scores, suggest that, in some areas at least, improvements in teachers' confidence in teaching reading and writing skills may have been reflected in higher than expected improvements in pupil attainment.

10. All projects implemented elements of **classroom support** in their delivery approach (as exemplified in **Project B** below, which, as set out in Section 3 above, also exemplified good practice in evaluation conduct). These included coaching by experts, schools pairing and peer support, mentoring and lesson modelling. The feedback from the projects suggested that this additional classroom support, and the fact that it was tailored to need, promoted the positive outcome for both teachers and pupils. Further review of the projects' commentary and the qualitative evidence that was provided suggested that it was the newly acquired pedagogical skills *rather than* the subject knowledge content that had been the element that promoted teachers' confidence in their teaching. Projects mentioned, in particular, the impact of a focus on teachers' understanding of how learners learn and their acquisition of new practical methods for use in the classroom.

Project B: implementation design

The key objective of this project was to improve pupils' attainment in early literacy through improving teachers' subject knowledge in Phonological Awareness. The project worked with nursery teachers.

This project achieved positive outcomes against nearly all of its stated objectives. These included an increase in teacher confidence of 45 percentage points (from not confident to confident) and an increase in teachers' subject knowledge test scores of 42 percentage points over the life time of the project.

A number of elements in the project's approach appeared to have promoted its success:

- A core training course, combining both subject knowledge and subject-specific pedagogical content (e.g. theory of phonological awareness, an examination of how learners learn phonology, and classroom teaching techniques)
- Modelled lessons and classroom support for teachers, tailored to each teacher's individual need
- IRIS Connect classroom video system³⁵ used as a coaching and peer support tool

Tailored classroom support appeared to have promoted teachers' confidence

³⁵See: <http://www.irisconnect.co.uk/>

- A set of bespoke resources for use in the classroom, which were also accessible in a shared online platform
- Partnering between schools for sharing resources and experience

Increased subject knowledge amongst teachers

Conducting a subject knowledge audit amongst the target audience appeared to promote positive outcomes amongst teachers

11. Seven of the projects in Group 1 provided evidence of positive outcomes in teacher subject knowledge. All of these projects appeared to have carried out a knowledge assessment phase *prior* to the start of their intervention or knowledge input. Six projects carried out this assessment amongst teachers, and one did so amongst both teachers and pupils. Projects suggested that this assessment helped the teams to focus the content of the intervention and to ensure that the level and the pitch of the training was appropriate. This in turn, appeared to encourage teachers' engagement. Projects commented that the relevance of the materials that were covered in the training sessions, along with the fact that they focused on skills which teachers could implement immediately in the classroom, meant they could obtain rapid feedback on its impact and so tailor future activities to promote a positive outcome for both teachers and pupils.

Increased pedagogical awareness amongst teachers

Some of the most effective LSEF projects seemed to have filled in a specific CPD gap

12. Although the projects discussed above discussed activities that combined subject content and subject-specific pedagogy, not all of them provided empirical evidence of improved pedagogical skills. Three of the 16 projects in Group 1, however, provided specific evidence of positive outcomes related to a discrete focus on pedagogical skills. These three projects also identified measurable outcomes in teachers' subject knowledge and teachers' confidence related to the development of their pedagogical skills. Interestingly, these three projects were the only projects that provided evidence of positive outcomes against these objectives and pupils' attainment.
13. All three projects worked in primary school settings, with two focusing on literacy and one on maths. The review of their final reports showed that these projects based their approach on research into the current state of teaching and learning of their respective subjects, which identified gaps in the system (e.g. topics not covered by existing CPD and a lack of awareness or knowledge in specific subject matter amongst teachers). In that respect, these projects appeared to have filled a gap in teachers' CPD, which qualitative feedback in the projects' reports suggested was much appreciated by teachers and promoted their understanding of specific pedagogical skills.

14. All three projects focused primarily on pedagogical content knowledge in their training session (as exemplified in **Projects F, G and H**). This included both theory (e.g. how do learners learn or what parameters need to be in place for learners to acquire specific-subject content effectively) and practical classroom skills. The notion of pedagogical content knowledge was first introduced by Shulman (1987)³⁶, who was looking to build a foundation for teaching reform, based on an idea of teaching that emphasised comprehension and reasoning, transformation and reflection. In practice this meant studying subject matter *and* identifying the subject knowledge *for* the purpose of teaching (in other words, it is not enough to have knowledge of the subject, it is about having the knowledge of how to effectively teach specific subject content). This offers a fine distinction from pedagogical awareness, which is the practice and method of teaching generally, not specifically related to a subject or content. Although just one of the projects articulated this distinction between general and subject-specific pedagogy, all three seem to have provided input to the latter.
15. One example of this can be seen in **Project G**, which sought to improve the teaching of specific literacy skills amongst teachers in primary schools. It based its approach on a well-researched pedagogical practice specifically designed to support the teaching of literacy skills. Designated champions in each participating school were trained to develop and establish their own practice. The champions then supported colleagues in their own schools. The project assessed the quality of teaching through lesson observations, which were judged based on Ofsted criteria. The assessment showed an improvement in the quality of teaching; prior to the intervention 26% of the lessons were judged as requiring improvement (Ofsted grade 3), a figure that dropped to four per cent (a reduction of 22 percentage points) by the end of the project. The project also noted an increase in subject knowledge and in teachers' confidence, drawing on self-

Project F

The key objective of the project was to raise the quality of mathematics teaching through developing teachers' subject knowledge and pedagogical skills. The project worked with Key Stage 1 teachers.

The intervention programme was designed to strengthen teachers' subject knowledge in maths and to improve their pedagogical skills. The training focused on a specific methodology for teaching mathematics and, in particular, the use of mathematical language, problem-solving and reasoning, to children in Key Stage 1. In this way the project targeted and sought to improve the quality of teaching in specific topics of the subject.

The project achieved an increase of 18 percentage points in teachers' subject knowledge and in pedagogical skills (an increase from a score of 68% to 86% in a pre- and post- audit test). Teachers' confidence in answering maths questions increased by 19 percentage points over the same time period and their confidence in teaching mathematical language, problem-solving and reasoning rose by 23 percentage points. Furthermore, the project evidence (including qualitative comments gathered from teachers) suggested that these skills were adapted by the Key Stage 1 teachers, who implemented them in other subjects to good effect.

³⁶ Shulman L (1987) 'Knowledge and teaching: Foundations of the new reform' *Harvard Educational Review* 57(1) pp. 1-22

assessment information gathered using a ten point scale. Survey results showed an increase, across a range of different indicators, of between 2.29 and 2.51 score points between the baseline and end of project assessment for subject knowledge and a mean score of 2.86 score points in increased teachers' confidence.

Subject champions appeared to have been effective in promoting pedagogical content knowledge

16. Another common element across all three projects was the training and promoting of subject champions. These champions were identified and specially trained to become experts in pedagogical methods specific to the chosen subject matter. In one project, these champions delivered the CPD to teachers in their schools. In the other two projects the champions engaged in tailored mentoring and modelling activities with teachers according to need.

Project H

The project key objective was to raise attainment levels in English, focusing on a pupil population from highly deprived areas. The project was building on a well-established partnership between two outstanding secondary schools and a core network of nine primary schools (six of which were in a cluster with one of the secondary schools, and three of which in a cluster with the other).

The project provided a package of basic CPD, literacy training days and coaching sessions.

Teachers outcomes were assessed using lessons observations (rated based on Ofsted standards), scrutiny of teachers' markings, and self-completion of efficacy scale questionnaires.

The outcomes for teachers showed a 29 percentage point increase in overall teaching quality when all of these indicators were combined.

The projects' activities focused on building capacity within clusters of schools to further develop teachers' skills. The extra capacity created enabled experienced teachers to devote time to guiding improvements in teaching. For this reason it would have been unrealistic to expect noticeable improvements in pupil's attainment within the two year timeframe in which the project operated. The success of the project in improving the quality of teaching was instead reflected in stretching pupils.

The key outcome that the project achieved amongst pupils was an increase in the number of pupils who achieved Level 5 at the end of KS2. At the end of the second year of the project, 254 of the 354 pupils (72%) achieved level 5, compared with 216 in 2013/14 (an increase of 38 pupils). This comparison does not, however, provide an indication of the relative proportions of pupils achieving Level 5 in 2013/14.

17. When reflecting on what has worked well in their projects, all three projects mentioned collaboration between teachers within and between schools as the main contributor to the improvement in teachers' pedagogical understanding and skills. They noted that it led to the creation of a learning community for sharing knowledge and expertise. One project, for example, described how teachers modelled ideas to each other and planned lessons together. Another commented that the collaboration between teachers provided a supportive environment which nurtured the development of leadership in the subject area. The benefits of collaboration between teachers identified in these projects supports that noted in the wider research literature. Leu (2004), for example, emphasises that teachers always function as part of a social network within the body of pupils and the school community and stresses that a strong school community and strong school leadership are of key importance

in bringing teachers together, in collaboration as a community of learning, thus promoting effective teaching³⁷.

Raised attainment amongst pupils

18. Our review of the projects in Group 1 showed that only two of the 16 projects did not intend (at the outset) to measure outcomes amongst pupils, stating that they did not expect to see any changes in pupils' attainment in the short lifetime of the project, and emphasising that their activity was directed at teachers. Of the 14 projects that set out to investigate outcomes amongst pupils, 13 provided evidence that showed positive (though variable) changes. In some cases, pupils were said to have made progress in some elements of the curriculum or in certain subject areas but not in others. Occasionally, there was a discrepancy between the qualitative data and the quantitative data, which meant that apparently observed improvements (whether in attainment, subject engagement or aspirations) were not supported by hard data on test scores or subject take-up. However, in the majority of the cases the projects spoke confidently about positive outcomes seen amongst the pupils taught by participating teachers. This was particularly credible when they used tests to measure progress, when they had a comparison group or when the quantitative data supported the qualitative data. **Project B**, for example, used standardised assessments to test the pupils of teachers who had received training in phonological awareness and found an increase of 22 percentage points in phonological awareness. The project also reviewed teachers' assessments of the same pupils and noted a consistency in trend between the two sources of information. As a result they felt that they could confidently state that the CPD they had provided had led directly to an improvement in pupils' attainment.
19. It is important to note, however, that many of the projects used data from the National Pupil Database (with historic data as the counterfactual rather than a reference group) and only a few (five projects in Group 1) tested pupils of the participating teachers against the subject elements that their CPD training had covered. As a result, most acknowledged that attributing any improvements in pupils' outcomes solely to the activities of the project was not possible. Many projects, indeed, pointed out that other activities to raise pupil attainment were taking place in schools at the same time as their projects were operating, and acknowledged that their analysis was not able to control for any effect that these may have had on pupils' outcomes.
20. Few projects indicated improvement in pupils' engagement in the subject as one of their objectives. Two projects in Group 1 (I and J, discussed below), however achieved positive outcomes in this area.

³⁷ Leu E., (2004). Developing a Positive Environment for Teacher Quality. Working paper #3 under EQUIP1's Study of School-based Teacher In-service Programme and Clustering of Schools. U.S. Agency for International Development

Improvement in pupils' engagement

Project I, for example, aimed to increase the confidence of English teachers by providing them a practical approach to the teaching and learning of a specific topic in English studies. Prior to the intervention, the project undertook a pupil survey which indicated that many pupils had negative perceptions which become barriers to learning of this specific topic. Using a theatre-based 'Rehearsal Room Technique' to bring texts to life, the project hoped to change pupil's attitudes towards learning English. Pupils' changes in attitudes were measured using a self-completion survey prior to the intervention and at the end. The evidence provided by the project, although from just a sub-sample of the participating schools, indicated that there was an increase of between 11%-33% in the average attitudinal scores indicating a positive change in pupil's attitudes (measured as contemporary relevance and empathy) towards the learned topic. The qualitative data provided further evidence of an increase in pupils' engagement where observations of lessons identified fully engaged pupils, working in pairs actively sharing and discussing ideas.

Project J aimed at improving the subject knowledge and teaching skills of Key Stage 3, 4 and 5 MFL teachers, and to increase the take up of MFL subjects amongst pupils in Key Stages 4 and 5. The project worked with ten secondary schools initially, and expanded to include 12 primary schools when MFL became compulsory at Key Stage 2. The project provided a package of core CPD, lesson observations and subsequent peer discussions, two transition days which included schools from both settings. The content of the CPD included both theory and research to increase understanding of the ways in which pupils learned MFL and practical techniques for use in the classroom designed to enrich and increase the enjoyment of the lessons (these included the use of music, video, interactive teaching of grammar, use of ICT and creative writing). When asked what they liked most about their MFL lessons, games and songs were the most frequently cited by primary pupils; films, games and class activities were those most cited by secondary pupils. When asked what they liked the least primary pupils cited not having enough MFL lessons and the written aspect of the language; secondary pupils cited textbook work, listening and writing.

Initial audits of pupils' attitudes towards taking MFL in Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5, however, showed what was for the project a disappointing reduction of six percentage points (from 65% to 59%) in the proportion of pupils who wanted to take MFL in Key Stage 4 and of three percentage points (from 35% to 32%) of pupils who intended to follow a course of study in MFL in Key Stage 5. This outcome did not come in line with the feedback provided by teachers and subject leads, who indicated greater levels of pupil confidence and enjoyment during MFL classes. This confidence and enjoyment had not translated into an immediate increase in pupils wanting to take the subject further, and may suggest that other factors (such as the perceived value of career aspirations) may be at play that were not scoped by the project.

Although the initial findings from phase one of the project were disappointing, the project delivered a language summer school for pupils in Key Stages 2 and 3. This involved the teachers who participated in phase one coming together and designing a course which brought together all the techniques they had learned in the training. All of the 25 primary aged pupils who completed the audit at the end of the summer school indicated that they wanted to take the subject in the next Key Stage. Of the 53 secondary pupils who completed the feedback at the end of the summer school, 79% said they wanted to take the subject in the next Key Stage, 4% said they were not sure, and 17% said they would not study languages at Key Stage 5. While these results look positive, we should note that the Final Evaluation Report did not provide any information on the pre-summer school aspirations of the pupils.

Better use of networks

21. The second hypothesis that was the focus of testing under the LSEF was related to the impact of improved schools and teacher collaboration on pupils' outcomes. To this end the majority of the LSEF projects (50) mentioned creating new networks or making better use of school and teacher networks as one of their intended objectives. However, our review of the projects' final reports suggested that this objective has been one of the most challenging to achieve. Seven projects in total, of which five were projects assessed as in Group 1, provided evidence of positive outcomes in this area.
22. When considering what had been the enablers in creating effective networks of teachers all projects had mentioned that the partner schools had all known each other, either from previous collaborations or because they were part of a cluster or school federation. Other enablers were the geographical location (where schools were in close proximity to each other) and the size of the networks. Networks seemed to have been more effective when the number of schools engaged was relatively small. Pairing of schools to create a network of teachers appeared to have been the most effective approach.

Project C

This project (also discussed in Section 3) aimed to improve the teaching of maths in primary schools through a focused professional development programme for teachers. During its two years of operation, the project worked with 110 primary schools and 563 teachers (teaching in Reception and Key Stage 1) across 31 London boroughs.

This project appeared to have been particularly successful in establishing networks of teachers and schools, working with clusters of schools and making use of local authority fora and conferences.

The project team appeared to have been pro-active in maintaining the newly established networks, continually thinking about how to encourage more teachers to collaborate within the partnership. The team set up various cluster workshops and conferences to provide opportunities for schools to meet with each other on a regular basis. In addition, the project team invested in improving their online presence, through maintaining an active blog and linking it to twitter topics.

23. Projects had also reiterated the importance of buy-in from senior leadership teams in the schools for the effective activity of the networks. Not only can senior leadership release staff to ensure they have sufficient time to engage with the network activity, but they have the potential to drive the work forward, making use of professional links with other schools to expand and enhance the network activity.

What worked less well?

24. In our assessment of the learning that can be drawn out from the LSEF outcomes in terms of what worked less well, we focused primarily on the 13 projects in Group 2, which produced a credible evaluation and which reported that they had not been successful in achieving their objectives.

Delays at the start of the project, attrition and challenges in gaining senior leadership buy-in were key barriers relating to the delivery and management of projects

25. A number of the projects on Group 2 made some progress against some of their objectives, with five projects providing evidence of some improvement in pupils' attainment, four in teachers' confidence, three in teacher's subject knowledge and three in pedagogical awareness. All of these projects, however, faced considerable challenges in the delivery and implementation of their intervention.
26. Some of the challenges that the projects faced related to the management and delivery of their projects. For example, eight of the projects mentioned they faced delays at the start of the project (one project did not start their CPD activities until January 2015 and so had little time to affect progress). Each of the 13 projects mentioned having faced attrition amongst teachers: some were related to staff churn; some to teachers losing interest in the intervention (a possible reflection on targeting or teacher need); and some to teachers having insufficient time to fully engage throughout the life of the project. This highlighted the challenge of identifying and recruiting schools and achieving senior leadership buy-in that many of these projects faced. Senior leadership engagement was vital for nominating the staff to take part in the project, freeing up their time and promoting the roll-out of the approach to the wider school community.
27. Projects specifically mentioned challenges relating to administration at both project and institution level. For example, one project mentioned that due to the delay in the start of the project, the venues they had earmarked for the delivery of the CPD sessions were no longer available. Finding alternative venues caused further delays and led to further attrition of schools. One project that worked across school phases faced challenges relating to the different timetables by which primary and secondary schools worked. This meant that for each training session they attended, primary teachers ended up missing two school hours of teaching, while secondary teachers missed just one. This was due to how the school hours during the day were split in the two different settings

Issues relating to the quality of the performance data collected meant that there was insufficient evidence to measure projects' outcomes

28. Projects also mentioned challenges relating to the metrics, data and processes they relied on for the evaluation of their project. For example, all 13 projects mentioned challenges relating to the performance data they hoped to collect. In most cases the challenge was the result of attrition, which meant that the size of their baseline sample was too small to be able to measure the effect of the project, or that the samples included in the pre- and post- strands of the study were not of the same groups of people. In other cases the duration of the project was too short to show any changes in the data.

Summary

29. The review of the outcomes achieved under the LSEF show that its biggest impact was in:
- increasing teachers' confidence
 - improving teacher subject knowledge and content or subject-specific pedagogy.

30. Some impact was also evident in pupils' attainment scores, but partly due to evaluation design, projects were often unable to attribute this **solely** to their interventions with teachers.
31. Our assessment of what worked well and what worked less well highlighted a number of commonalities between projects in Group 1 (the most effective) and Group 2 (those less effective) projects.
- The features that appeared to have promoted the achievement of positive outcomes were
 - Ensuring that the project had a clear evidence base on which to draw or was able to identify a clear rationale for their approach, and so establish specific hypotheses to test over the course of the project
 - An audit or assessment of teacher's knowledge prior to the intervention, in order to better target the content and pitch of the CPD programme
 - Combining specific subject-knowledge content with general and subject specific pedagogical theory and practical skills
 - The development of subject champions
 - An emphasis on teacher collaboration
 - Tailored classroom support for teachers, including lesson modelling, coaching and mentoring
 - The features that appeared to have acted as barriers to achieving positive outcomes were:
 - Delays in the start of the projects, which limited the time-frame for the intervention and led to attrition at school and teacher level
 - Insufficient buy-in from senior leaders and ineffective identification of potential participants (whether at school or teacher level)
 - Staff churn and attrition
 - Insufficient time over which to identify the anticipated change (which also suggested the need for better clarification of intermediate outcomes)
 - Administrative challenges, which meant that projects had to spend more time dealing with unexpected problems, which in turn sometimes contributed to delays in activities and increased attrition.

5. Learning from the LSEF

1. This section considers what we can learn from the LSEF, based on the outcomes and achievement of funded activity across the 78 projects that submitted final evaluation reports by the end of November 2015. In particular, we reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the approaches adopted by the different LSEF projects and consider the impact of these on the overall effectiveness of their activity. Based on this evidence, we identify a number of key lessons that commissioners (such as the GLA), delivery organisations (such as schools, higher education institutions and learned societies) and individual practitioners can learn about how to deliver (and commission) successful projects to support improvements in teachers' subject knowledge and the quality of their professional practice. Where possible, we have situated this within the wider academic literature. In particular we reflect on:
 - the strengths and weaknesses of the approaches adopted by delivery organisations in designing their project
 - what, if any, contextual or enabling factors appear to have contributed to the success of project delivery
 - which approaches appear to have been most effective in supporting beneficiary groups.

Project design

2. In producing their final report, projects were asked to reflect on what they had learnt from participation in LSEF and what changes, if any, they might have made to their approach to delivering their project if they were commissioned afresh. Perhaps unsurprisingly, of the 78 projects reviewed as part of the meta-evaluation nearly all (69 of 78 projects) suggested that one of their primary changes would be the way in which they approached evaluating the effectiveness or impact of project activity, particularly the way in which they went about deciding how best to capture evidence relating to project outcomes or impacts. Common areas they reflected on included:
 - **Identifying a suitable counterfactual** to support an assessment of the impact of their activity. This is a challenge commonly faced by those involved in educational research, particularly when the research is exploratory. Just over two-thirds (68%) of the LSEF projects in the meta-evaluation indicated that they had faced difficulties in identifying an appropriate counterfactual for their project or that they had been unable to implement their chosen approach to doing so. For instance, where projects had sought to identify a group of teachers with similar characteristics to those within the treatment group, many indicated that they had found it difficult to collect data from members of the intervention/comparison group in sufficient quantities to support analysis. In other instances, projects found it difficult to recruit a group that had similar enough characteristics to the intervention to support the construction of a robust impact measure.

What can we learn from how delivery organisations designed their project?

- **Identifying appropriate outcome measures** over which to measure the performance of activity over the timeframe of the evaluation: Just under one-third (30%) of the projects indicated that they had tried to measure the performance of their project using indicators that, in reality would only change over the medium to long term. For instance, amongst projects that had sought to assess changes in pupil attainment, a number acknowledged that, in retrospect, they realised that such an indicator could only hope to identify or capture the effect of their project over a greater number of years than were funded under the LSEF.
 - **Quantifying the effect of external factors** on the performance of the intervention group, independent of project related activities: Just over one-tenth (11%) of the projects indicated that they had struggled to account for the effect of other independent variables, in particular where teachers/schools in which they were working were involved in more than one LSEF project.
3. Given such findings, in future, commissioners may wish to consider what, if any, steps could be taken to help projects to overcome these issues and strengthen the quality of their evaluation planning. For instance, as asserted in the HM Treasury Magenta Book³⁸ there can be no robust assessment of outcomes if no **counterfactual** has been identified. Counterfactual are essential when looking at the efficacy of practices that are assumed to have a positive impact, but not when the research is designed to be more exploratory. Indeed, in working in schools there may be strong ethical and practical reasons why randomisation would not be appropriate. For instance, many of the LSEF projects sought to target the project at those teachers and pupils thought to be most in-need of support. In such cases, it could be considered unethical to restrict access to support for those considered in need of it.
4. Furthermore, the Magenta Book notes that in designing an evaluation, it is vital to consider the **proportionality** of the approach. Inherent in any such assessment of proportionality must also be some consideration of the scale of the intervention (in fiduciary and non-fiduciary terms) and what changes can reasonably expected to occur in beneficiary practices or behaviours based on the 'dosage' of support. This, in turn might influence the selection of key performance measures. For example, one might expect a project that provided beneficiaries with one hour of training in a group format to require less investment than a project that provided three days' worth of one-to-one coaching. In turn, one might expect, if the project was cost effective, for the latter to support a greater change in practices and behaviour than the former.
5. Nonetheless, and while the importance of such learning should not be overlooked, there is a more fundamental element that underpinned the success of the projects and that is the extent to which they had identified or developed an understanding of why their proposed intervention might work (their theoretical construct) and the

Assessing the impact of activity is valuable but the approach adopted should be both realistic and proportionate

³⁸ HM Treasury (2011) Magenta Book (Online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-magenta-book> (Accessed: 04/02/2016)

assumptions on which the intervention was predicated. Half of the projects' final reports (42 of the 78 projects) lacked clarity in this area.

6. The implications arising from weaknesses in the way that some projects sought to establish a **theoretical basis for their intervention** can be clearly observed through reflection on the approaches (and subsequent performance) of Group 2 projects (those projects that had been robustly evaluated but found that they were less effective in meeting their aims), around two-thirds of which (9 of the 13) appeared to have faced challenges in developing an appropriate theoretical construct for their project.

Project K

For example, one project set out to increase the proportion of pupils studying science at Key Stage 5. To this end, a variety of approaches were set out within the project's evaluation plan to assess changes in pupil decision-making. Over the course of the two-year project, however, the intervention focussed *exclusively* on improving the quality of teaching in science, *rather* than any interventions targeting any barriers to uptake of science at Key Stage 5 that might have been faced by pupils. The project anticipated a link between the quality of teaching and the ongoing engagement of pupils in a subject area. In practice, the time-frame over which the project took place may have been too limited to quantify this relationship and the project did not fully explore the assumption that teaching quality had a greater significance than others (such as careers education or the pull factor of other subjects) on pupil choice of subject. For instance, improvements in the quality of teaching would not, by itself address any of the cultural, social or economic factors that might influence such choices. If the project had considered such variables, it is possible that they might have chosen to invest directly in some pupil-facing activities that promoted science, as well as CPD for teachers. Although the project successfully implemented its chosen evaluation model, the numbers of young people following Key Stage 5 science did not increase and the project found little evidence to suggest that it had succeeded in meeting its aim.

7. Where reviewers identified projects that were found to have designed their project around a clear theoretical framework, there was some evidence to suggest that this had led to the deployment of a stronger evaluation model and ultimately more robust evidence of project related outcomes. Tellingly, reviewers uncovered evidence to suggest that the approaches adopted by just under half (7 of the 16) Group 1 projects (those projects which undertook a robust evaluation and were effective in achieving some, if not, all of their objectives) had such a framework in place.

Establishing an appropriate theoretical basis for a project supports effective project planning/evaluation

Project L

This project looked to improve the conceptual fluency of pupils in maths at Key Stage 2 in the hope that this would support an improvement in the proportion of pupils who achieved Level 4. To support this aim, a range of training and support activities were implemented to support teacher recipients to help them introduce new pedagogical approaches into their practice. By reflecting on the existing evidence base, the project explicitly identified a range of intermediate outcomes that had, in the past, been associated with longer term changes in performance. For example, by testing the conceptual fluency of pupils, the project was able, albeit tentatively, to test the link between changes in the way that they were taught and changes in their academic performance in Key Stage 2 tests.

8. Moving forward, such findings have a number of implications for both commissioners and delivery organisations involved in project development. In particular, it will be important to reflect on what processes, if any, should be put in place to ensure that through the project design process, the assumed relationship between the aims of the project activity and any anticipated outcomes has been explored (and where possible references have been made to the existing evidence base). Where projects are asked to support their own evaluation, it will also be important to consider what steps have been taken to assure that such an approach tests the assumptions identified in development work. Under the LSEF, the GLA sought to do this by appointing Project Oracle to take on this role.

Project set-up

9. As acknowledged by Miranda Bell (2006) and her colleagues in their systematic review of the impact on pupil attainment of collaborative CPD models³⁹ (approaches taken forward by many LSEF projects), regardless of the strength of the evidence base in support of the theoretical approach proposed by an individual organisation, a project is unlikely to be successful if it is not meeting a **recognised need** within the target cohort. Given this evidence, it is perhaps somewhat surprising that few projects explicitly recognised the importance of undertaking a formal **need or demand assessment** in ascertaining whether their target cohort was likely to be receptive to the type of training/support that they intended to deliver (8 projects in total). Having said this, and given the emphasis placed by the GLA on selecting those projects either led by schools, or by organisations already working within London schools, this may simply reflect that a formal assessment was deemed unnecessary by delivery organisations, or had been undertaken prior to engagement with the LSEF.
10. Such an argument appears consistent, at least in part, with the results of analysis undertaken by the review team which found that despite evidence that few projects appeared to have undertaken a formal assessment of the need or demand for their intervention, most (41 of 78 projects) appeared to have undertaken a range of related scoping activities to establish which schools/practitioners were most likely to consent to participation from the target cohort. That said, just under one half of these scoping activities were identified as at least partly ineffective. Where this was the case, this had led to projects setting unrealistic targets for the recruitment of schools or practitioners, which then had to be amended.

What can we learn from how projects approached the implementation of their chosen delivery model?

Investing in scoping activities to establish whether a proposal meets a recognised need should be encouraged

Project M

One such example was a Group 2 project (which provided strong evaluation evidence) which had set out to improve pupil learning outcomes in modern foreign languages by improving the subject knowledge of language teachers. Following the launch of the project, the delivery organisation realised that most of its intended target group had, according to the Final Evaluation Report '*exceptionally high levels of subject knowledge*'. As a result the project

³⁹ Bell, M, Jopling, M, Cordingley, P, Firth, A, King, E & Mitchell H (2006). What is the impact on pupils of networks that include at least three schools? What additional benefits are there for practitioners, organisations and the communities they serve? (Nottingham; NCSL)

changed the emphasis of the support it offered to these staff, focusing instead on content-specific pedagogy.

11. Although, reviewers identified few examples of where a Group 1 project had invested in formal scoping work, irrespective of the character of the lead organisation (be that a school, HEI or not-for-profit organisation), in most cases there was evidence to suggest that the project team were either already **embedded** within pre-existing school or practitioner networks or had chosen to involve the target group at a developmental phase. For instance, reviewers noted that it was unlikely that one project would have been as effective if the academics responsible for designing the intervention had not chosen to engage a local authority in its pilot work. It was argued that this had both helped to refine the model prior to the roll-out of the intervention through the LSEF and allowed the project steering group to tap into local school or practitioner networks, and refine messaging that would ultimately be used to persuade schools and practitioners to engage once the project was launched.
12. Given the importance placed by the GLA on setting targets relating to the number of teachers, schools and pupils that would benefit from project activity, as one might expect, in reflecting on the performance of their projects, evaluators commonly reflected on the relative success of their recruitment strategy, with just over half (46 of 78 projects) identifying a specific example of where their approach had impacted either positively or negatively on project outcomes. Commonly identified issues included:
 - **Making contact** with individual practitioners: Around one half of the projects reviewed as part of the meta-evaluation identified that one of the major issues facing them in implementing their proposal had been recruiting beneficiaries. In developing a recruitment strategy, particularly for an intervention that would require a practitioner to access training and/or support on more than one occasion, it was notable that projects had commonly looked to recruit individual practitioners after having obtained explicit consent (and buy-in) from a senior leader. Although often considered a vital ingredient in supporting access to practitioners, it was evident that such an approach could have a negative effect on the willingness of a practitioner to participate, if the reason for their inclusion within an intervention was not handled carefully. For example, in one case a project (assessed as in Group 2) had to overcome the active hostility of some of those teachers who were sent on their CPD programme (rather than volunteering), as they did not feel that they needed it. In this case, the project team acknowledged that, in future, they would seek to ensure that they took greater control over the messaging surrounding the recruitment of teachers and emphasised the developmental nature of the offer.
 - **Sustaining engagement** with host schools: Just under two-fifths (30 of 78) of the projects, reviewed as part of the meta-evaluation, indicated that they felt that one of the main challenges they had sought to overcome related to securing the ongoing participation of those schools and practitioners

recruited to the intervention group. In London, in particular, it was felt that schools were subject to a high degree of staff turnover. This was found to have implications both at a strategic and an operational level. For instance, it was noted by one project that a change in senior leadership meant that the team lost access to a school with which they had been working. In other cases, it was acknowledged that the momentum of an intervention had been lost because practitioners, who had received training in the hope that they would use their new found expertise to support their peers in the participating schools, had taken on new roles elsewhere. To mitigate the impact of staff turnover projects had adopted a number of strategies. Most common amongst these was the use of a formal contracting process. For example, six of the 16 Group 1 projects chose to formalise their relationship with host schools either via a contract or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)⁴⁰ or by setting aside funding that the school could only access based on their ongoing participation. Having said this, although helpful, such agreements should not be seen as the only answer to securing school engagement and needs to be supported by other activities. As noted in one project report, following a change in senior leadership it was noted that a school had decided to dis-engage from a project, despite the fact that an MOU was in place. In this instance, reviewers queried if a greater emphasis should be placed on 'succession' planning and ensuring that sufficient buy-in is achieved across the school to ensure that a relationship can be maintained even where a senior leader moves on.

Project Delivery

What can we learn from the approaches adopted by LSEF projects?

13. Goodall et al (2005) in their systematic review into the impact of effective continuing professional development (CPD) found that although there was strong evidence to suggest that CPD could be an effective way of improving teaching quality, it was less clear what made different approaches to the delivery of CPD more or less effective⁴¹. In recent years, work undertaken by Philippa Cordingley and others has increasingly shed light on the approaches often associated with effective CPD provision⁴². Evidence collected by LSEF projects contributes to this body of research.

Project infrastructure

Do certain types of project infrastructure support project delivery better than others?

14. Consistent with the findings of work led by Miranda Bell (2008) on the characteristics of successful networks in supporting improvements in pupil outcomes, evaluators frequently stressed the importance of having appropriate infrastructure in place to support project activity (71 of the 78 projects subject to review identified one or more issues associated with the way in which they had

⁴⁰ MOUs were also used in projects that did not score so highly on the quality and credibility of their evaluation.

⁴¹ Goodall J, Day C, Lindsay G, Muijs D & Harris A (2006) Evaluating the Impact of CPD (Online) Available at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/RR659.pdf> (05/02/2016)

⁴² See for example the systematic reviews undertaken by the EPPI Centre. These can be accessed via: <http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/Default.aspx?tabid=62>

supported project delivery). Depending on the strategies and approaches used by projects to support delivery this was found to have considerable implications for the implementation of project activities and the collection of performance monitoring information (and ultimately the robustness of a project evaluation). Commonly identified issues included:

- **Securing completion of research tools:** In order to assess the effectiveness of their intervention, projects developed a range of research tools to assess changes in the performance of beneficiaries. Albeit a perennial issue in much social research⁴³, it is notable that many projects indicated that the credibility of their evaluation had been undermined as a result of difficulties in persuading practitioners to complete these tools. For instance over three quarters of the projects considered as part of the meta-evaluation indicated that they had secured a lower than expected response rate to a practitioners' survey. These response rates had placed constraints on the findings the project teams could draw from the data which had been collected.
- **Coordinating the implementation of project activity:** Depending on their organisational structure, projects demonstrated a wide range of different approaches to supporting the management and coordination of project activities. Perhaps unsurprisingly, in many cases evaluators suggested that the relative success of their project management team had had a major bearing on that of their project as a whole. Indeed, setting aside sufficient resources was commonly identified as of central importance (23 of the 78 projects we reviewed identified this as an issue). That said, many projects acknowledged that such role(s) could often be multi-faceted, with both strategic and operational dimensions. For instance, in just under one-fifth of the reports (15 of 78) reviewed as part of the meta-evaluation projects identified the importance of an effective communication strategy in ensuring the ongoing engagement of beneficiaries. A similar proportion indicated that the effectiveness of their project had depended, at least in part, on the strength of day-to-day administration (for example in booking venues for training or monitoring delivery against project planning documents).
- **Using technology to support project activity:** LSEF projects appeared to embed the use of technology within their project delivery model to support implementation, though with varying degrees of success. For example, while some projects sought to use an online portal to support the collection of performance monitoring data, others sought to use such functionality to encourage peer-to-peer collaboration. Although perhaps unsurprising, where practitioners were unfamiliar with such technology, issues were often reported associated to its use (such issues were reported in 10 of the 78 reports considered as part of the meta-evaluation).

⁴³See for example: de Vaus D (2014) Surveys in social research (London: Routledge)

In reflecting on the relative success of project activity it is important to do so in a realistic and proportionate manner.

15. As we seek to interpret and ultimately learn from these findings, it is important that they are considered in a realistic and proportionate manner. For instance, although some projects may have been disappointed in the response rates that they achieved in the deployment of a survey of practitioners, one must ask whether there was more that they could have realistically done to improve upon them? Given limitations in the information provided by projects on which to assess the effectiveness of their approach in optimizing response rates, any answer to these related questions is likely to be partial in scope. Nonetheless, reflecting on those projects that had the most robust evaluations (Group 1 and Group 2 projects), it is noticeable that efforts appear to have been made to embed evaluation activity within the overall approach to project management and coordination rather than consider it as a discrete entity. For instance, in one case the evaluator noted that engagement with performance monitoring tasks improved once this was made a standard agenda item in all meetings with senior leaders in participating schools. It was noted that this had been effective in ensuring that senior leaders saw these tasks as *'part and parcel'* of participation rather than as an *'add-on'*.
16. To appreciate the challenges faced by LSEF projects in managing and coordinating delivery it is important to reflect on the different delivery models and organisational structures that were adopted. For instance, it is notable that over three-quarters of the projects (59 of 78) funded through the LSEF were successful in supporting some form of networking activity as a means by which to share practice. As noted by Bell *et al.* (2006) managing or coordinating such activity *'makes demands over and above those of leading CPD in [individual] schools'*⁴⁴, not least in the timescale over which the benefits of such activity can be assessed. Viewed through this prism, it is understandable why issues relating to the capacity of the lead organisation to manage or coordinate and the success of their communication strategy might have attracted so much attention from the evaluators of the funded projects.
17. That said, understanding why some projects where beneficiaries (often working with their peers) have been required to take on responsibility for managing their own learning and development have been more successful than others was not straightforward. To do so requires the disaggregation of a number of issues. For instance, to what extent was the relative success of a project related to the capacity of the lead organisation to support the implementation of project activity? Alternatively, was the successful recruitment of motivated individuals more important? Reflecting on the conduct of Group 1 and Group 2 projects (those assessed as subject to a credible evaluation) provides some insights into effective practice. Of the four Group 1 projects identified by reviewers as having a particular strength in supporting collaborative activity it is notable that most, if not all, appear to have identified the *'facilitation'* of such activity as a discrete function performed by the lead organisation. In order to encourage the contribution of beneficiaries to an online blog, for example, members of the lead organisation had set aside time to ensure that blog users were kept abreast of developments within the sector. The

Facilitating peer-to-peer collaboration places additional demands on a delivery organisation. Resources should be set aside to meet this demand if such activity is to be sustained.

⁴⁴ Bell, M, Jopling, M, Cordingley, P, Firth, A, King, E & Mitchell H (2006). What is the impact on pupils of networks that include at least three schools? What additional benefits are there for practitioners, organisations and the communities they serve? (Nottingham; NCSL)

project team argued that only through this initial investment would beneficiaries start to see the blog as a useful resource to which, ultimately, they might consider contributing. Without such investments of time and resource, it is evident that such activities struggled to get off the ground.

18. Although acknowledging the importance of '*network facilitation*' may be useful in helping those involved the design and development of projects aiming to support peer-to-peer collaboration, it tells us little about the level of investment that might be required to support this type of activity, particularly where the scale of such activity, and the character of the lead organisation may differ markedly. Unfortunately, given the number of projects on whose evidence we can fully rely, (29 projects were assessed as either in Group 1 or Group 2) any analysis at this level is extremely difficult. That said, it is evident that, in those projects with a greater investment in peer-to-peer networking (particularly those with multiple delivery centres; Model D projects – see Section 2), the level of investment in project infrastructure appeared much higher, with different aspects of the project management and coordination function taken on by multiple team members in some instances. However, from the data it is difficult to distinguish whether the ability of the project to support multiple project management roles was a function of the scale at which it was operating or whether it was a specific requirement of supporting such activity. Drawing any definitive conclusions based on this evidence alone would be unwise, but it is interesting to note that the level of investment required to support effective project management or coordination of projects did not appear to differ depending on the character of the lead organisation.
19. In analysing the reports submitted by LSEF projects, reviewers noted the importance of **effective quality assurance/management processes** in supporting project activity, particularly where different components of project activity were delivered by a range of different actors. (Reviewers identified that the presence or lack of such processes had had major implications for the performance of 11 of the 78 projects reviewed as part of the meta-evaluation). Interestingly, such systems or processes were not identified as an issue in any of the 16 Group 1 projects (assessed as subject to a credible evaluation and as having been effective in meeting their initial aims and objectives). However, in most cases this is likely to represent the fact that quality assurance or management processes were so well integrated that they went unreported. Of much greater interest, therefore, are the two Group 2 projects for whom reviewers felt that weaknesses in their quality assurance processes had contributed to a less successful outcome. In both instances, it was notable that the projects had sought to extend the reach of the project by training a cadre of 'lead' practitioners who were then responsible for supporting their peers (within their school- at least initially). In neither case were processes put in place to assess whether such teachers were delivering training of the same or similar quality as they had received. As such, reviewers raised concerns that there was a danger that the training provided by 'lead' teachers had not been as effective as it could have been.

Putting appropriate quality assurance processes in place is important, particularly where multiple actors are involved in the delivery of training.

Project Activities

Are some approaches more effective than others in supporting improvement in beneficiary outcomes?

20. The meta-evaluation of LSEF projects provides us with an opportunity to consider what can be learnt about the types of or approaches to the delivery of training and support which appear most effective in supporting improvements in the behaviours or practices of practitioners (at whom the vast majority of funded activity has been directed). Reflecting on the contents of the 78 project reports helped identify five principal factors against which the effectiveness of training could be assessed: the **format** of training and support, the **content** of training, the **accessibility** of project activity, the **intensity** of training and support and the **role of the 'expert'**.

Format of support and training

21. Given the emphasis placed by many projects on supporting or facilitating peer-to-peer working (59 of 78 projects were successful in supporting some form of networking activity), it is perhaps unsurprising that, in seeking to learn from their experience in delivering their project, and, in particular, the type of training that they delivered, evaluators in their project evaluation reports commonly focussed on the merits of different approaches in helping to sustain peer-to-peer working beyond the life of the project (evaluators identified this as an issue in 19 of the 78 projects that were considered as part of the meta-evaluation). Although, clearly an issue of importance, one must ask whether a debate about sustainability has the potential to distract from broader considerations of the effectiveness of such activity, in its own right, in supporting improvements in behaviour or practice. Using this lens, reviewers were able to identify a number of learning points:

Peer-to-peer networking can be more effective when it is embedded within all facets of project delivery but the willingness of beneficiaries to work in this way should not be assumed

- The benefits arising from **embedding peer-to-peer work** within all facets of project delivery. In total, reviewers identified 12 projects that had taken steps to provide collaborative opportunities within *all aspects* of project delivery (rather than as an add-on). For example, in one case, practitioners were invited to support the co-creation of their own training resources, working with subject-experts. Fermenting a collegiate approach from this early stage was considered integral to the success of later collaborative activity, as beneficiaries had also seen the value that this way of working could have. Such an approach may not be appropriate in all instances, of course. Indeed, reviewers noted that despite a similar approach being adopted in another project, collaborative activity subsided soon after the end of the formal training programme. In this case, it was questioned whether support was withdrawn too quickly or whether the subject matter was too technical for practitioners to understand and debate in a semi-formal setting.
- The value of **technology** as an aid to support professional development. In a number of cases (seven projects) reviewers observed that technology had been used to enhance/support professional practice (rather than merely as an instrument of project management, for instance). Where used to support practice, reviewers indicated that technology had been advantageous in both improving the quality of the training and support on offer and, in some cases, improving accessibility. For example, one Group 1 project had asked practitioners to record their lessons using a video camera and then share the

'New' technologies can provide a way of improving the quality of training. However, beneficiaries often require support in order to use it to its potential

results with their peers via an online portal. The clips had enabled the cohort to reach a shared understanding of effective practice, in partnership with subject-experts. By making such clips available online, the amount of time that practitioners were out of school was reduced, removing one barrier to their participation. Although heartening, such an experience was not universal. Albeit (on balance) positive about their experience in using similar technology for their project, the evaluators for one Group 2 project noted that practitioners had only been comfortable in opening-up their practice to this type of scrutiny once the decision was taken to dis-associate this strand of activity from the evaluation model for the project. Furthermore, it was noted that the project team had had to work extremely hard in order to build the confidence of individual practitioners to actively engage in discussions around the practice of a peer. As such, reviewers queried whether collaborative activity would continue once this level of support was removed.

- The benefits arising from the use of **enquiry-orientated approaches**. In a small number of cases (5 projects), reviewers noted the potential benefits associated with the use of an enquiry-orientated approach. In such projects, practitioners were explicitly required to identify their own training needs. Where such an approach had been adopted by projects, reviewers noted that project reports showed that practitioners were often highly engaged in the learning process and felt very confident in their ability to apply what they had learnt when they returned to the classroom. For example, the evaluators of one project concluded that of the 28 schools in which they had piloted the use of the Lesson Study⁴⁵ approach 26 had indicated that they would continue to use the approach following the end of the project. Nevertheless, even in those instances where an enquiry-orientated approach had been adopted to positive effect it was acknowledged that such an approach was highly resource intensive and should not be entered into lightly.

Content of training and support

22. As discussed in Section 3, LSEF projects have covered a wide-range of subject areas (from maths through to Mandarin Chinese) in the pursuit of a variety of aims (including improving subject uptake at KS5 and improving the confidence of early years' practitioners). Somewhat inevitably, as a result, the '*content*' or substance of what has been delivered was also similarly variable. It is nonetheless important to understand, if and when common strategies have been adopted, whether these have been effective in supporting learning. Although mindful of the limited evidence on this issue provided by projects in their reports, reviewers identified a number of issues worthy of further discussion:

- The benefits of a **learner-centred approach**: In just under one-fifth (13 of the 78) of the projects, reviewers identified, albeit tentatively, a link between the emphasis placed by projects on positioning the learner as a co-architect of their training programme and high levels of engagement and empowerment

Learner-centred approaches can be effective but require learners to be highly motivated

⁴⁵ More information on the Lesson Study model can be found at: <http://tdtrust.org/what-is-lesson-study>

amongst practitioners (and indeed pupils in some cases). For example, one project (in Group 1) encouraged individual practitioners to identify an area of the new curriculum to prepare for with support from a subject-expert. Practitioners were then invited to share their work with other beneficiaries, with the expectation that this would provide the cohort with enough resources and guidance to meet the requirements of the curriculum in future years. Providing practitioners with an opportunity to direct their own learning was considered to have been integral to securing the ongoing engagement of practitioners and allowing subject-experts to tailor their support to meet the individual needs of learners. That said, in adopting this approach it was acknowledged that it relied, at least initially, on the motivation of each learner to take forward their own programme of activity. In some instances, it was acknowledged that such a level of buy-in might not be achievable, for example where senior leaders rather than individual practitioners have mandated their participation.

- The value of **tailored** training and support: In around one-fifth (13) of the projects reviewers identified a tension between the desire from the project team to adapt their delivery model to better meet the needs of individual beneficiaries and their recognition of the potential pitfalls that could arise if the content of training deviated too far from that which had been seen to work in the past (or which had a basis in the academic literature). One project, for example, allowed learners to choose from a menu of training and support options. With each training and support module quality-assured by the lead delivery organisation, the project team reflected that they were confident that what was being delivered was of a high quality. In analysing the feedback from participants it was noted that they had considered the tailored nature of the intervention to have been a key factor in the project's success.
- The benefits of developing **resources** as a means of sharing effective practice: To support the dissemination of effective practice, a considerable number of LSEF projects supported the development of resources (most commonly either to support lesson planning or curriculum planning)⁴⁶. Given the value placed on these resources it is important to consider what, if anything, can be learnt from LSEF projects about what constitutes good practice in supporting their development. Unfortunately, only 10 of the project evaluation reports submitted for inclusion within the meta-evaluation provided evidence to take this discussion forward. Only four of these were assessed as in either Group 1 or Group 2 (and as such provided a reliable source of data). These indicated that where learners were directly involved in the **co-creation** of resources, the level of engagement was higher. Equally, by directly engaging practitioners in the development of resources, there was some evidence to suggest that such resources were more '*classroom-ready*'.

⁴⁶ See Section 2 for more information. www.london.gov.uk/LSEFresources has links to resources developed.

Accessibility of support and training

23. Perhaps understandably, given the challenges associated with securing the engagement of teaching staff, around one quarter of the projects considered as part of the meta-evaluation identified issues associated with the accessibility of training and support activities. In seeking to optimise accessibility projects appeared to have taken one of two principal approaches:

To optimise beneficiary engagement, where possible steps should be taken to align project delivery with the availability of beneficiaries

- Optimising the value of **contact-time** required within the school day: Reviewers noted that in just under one-tenth of the projects a concerted effort had been made to minimise the amount of time beneficiaries needed to spend out of the classroom. Common strategies included the provision of twilight sessions or breakfast meetings. While such approaches appeared to have worked well for some projects, it is worth noting that while such an approach was applicable in some circumstances it would not work in others (for example in a coaching or mentoring model in which interaction with a practitioner within the classroom was important). In reality, it may be worth considering, in designing projects, the emphasis that should be placed on maximising the value of any training delivered during the school day rather than simply reducing the amount of such training that was delivered. For example, in one case, following a pilot phase (undertaken prior to LSEF), one project evaluator reflected that the team had chosen to reduce the contact time required with practitioners by one third and shifted the emphasis of such sessions to conveying key concepts. By providing practitioners with set tasks outside of these face-to-face sessions it was noted that the time required to deliver the programme had been reduced while the outcomes associated with participation had improved. It was argued that, by providing a framework for teachers to take forward learning independently within their own classroom environment, changes in practices/behaviour had become more quickly embedded within their practice.
- Adopting a more agile approach to **project planning**: Reviewers noted that considerable benefits for some projects (particularly in terms of beneficiary engagement) had been derived through the adoption of a more flexible approach to project delivery (adopting this type of approach was considered to have benefited at least seven projects). For instance, following initial discussions with host schools one Group 1 project had decided to vary the timeline for the delivery of project activities to better reflect the peaks and troughs in each school's calendar. Although it was noted that this had increased the administrative burden on the project team, the benefits in terms of staff responsiveness were felt to have been worth it. Clearly, there are limitations around the extent to which the needs of individual schools and practitioners can be accommodated. Nonetheless in developing a project plan, project teams working in this area may wish to consider how their approach can be made as flexible as possible.

Intensity of training and support

24. As projects seek to optimise the value of contact time with beneficiaries it is important to recognise the challenges associated with identifying the appropriate balance between the 'dosage' of training and the support required by practitioners to achieve the stated aim and objective of a particular project. As noted above, in many cases projects reflected that a reduction in the volume of time that they had spent with individual practitioners had been associated with an improvement in engagement. Perhaps understandably, however, none of the projects that had chosen to vary the 'dosage' offered to different beneficiary groups had the resources to test the implications of this on the outcomes experienced by beneficiaries as a whole. Without this type of assessment it is impossible to assess whether projects have found an appropriate balance.

In seeking to optimize the value of contact time with beneficiaries it is important to strike a balance between the availability of the target cohort, and how much support they will require to make a difference to their behaviour

The role of the expert

25. As acknowledged by Philippa Cordingley and her colleagues in their review of the contribution of 'specialists' or 'experts' (2007) much, if not all, CPD involves some form of knowledge exchange⁴⁷. Perhaps understandably the vast majority of such activity takes places within the confines of a defined hierarchy i.e. training and/or support occurs when one participant shares what they know if other participants who place a value on what is being communicated to them. Nonetheless, recognition of this fact makes defining who is and who isn't an 'expert' (and in what context) extremely difficult. Mindful of this challenge, it is interesting to note that just under two-fifths (29) of the LSEF projects considered as part of the meta-evaluation made explicit reference to the important role played by 'experts' in the delivery of their activity. Few, however, explicitly identified the factors that had supported or detracted from the knowledge transfer process. Over the course of the meta-evaluation, reviewers were able to identify a number of areas of learning:

In delivering teacher CPD it is important to acknowledge that different types of expertise may be required to support an all-round improvement in teacher performance

- The importance of acknowledging **different forms of 'expertise'** in supporting improvements in teacher quality. Interestingly, five of the 16 projects assessed as in Group 1, reviewers noted explicit recognition of a need to acknowledge the inter-relationship between **subject knowledge** (an understanding of what is to be taught) and **pedagogical content knowledge** (an understanding of how to teach it⁴⁸). For example, in one case, and to ensure that the correct emphasis was struck in the development of, and use of, training materials, all activities were delivered in partnership between academic partners who were perceived to be experts in their subject and those directly involved in the development and delivery of Initial Teacher Education and Training courses. In those projects in which this balance was not achieved, evaluators noted that practitioners struggled to operationalise what they had learnt within their practice. For example, one Group 2 project

⁴⁷ Cordingley P, Bell M, Isham C, Evans D & Firth A (2007). What do specialists do in CPD programmes for which there is evidence of positive outcomes for pupils and teachers? (London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London)

⁴⁸ For more information on the difference between subject knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and general pedagogical skills please see: Shulman L (1987) 'Knowledge and teaching: Foundations of the new reform' *Harvard Educational Review* 57(1) pp. 1-22

indicated that one of the reasons why they had not performed as well as they had hoped was that the academic experts that they had used to support practitioners had struggled to identify ways in which teachers, now secure in their subject knowledge, could communicate this in way that would improve pupil learning outcomes.

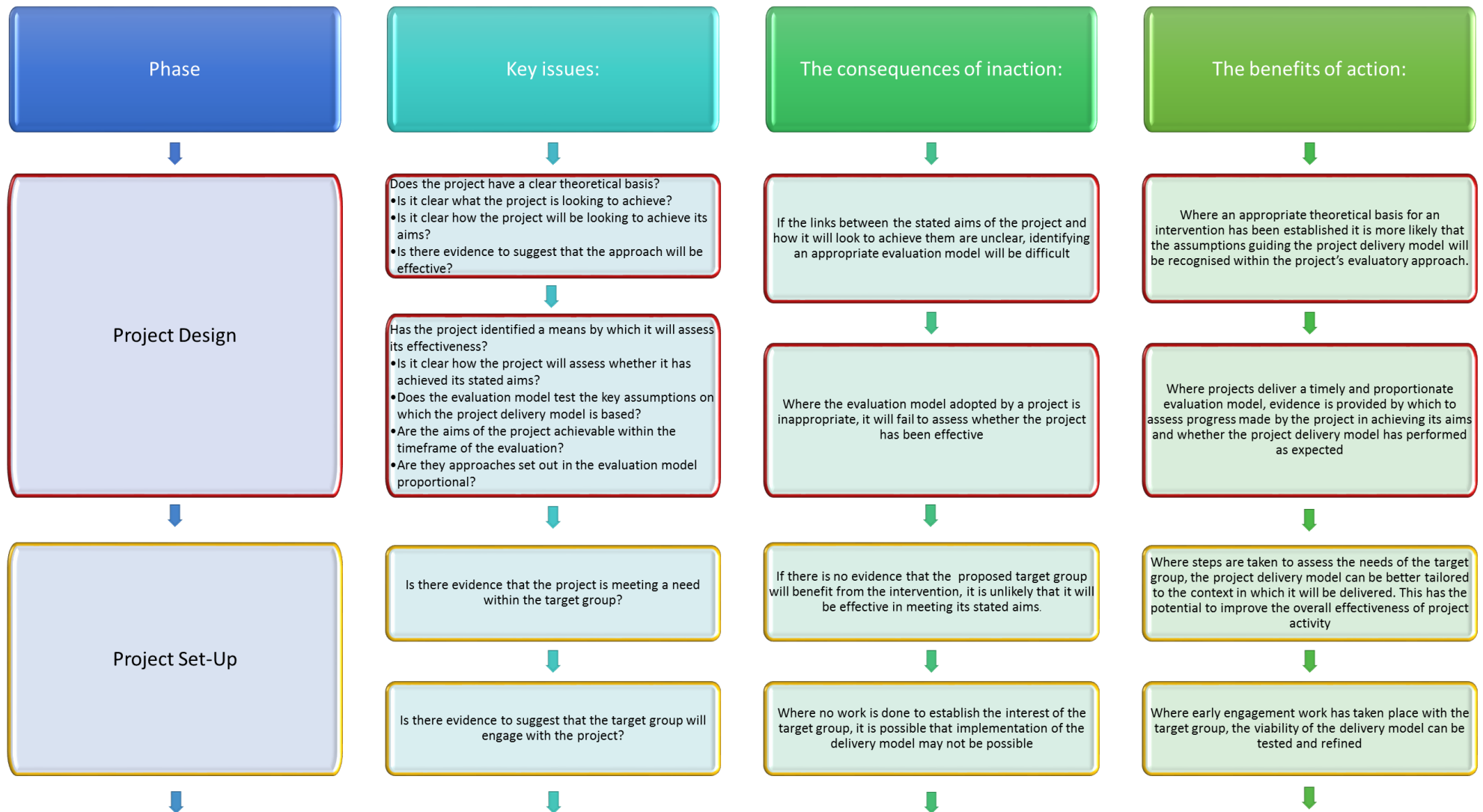
- The advantages associated with recognising the **teacher as an 'expert'**. In a small number of projects, it was evident that attempts had been made to achieve a sense of parity between practitioners in receipt of training and those delivering it. For instance, the lead organisation for one project had decided to include representatives from beneficiary groups on the project steering group. It was felt that such an approach had impacted both on how practitioners felt about the project and had led to improvements in the quality of the training programme itself.
- The importance of recognising the needs of **adult learners**. Albeit in a small number of projects, reviewers identified that projects had set aside resources specifically to ensure that '*experts*' had the skills to support adult learners. For example, the evaluator of one project noted that despite the fact that training and support was provided by practitioners who were used to teaching young people, this did not mean that they had the skills to provide training for other teachers. As a result additional sessions were delivered for trainers to support them in doing this. Regardless of the level of expertise of trainers, where they did not have these skills the effectiveness of the offer was found to suffer. For instance, the evaluator of one Group 2 project noted that while practitioners valued the training provided by academics, they indicated that, following such sessions, practitioners had had to do a lot of work to convert what they had learnt into something they felt comfortable using with their pupils.

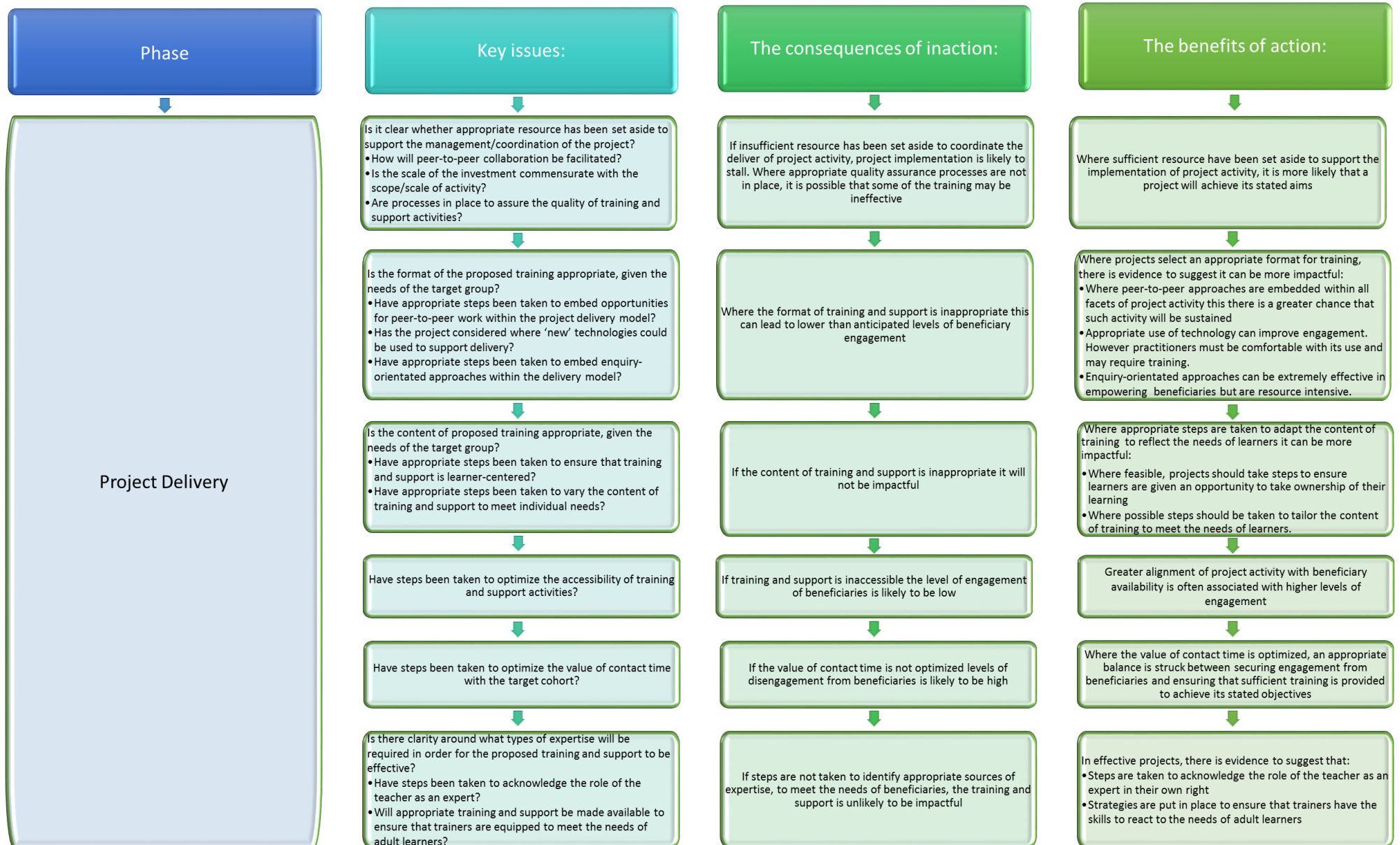
To support the sharing of expertise requires that trainers have the skills to manage this process effectively

Understanding the characteristics of an effective project

26. In this sub-section we reflect on the key issues that project evaluators and the review team identified as having an impact on the effectiveness of project activity and consider, in particular, the responses of Group 1 and Group 2 projects (on whose evaluation data we can rely). In doing so, we identify a number of characteristics which appear to be commonly associated with effective practice. We hope that this framework will support commissioners in identifying those projects most likely to succeed in meeting their objectives and project teams in looking to improve upon existing delivery models.

Figure 5-1: Understanding the characteristics of an effective project





Summary of learning

27. In considering the wider learning from the Final Evaluation Reports submitted by the 78 projects, a number of points emerged that could inform the future establishment of such projects and increase the opportunities for learning from them, including:
- Establishing an **appropriate theoretical basis** for a project supports both effective project planning and evaluation, so that projects are clear as to why their proposed interventions are likely to have an impact on the proposed beneficiaries
 - Investing in **scoping activities** to establish whether a proposed project meets a recognised need should be encouraged, so that projects are able to direct their resources in the most appropriate way
 - In setting up an evaluation approach, it is essential to consider how the impact of activity will be **monitored and assessed**, but the approach adopted should be both realistic and proportionate
 - Facilitating **peer-to-peer collaboration** (which the projects' Final Evaluation Reports indicated was a particularly effective approach) places additional demands on a delivery organisation. Resources should be set aside to meet this demand if such activity is to be sustained
 - Peer-to-peer networking can also be more effective when it is embedded within all facets of project delivery, but the **willingness of beneficiaries** to work in this way should not be assumed
 - Putting appropriate **quality assurance** processes in place is important, particularly where multiple stakeholders are involved in the delivery of training. It is essential that there is a clear process for assuring quality, which means that a lead organisation or lead individual may need to take on this responsibility
 - '**New technologies** can provide a way of improving the quality of training. However, beneficiaries often require support in order to use it to these technologies to their full potential
 - **Enquiry-orientated approaches** can be an effective way of **engaging beneficiaries** but they are both resource and time intensive and projects need to consider this in their planning. **Learner-centred approaches** can also be effective but require learners to be highly motivated and therefore, as set out above, the project will be more effective if addressing an identified need
 - Training and support activities can be most effective when they are tailored to meet the needs of individual beneficiaries, although this may not always be feasible, given time constraints and budget. They also require projects to

undertake a needs analysis for each participating individual (using tests, self-reporting or classroom observations)

- To optimise **beneficiary engagement**, steps should be taken to align project delivery with the availability of beneficiaries. This means that projects need to consider the timing and duration of CPD, which can be a particular challenge when working cross-phase.
- There is a need to strike a balance between the availability of the target cohort for training, and the extent of support they each require to make a difference to their behaviour. This means that training sessions need to focus on the learning that is best done in a group and not on the activities that could be done outside the session by individual beneficiaries
- In delivering teacher CPD it is important to acknowledge that different types of expertise may be required to support an all-round improvement in teacher performance. This may mean that teachers require input from both subject 'experts' and from experts in content-specific pedagogy. Effective CPD appeared more evident when trainers had the skills to manage sharing of expertise

6. Key Learning and Recommendations

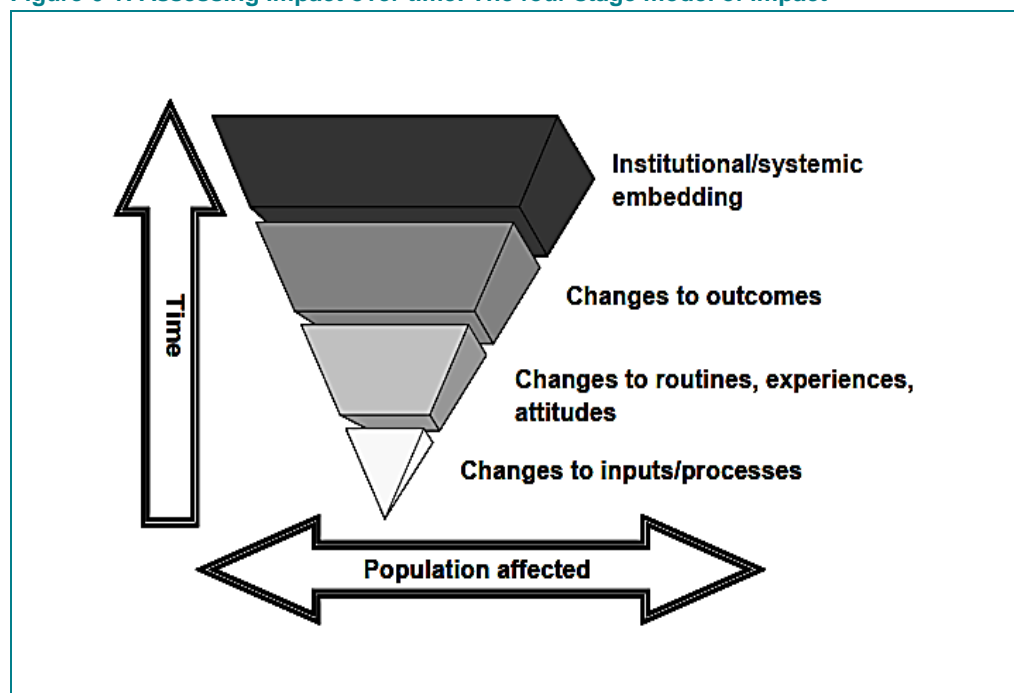
1. The information provided by the projects in their Final Evaluation Reports suggests that many were enthused by the opportunity to try out new approaches or expand existing approaches to increase subject knowledge amongst teachers and improve classroom pedagogy. While it was generally too soon to identify or attribute changes in pupil attainment to the projects, many were hopeful that such changes would arise in the future, in line with improvements in teachers' knowledge of their subject and content-based pedagogical knowledge and collaboration - each of which is known to be positively associated with pupil attainment⁴⁹. During our visits to projects and schools, conducted as part of the accompanying thematic study, this enthusiasm and appreciation for the LSEF funding was also observed.
2. In addition, one of the notable outcomes of the programme of developmental activity under the LSEF was the extent to which many of the projects learnt from the support that had been provided to them both by the GLA and by Project Oracle, following the SQW review of their interim reports. This highlighted the value of identifying the need for and providing targeted support to projects in order to conduct self-evaluations, particularly since many of the projects were new to this approach. In this sense, the support programme also had a capacity building role, contributing to the evaluation and research skills in the sector. In turn the projects with good quality evaluations provided useful insights for practitioners and policy-makers, as summarised in this report.

Emerging impact

3. The evidence from the Final Evaluation Reports indicates that the main successes of the LSEF to date have been in improving teacher confidence and in improving subject knowledge and content-specific pedagogy. Not surprisingly, given the length of time over which projects had been operating, projects found it harder to identify (or attribute) improvements in pupil attainment or pupil engagement or aspirations as a result of the funding, though some reported a number of early indications (see Section 4). As set out in Figure 6-1, such changes in pupil outcomes would rarely be expected at this stage in the lives of projects. However, as discussed below a number of the earlier stages are clearly evident.

⁴⁹ See, for example Leu (2004) and Goe and Stickler (2008).

Figure 6-1: Assessing impact over time: The four stage model of impact



Source: Morris M and Golden S 2005

4. In considering the impact of the LSEF since its launch, an analysis of the projects' submitted reports suggest that:
 - There have been some marked changes in **first order impacts** (the inputs and processes identified in Figure 1-1), with schools and other stakeholders able to access significant funds and expertise to set up and test a wide range of different approaches to achieving outcomes for teachers and (in the longer-term) pupils.
 - These changes in **inputs and processes** have led to changes in **infrastructure**, and to changes in staff **routines, experiences and attitudes** (with staff showing willingness both to have their skills and confidence assessed and to allow peers to observe their practice in the classroom, for instance).
 - In particular, the LSEF has supported and promoted **the establishment of peer-to-peer networks, coaching and mentoring** and the establishment of **intra- and inter-school collaboration** and (through the use of **subject experts**) activities across local authorities.
 - For **teachers**, the projects recorded a range of **outcomes** (particularly in relation to **improved confidence, subject knowledge and content-specific pedagogy**). These characteristics that (as summarised by Leu, 2004⁵⁰, and Goe and Stickler, 2008⁵¹) have been associated with those most likely to

⁵⁰ Leu E., (2004). Developing a Positive Environment for Teacher Quality. Working paper #3 under EQUIP1's Study of School-based Teacher In-service Programme and Clustering of Schools. U.S. Agency for International Development

⁵¹ Goe L., and Stickler L. M., (2008). Teacher Quality and Student Achievement: Making the Most of Recent Research. National Comprehensive Centre for Teacher Quality

improve pupils' outcomes. Where projects had been successful in these areas, it would suggest that over the longer-term such outcomes may be associated with improvements in pupil attainment.

- Outcomes included early signs of improvements in **pupil attitudes and engagement**, with some projects also being able to identify increases in subject-specific skills⁵².
5. The ongoing challenge that remains is to embed these changes in the system; not all projects were confident that progress would continue towards attainment outcomes for pupils or institutional/systemic embedding (Level 4 impact, Fig 1-1 above) without further infrastructural and/or funding support.

Learning points and recommendations

6. This section considers the main learning points from the meta-evaluation of the LSEF and presents a number of recommendations for consideration by commissioners, policy-makers and those involved in the development and delivery of targeted interventions to support improvements in the quality of teaching and, ultimately, in pupil learning outcomes.
- **Establishing an appropriate theoretical basis for a project supports effective project planning, delivery and evaluation.** The findings from the meta-evaluation suggest that the projects that were most effective were those where the staff developing and delivering the project were clear about their underlying theory of change and about the links between what they were doing and what they were trying to achieve. Such projects were also more able to identify the types of evidence they needed to monitor and assess their progress and were robust in their application.
 - **Investing in scoping activities (including audits or needs assessments) to establish whether a proposal meets a recognised need should be encouraged.** The more successful projects were those that had taken steps to assess the actual (not just the anticipated) needs of the target group (whether of schools, teachers or pupils). This meant that their project delivery model was more effectively tailored to the context in which it was delivered. Early engagement with proposed target groups means that the viability of the delivery model can be tested and refined, and the aims and objectives of the project can be better clarified. Time is needed to undertake this work, and may delay project implementation (a challenge when funds are time-limited) but taking this staged approach has the potential to improve the overall effectiveness of project activity.
 - **Sufficient resources need be set aside for project management and coordination.** The availability of staff and time to coordinate project implementation was crucial and was sometimes overlooked at the start of

⁵² This was most evident amongst younger pupils, where the nature of the assessment strategies used enabled detailed changes to be both monitored and recorded

some projects. The continuing lack of any such resource in a number of these projects hampered their delivery (whether there were multiple delivery partners, or where delivery was the remit of a single stakeholder). However, where resources were set aside, they often proved critical to project success.

- **Facilitating peer-to-peer collaboration places additional demands on a delivery organisation.** While the establishment and operation of peer-to-peer networks were a particular success of the LSEF, it needs to be recognised that organising such interaction requires oversight, time and a clear focus on the purpose and role of such networks.
- **Peer-to-peer networking can be more effective when it is embedded within all facets of project delivery.** A number of projects demonstrated effective practice in developing and managing peer-to-peer networks, but also emphasised that the willingness of potential beneficiaries to work in this way should not be assumed. Activities to develop trust between participants and to demonstrate the value of joint working (whether to share learning or to develop shared resources) were often critical.
- **Putting appropriate quality assurance processes in place is important.** One of the challenges faced by projects was ensuring the fidelity and quality of training, particularly where cascade models were in operation, or where multiple stakeholders were involved in delivery.
- **To optimise beneficiary engagement, steps should be taken to align project delivery with the availability of beneficiaries.** As projects noted, even with good senior leadership support (an essential element for success), releasing staff for training during the school day (particularly in smaller schools) can be challenging and although the potential benefits of the project may be recognised by all potential participants, engagement can be seriously affected if activities are not planned in a way that recognises teachers' other commitments.
- **Although not always feasible, training and support activities can be most effective where they are tailored to meet the needs of individual beneficiaries.** A number of the more successful projects combined group training sessions with individual mentoring and coaching (whether by subject experts or by other staff in the school or from within the project cohort) to help beneficiaries apply their learning and review their performance in a dynamic way.
- **Evaluation approaches should be both realistic and proportionate.** At the outset, projects should be encouraged to consider the resource implications of their proposed approach to evaluation and ensure that this is both proportionate to the outcomes they anticipate and realistic when they consider the available amount of funding. It should also be recognised that it may take time to identify the most appropriate monitoring or testing tools and to ensure that they are available ahead of the project launch in order to provide a baseline against which progress can be assessed.

- **Clarity about the intentions of programme-level evaluation and support for project self-evaluation is critical to ensure quality and to enable cross-project comparability.** The GLA had helpfully designed a series of detailed templates in order to gather comparable data from funded projects and had put in place a support strategy to assist them in the design and conduct of their evaluations. They were also very responsive in introducing appropriate amendments when the formative meta-evaluation indicated that some projects appeared unclear about the nature of the data they needed to include in their reports. Even so, some elements of the necessary data required to enable, for example, a value for money analysis were incomplete at the final reporting stage and, because of the limited timescale, pupil outcomes and the wider system impact (Hypothesis 3) could not be assessed.
- **In delivering teacher CPD it is important to acknowledge that different types of expertise may be required to support an all-round improvement in teacher performance.** Many of the projects combined the development of teachers' subject knowledge with training that demonstrated how that knowledge could best be deployed in the classroom. The meta-evaluation suggested that the sharing of subject expertise was often insufficient by itself, but was more effective when delivered by experts who had the skills to link subject knowledge to pedagogical content knowledge.
- As highlighted in Section 4, **success in projects was more often reported where training in specific subject-knowledge content was combined with general and subject specific pedagogical theory and practical skills.** Using subject champions in school and focusing on teacher collaboration were both effective approaches.