



Department  
for Education

# Ipswich Opportunity Area Synthesis Evaluation

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## Abbreviations/Acronyms

AP	Alternative Provision
ARE	Age Related Expectations
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DfE	Department for Education
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EBPF	Evidence-Based Practice Fund
EEF	Education Endowment Foundation
ILG	Individual Learning Goals
ELSA	Emotional Literacy Support Assistants
EY	Early Years
EYIL	Early Years Implementation Lead
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
EYTL	Early Years Transition Leads
FSA	Family Support Assistants
HLTA	Higher-Level Teaching Assistants
IL	Implementation Leads
IOA	Ipswich Opportunity Area
LBL	Learning Behaviour Lead
MAT	Multi-Academy Trust
NEACO	Network for East Anglian Collaborative Outreach
NEET	not in education, employment, or training
NOA	Norwich Opportunity Area
NQT	newly qualified teacher
OA	Opportunity Area
SLC	Speech, Language and Communication
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and maths
SWERL	Supporting Wellbeing and Emotionally Resilient Learning
TA	Teaching Assistant
UCL	University College London
UEA	University of East Anglia
WADADM	What A Difference A Day Makes

# Executive Summary

## Introduction

The Opportunity Areas programme was launched in 2017, with the aim of improving social mobility for young people across 12 geographical areas facing substantial and long-standing challenges.<sup>1</sup> The programme adopted a place-based approach, which both identified a local area and devolved high-level decision-making to local leaders. This report presents findings from the synthesis evaluation of the Ipswich Opportunity Area (IOA). The IOA programme was funded by the Department for Education (DfE) for three years (2017 to 2020) before it was extended for two further years (2021 to 2022).

This evaluation sought to:

- 1. Understand what the IOA did in trying to meet the original delivery aims set out in the delivery plan.**
- 2. Examine the perceived and/or measured progress that has been made in achieving these aims by the IOA.**

Suffolk County Council commissioned the University of East Anglia to conduct a synthesis evaluation of the IOA in February 2022. The evaluation took place between March 2022 and June 2022. Specifically, a documentary analysis and an interview with the Programme Manager were conducted between mid March and mid May (approximately eight weeks). The research team also attended multiple legacy groups and Network meetings, which provided additional context and an opportunity to speak to stakeholders about their understanding and experience of the IOA.

## Key Findings

- **Measured Outcomes.** The evidential base on which this evaluation draws does not allow for quantifiable, systematic and robust data to be obtained in relation to headline targets set out in the initial delivery plan<sup>2</sup> and the degree to which they have been achieved.
- **Perceived Outcomes.** In its impact reports,<sup>3</sup> the IOA believed that several individual projects provided positive significant outcomes for beneficiaries of the funding (such as pupils, staff, parents and schools). Some of these were

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<sup>1</sup> DfE (2017) [Opportunity Areas](#). Policy Paper. 9 October 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Ipswich Opportunity Area Delivery Plan (2018). [Department for Education – Social Mobility Delivery Plan – Ipswich](#), (viewed on 20 March 2022)

<sup>3</sup> These included publications such as: Ipswich Opportunity Area – What's Changed? (2022). [Sustaining-Opportunities-IOA-Impact-report-January-2022](#), (viewed on 9 May 2022).

demonstrated by tangible quantifiable progress in the data and are discussed throughout this evaluation.<sup>4</sup>

- **Working Practices.** During this evaluation, multiple IOA stakeholders pointed to significant positive changes in the way working practices developed between educational settings and multiple local stakeholders because of the IOA programme. This increased as the programme moved into its fourth and fifth years as the focus turned to create several legacy networks and hubs.
- **Legacy and Sustainability.** Some IOA-initiated projects have a good chance of being sustainable once IOA funding ends because of the legacy work that the Partnership Board and Programme Leads have done. Six specialist resilience and wellbeing hubs, many led by schools and early years settings, have been formed to offer support, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and resources to practitioners working with children and young people. The IOA has also launched a Suffolk-wide Teaching Assistant (TA) Network in collaboration with the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and the local authority.
- **Place-based Approach.** The design of the Opportunity Area programme as a place-based initiative resulted in Ipswich local leaders and stakeholders forming a more coherent and cohesive sense of what is needed for the area's children. It had helped form a sense of 'collective responsibility' amongst those involved with children's learning and wellbeing (Programme Manager).
- **COVID-19.** The IOA was able to draw on its resources flexibly and was well positioned to listen to what schools needed when the pandemic occurred. The IOA programme helped to mitigate against some of the disruption to pupils' learning during coronavirus (COVID-19), with examples of positive outcomes on pupil engagement and reintegration back into classes. Interventions around mental health that were pursued by local leaders early on in the programme became increasingly well used and relevant.

## Future Considerations

This evaluation outlines several considerations regarding future interventions, project evaluation and legacy planning. This discussion can be found in [chapter four](#) of this report.

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<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that this synthesis evaluation has not conducted impact evaluation of individual projects.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Policy Context

This report presents findings from the synthesis evaluation of the Ipswich Opportunity Area (IOA). To improve outcomes for children and young people, Ipswich was designated one of twelve Opportunity Areas in England. This programme was funded by the Department for Education (DfE) for three years (2017 to 2020) before it was extended for two further years. The DfE-funded programme is set to end on 31 August 2022. Overall, £8,944,158 was spent from 2017 to 2022 to support work across four priorities that were set out in the IOA delivery plan:

Priority 1 – Ensure all children in Ipswich are prepared to learn for life by developing key behaviours such as resilience and self-regulation.

Priority 2 – Strengthen the teaching profession in Ipswich by providing world-class support and development.

Priority 3 – Improve attainment for disadvantaged pupils by embedding evidence-based practice in the teaching of English and maths.

Priority 4 – Inspire and equip young people with the skills and guidance they need to pursue an ambitious career pathway.

## 1.2 The Challenge

Despite the strengths of the area, Ipswich has struggled economically in recent years. Traditionally an industrial town, the economy in Ipswich has become increasingly service-led. The levels of deprivation within the town are relatively high in some areas. Employers have identified low levels of skills as a potential barrier to growth in Ipswich; fewer adults in the town are qualified to level 3 (equivalent to A-Levels) and level 4 (equivalent to a certificate of higher education) than nationally. Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in Ipswich achieve, on average, poorer outcomes in education than disadvantaged pupils across the country. In the 2016 'Achieving Excellence in all Areas' analysis, which is used for understanding educational performance and capacity to improve, Ipswich was ranked in the bottom 10 of all local authority districts nationally. When comparing the academic and employment life chances of children eligible for free school meals, the 2016 Social Mobility Index ranked Ipswich 292 out of 324 districts. According to Suffolk County Council data, young people in Ipswich are more likely not to be in employment,

education or training (NEET) than nationally, and an increasing number of children and young people are being drawn into drug and gang activities within the town.<sup>5</sup>

Based on a combination of a thorough analysis of data and intelligence from local stakeholders, the IOA developed its delivery plan<sup>6</sup> with a focus on the needs of the local area and to set 'the right tone for delivery' (Programme Manager). The IOA set out its vision for Ipswich:

*All young people in Ipswich are happy, confident, ambitious and flexible lifelong learners. We want to ensure all young people can fulfil their potential and access the opportunities available to them regardless of their background.<sup>7</sup>*

In line with all other Opportunity Areas, a Partnership Board was set up including education and non-education partners. Partnership Boards were a feature of all Opportunity Areas and consisted of "an advisory body whose members offer expertise and knowledge relevant to the local Opportunity Area".<sup>8</sup> The current IOA Partnership Board consists of local leaders from several sectors, including schools, the Local Enterprise Partnership and charities.<sup>9</sup>

The core focus of the entire IOA programme was that all children have the necessary skills and behaviours to learn for life; strengthening the teaching profession; improving key stage 2 and key stage 4 maths and English outcomes for disadvantaged pupils by embedding evidence-based practice; equipping young people with the skills to pursue ambitious career pathways.

### 1.3 Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation team conducted a documentary analysis of a range of secondary data, published outcomes/frameworks, and other relevant documentation relating to the whole programme. The team sought out previous project evaluations commissioned by the IOA and the national process evaluation report. The research team interviewed the programme leader. Additionally, there was an opportunity to

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<sup>5</sup> Social Mobility Delivery Plan Ipswich (2022), [Future Ipswich Corporate Plan 2021 -2026](#) (viewed on 10 May 2022).

<sup>6</sup> Ipswich Opportunity Area Delivery Plan (2018). [Department for Education – Social Mobility Delivery Plan – Ipswich](#) (viewed on 5 May 2022).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> NatCen (2022). [Opportunity Areas Process Evaluation](#). Research Report, page 4, (viewed on 13 June 2022).

<sup>9</sup> Partnership Board members are listed here: [Ipswich Opportunity Area Our Partnership Board](#) (viewed on 15 June 2022)

attend several Network meetings and legacy groups across the priorities. The data collection phase of the research ran between mid March and mid May.

## 1.4 Method

The research evaluation examined the legacy of the IOA and examined to what extent it had achieved its intended outcomes. The scope of the evaluation was directed by two research questions:

- 1. Understand what the IOA did in trying to meet the original delivery aims set out in the delivery plan.**
- 2. Examine the perceived and/or measured progress that has been made in achieving these aims by the IOA.**

Within these two research questions, further areas were explored and included:

- What were the key aims of each priority in this OA?
- Who was targeted?
- What projects were used to meet these priorities?
- Were these projects new/existing? How were they delivered? Who was involved? Were these short- or long-term projects?
- How has the approach varied across the different programme years?

## 1.5 Data and Analysis

This evaluation combined documentary analysis of published and unpublished documentation, attending stakeholder network meetings and a single semi-structured interview with the IOA's Programme Manager.<sup>10</sup> Data analysis occurred across the course of the research evaluation. Initially, a broad thematic analysis was conducted of high-level impact reports, Partnership Board reports, IOA newsletters and the Education Leadership Board minutes. Following this, a more focused approach was taken to look at unpublished monitoring reports of individual projects. At the same time, the evaluation team met stakeholders in three separate Network meetings to try and better understand the stakeholder's experience of working within the IOA programme.

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<sup>10</sup> An annex accompanies this evaluation and provides more detail about the types of documentation (published and unpublished) that was analysed.



**Documentary analysis** involved analysing published and unpublished documentation to triangulate and test assertions in high-level impact reports, evaluating individual projects and developing recommendations.

Access to **stakeholder meetings** was secured by the Opportunity Area leads who invited the University of East Anglia (UEA) research team to attend the project group meetings. During 15- to 20-minute designated slots, UEA researchers asked questions to IOA stakeholders, such as education leaders, teachers and early years practitioners, to get their views on their engagement with projects, any barriers they faced, experiences from their participation with the IOA and examples of best practice.

One **interview** with the Programme Manager covered topics about why certain decisions were made early in the programme, the development of the IOA programme, COVID-19 disruption, legacy, and future considerations.

Stakeholder meetings and the Programme Manager interview were strategically important for developing a report that included some context-rich findings. This qualitative approach can capture examples of positive engagement by schools during the past couple of years whilst under significant pressure from COVID-19. Moreover, meetings and interviews enabled researchers to probe and contextualise any gaps in available data, caused by the monitoring challenges posed by COVID-19. Project group discussions and stakeholder interviews were held virtually, which allowed for time and cost savings for both participants and the research team.

Method	Description
Documentary Analysis (2017 to 2022 documents)	Logic models, prior evaluation reports, headteacher surveys, Partnership Board meeting minutes, IOA newsletters. Education Leadership Board meeting minutes, unpublished individual project evaluations and monitoring reports
Stakeholder Interview (semi-structured)	Interview with Programme Manager
Legacy groups and Network meetings	Attending groups and networks that ran across the priorities; context-building exercise. Three meetings were conducted, including with the Education Leadership Board, Wellbeing and Resilience Network and the Early Years Implementation Leads Network.

## **Ethics**

Stakeholder meetings and interviews were subject to the UEA's School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics sub-committee's approval. This ethics process ensured that there was a rigorous in-built design and procedure for protecting stakeholders and data generated. Interview participants were fully briefed about the purpose of the research, how their data would be handled and any opt-out procedures. For the interview, Microsoft Teams-generated transcripts were produced. Stakeholder meetings were part of the research team's attempt to understand the context of the IOA.

## **Limitations**

Within an eight-week window for data collection and analysis, this evaluation attempted to cover 64 activities conducted by the IOA throughout the programme (2017 to 2022).<sup>11</sup>

The evaluation team had hoped to interview more stakeholders to provide a more context-rich discussion of perceived outcomes between stakeholders, however, recruitment proved difficult. As a result, this evaluation relies almost exclusively on the documentation provided by the IOA, including high-level impact reports, unpublished documents and previous evaluations commissioned by the IOA and nationally. This evaluation is not an impact evaluation and therefore its scope is limited to the two research questions outlined earlier in this chapter.

## **UEA/OA Seminar**

On 27 June 2022, a half-day hybrid seminar was held at the UEA. The evaluation team and OA worked collaboratively to deliver this event. Prior to seminar, the UEA evaluation team shared its full provisional report, including findings and recommendations, with those stakeholders who were joining online or in person. The event was intended to generate feedback from stakeholders on whether they agreed with the evaluation team's findings and recommendations, as well as to reflect more broadly on what they felt had changed in Norwich and Ipswich because of the OA programme.

Forty people attended the event in person (30) and online (10). Both OA's Chief Executive Officers were present, alongside some Partnership Board members, as well as stakeholders from Norfolk and Suffolk county councils, school leaders, OA Programme Managers, DfE leads and members of UEA's outreach and widening participation team.

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<sup>11</sup> Within defined "projects", the IOA programme had often developed multiple activities. For instance, a particular project might involve several separate activities with different beneficiaries and aims.

Three questions were circulated with both reports in advance of the event and provided the basis for a group discussion and feedback session.

**Question 1: Do you agree with the evaluation findings and recommendations? Are there any surprises?**

**Question 2: What difference has the OA programme made in Norwich and Ipswich that will contribute to greater social mobility?**

**Question 3: What would you recommend to others setting up a similar programme?**

There is a discussion of the findings of this event in the [Conclusions chapter](#) of this report.

## 1.6 Report Structure

The remainder of this report is structured in the following way:

**Chapter 2 Evaluation Methodology.** A summary of the methods used to conduct this synthesis evaluation.

**Chapter 3 Findings.** Overarching findings from across the programme, as well as each priority individually.

**Chapter 4. Conclusion and Considerations for the Future.** A summary of each research question and some considerations/suggestions for the future.

## 2. Findings

This chapter presents findings from the synthesis evaluation. It begins with a summary of the key findings from across each of the four priorities. Each priority is then set out in its context along with the targets that the IOA developed in its original delivery plan. This evaluation then assesses what was done by the IOA for each priority, as well as any measured and/or perceived progress that was made towards achieving headline targets.

### 2.1 Key Findings

- **The evidential base on which this evaluation draws does not allow for quantifiable, systematic and robust data to be obtained in relation to headline targets set out in the initial Ipswich delivery plan and the degree to which they have been achieved.** Multiple potential reasons for this came up throughout the evaluation. Firstly, COVID-19 disrupted national benchmarking, which made it difficult to assess local progress at a national level. The IOA did draw on Juniper data<sup>12</sup> to help it assess priority 3. Secondly, at a programme level, not enough was done from the start to build robust quantitative evaluations of project impact. Stakeholders also echoed a theme that was also present in the NatCen OA Process Evaluation:<sup>13</sup> demonstrating a marked impact on social mobility takes longer to demonstrate than the programme's lifecycle<sup>14</sup>.
- **IOA project evaluations<sup>15</sup> indicated that several individual projects provided positive significant outcomes for beneficiaries of the funding (such as pupils, staff, parents and schools) and some demonstrated tangible quantifiable progress in the data.**

For instance, a bespoke key stage 2 improvement project delivered by EKO Trust led to an average improvement of between 27% and 37% in the percentage of pupils in that cohort achieving their Age Related Expectations (ARE) in reading, writing and maths. Across the four priorities, some projects

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<sup>12</sup> Juniper data is unpublished monitoring data. In the context of the IOA programme, aggregated data has been taken from 17 IOA primary schools who use a Juniper commercial tracker. Juniper IOA reports provide the percentage of pupils working at or above Age Related Expectations for reading, writing and maths, based on teacher assessments, which is then benchmarked against Juniper's national data set.

<sup>13</sup> NatCen (2022). [Opportunity Areas Process Evaluation](#). Research Report, page 62 (viewed on 13 June 2022).

<sup>14</sup> The NatCen is a qualitative evaluation that investigated how the OA programme was delivered across OAs in Years 1 to 4. It sought to understand the delivery, benefits, challenges and perceived outcomes of the programme by strategic and local stakeholders. Across the 12 OAs, 162 interviews and 27 focus groups were conducted.

<sup>15</sup> The UEA evaluation team looked at multiple sources of documentation and data, but impact evaluation has not been conducted.

specifically targeted outcomes for a specific group of schools and pupils, whereas others gave schools discretion to use funds to target priorities in a way that made sense for them.

A significant number of practitioners benefited from professional training. For instance, the Teacher Development Trust and the Educational Endowment Foundation (EEF) supported 50 schools to develop and implement £1.2m in bespoke workforce development plans. As a result, leadership development training and coaching were delivered to 50 school leaders; 23 schools/settings completed accredited awards in areas of expertise; 40 Newly Qualified Teachers (NQT) mentors were trained.

**This evaluation can point to significant positive changes in the way working practices developed between educational settings and multiple local stakeholders because of the IOA programme.**<sup>16</sup> This involves relationships amongst different schools, including between primary and secondary schools. In years 4 and 5 of the programme delivery, stakeholders have increasingly worked together in a more co-ordinated manner because of the IOA's bigger focus on supporting networks and groups.<sup>17</sup> There has been strong engagement and collaboration amongst practitioner networks, which has allowed good practice to be shared and joint solutions to be pursued within the IOA's networks and groups. This collaborative focus has increased 'collective responsibility' (Programme Manager). Spring 2022 data (135 respondents) suggested that over three-quarters of school leaders were either "very confident" (8%) or "quite confident" (70%) that local leaders and practitioners would continue to work together to sustain the impact of IOA investment once funding ends.

Some examples of tangible projects and initiatives increasing working practices include:

The **Strong School Start Programme**. Early years settings are now using consistent, enhanced means of tracking and monitoring and supporting children's resilience and early speech, language and communication skills. There has been improved collaboration and programmes of transition activities for children and families implemented and adopted by both early years providers and local primaries.

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<sup>16</sup> The evaluation team spoke to stakeholders across three networks and groups, including the Education Leadership Board, Early Years Implementation Lead network and Wellbeing and Resilience. Stakeholders told us how these networks and groups had increased shared learning and collaboration across sectors (Leadership Board) and amongst practitioners.

<sup>17</sup> Examples include the Suffolk TA Network, the Education Leadership Boards and the six groups under the Wellbeing and Resilience and Wellbeing Network: [Ipswich Opportunity Area Supporting Engagement \(viewed on 25 May 2022\)](#).

A tangible demonstration of the commitment to shared working practices built up between schools throughout the programme is the **Ipswich Transition Charter**.<sup>18</sup> The charter aims to unify and empower education providers around a consistent, collaborative framework of principles covering all key transition points, from early years to post-16 and beyond, improving young people's experiences. As at mid July 2022, 30 schools, colleges and settings had signed up to the joining the Transition Charter.<sup>19</sup>

- **The design of the Opportunity Area Programme as a place-based initiative resulted in Ipswich local leaders and stakeholders forming a more coherent and cohesive sense of what is needed for the area's children than they had before.** It had formed a sense of 'collective responsibility' amongst those involved with children's learning and wellbeing (Programme Manager). The national process evaluation had found themes associated with the place-based approach across the 12 OAs, which included increased ownership, buy-in, sustainability and legacy and a more responsive programme design tailored to local needs.<sup>20</sup> Though this present evaluation had limited interviewees, many of these same themes were expressed in stakeholder meetings and the interview with the Programme Manager.
- **The IOA programme helped to mitigate against some of the disruptions to pupils' learning during COVID-19, with examples of positive outcomes on pupil engagement and reintegration back into classes.** Interventions around mental health that were pursued by local leaders early in the programme became increasingly well used and important.

Specifically, through the Supporting Wellbeing and Emotionally Resilient Learning programme (SWERL) programme, 33 schools developed and implemented whole-school plans to improve pupil wellbeing. University College London (UCL) worked with schools to audit their approach to supporting pupils' emotional and mental health needs and assisted each school to create an action plan and funding for implementation.

Across multiple other IOA projects, the programme oversaw the training of 90 Mental Health First Aiders, 31 Emotional Literacy Support Assistants and 23 behaviour leads. Moreover, 16 Remote Learning Support Assistants were trained, supporting over 1,000 pupils to engage with remote learning. Fifty English as an Additional Language (EAL) families were supported to access remote education and support learning. The IOA was able to draw on its

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<sup>18</sup> Information about the Transition Charter is available: [Ipswich Opportunity Area Making Transition better across Ipswich and Suffolk](#)

<sup>19</sup> See: [Ipswich Opportunity Area Transition Charter schools and settings \(viewed on 20 May 2022\)](#).

<sup>20</sup> NatCen (2022). [Opportunity Areas Process Evaluation](#). Research Report, pages 37–39 (viewed on 13 June 2022).

resources flexibly and was well positioned to listen to what schools needed at the time.

- **Legacy and Sustainability.** The Partnership Board and programme leadership have been working to secure the legacy and sustainability of the IOA programme. Several legacy assets have been identified, progress established, alongside outlining the risks and considerations.<sup>21</sup> These key legacy structures include:
  - The Ipswich Associate Research School
  - The Suffolk TA Network
  - Ipswich Resilience and Wellbeing Hubs
  - The Sharing and Learning Hub
  - Strong School Start (formerly the Early Education Network)
  - Education Leadership Board
  - The Learning Behaviour Network.

Focus has been centred on learning, expertise, relationships and impact.<sup>22</sup> Many of these legacy structures will work to connect to various parties, such as non-education partners (Learning Behaviour Leads Network) or be project focused and therefore maintain the developing legacy programmes.<sup>23</sup>

An IOA transition working group has “been working collaboratively across early years, primary, secondary and FE and with Suffolk County Council, and have further developed the Common Transition Document trialled last year for transfer to secondary school”.<sup>24</sup> Planning in the Education Leadership Board meetings referred to developing the existing networks into stronger communities of practice.<sup>25</sup> The Partnership Board Legacy workshop held in January 2022 echoed similar themes.<sup>26</sup> At the time of writing in July 2022, the programme leadership had identified resources needed to sustain legacy activity, which predominantly included project administration and management capacity.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> IOA Legacy Transition Plan (2022). 25 May 2022. Unpublished.

<sup>22</sup> IOA (2022) Ipswich Opportunity Area – Impact report April 2022, page 2 (currently unpublished).

<sup>23</sup> IOA Legacy Transition Plan (2022). 25 May 2022. Unpublished.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. page 8.

<sup>25</sup> Education Leadership Board Meeting Minutes. March 2021.

<sup>26</sup> Ipswich Opportunity Area Partnership Board Legacy Planning Workshop. 4 January 2022.

<sup>27</sup> IOA Legacy Transition Plan (2022). 25 May 2022. Unpublished.

There has been a large emphasis on the importance of networks and partnerships that have been formed. Six specialist resilience and wellbeing hubs, all led by schools and early years settings, have been formed to offer support, continuing professional development (CPD) and resources to practitioners working with children and young people. These six hubs are explicitly related to mental health. The IOA has also launched a Suffolk-wide TA Network in collaboration with the EEF and the local authority. This network exists “to support and promote the work of teaching assistants (TAs) and Higher-Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) throughout the county by providing a range of training and networking opportunities”.<sup>28</sup> There are currently 405 members and 78% of IOA schools/colleges are engaged, strengthening professional development and strategic deployment of teaching assistants.

A recent impact report reflecting on the IOA’s sustainability and legacy provided an overview of the key infrastructure “to consolidate learning from previous funded projects, develop and share expertise and create local networks to share practice”.<sup>29</sup>

- A survey of IOA headteachers, setting managers and practitioners, showed that awareness of these legacy activities and projects varied between 51% and 71%, with 78% of headteachers and 93% of setting managers being “keen for them to continue”.<sup>30</sup>

**The Eastern Opportunity Areas 'Big Ideas' Online Sharing Learning Hub**<sup>31</sup> has been developed to capture five years of learning from Ipswich, Norwich and Fenland & East Cambridgeshire OAs, including project summaries and case studies. The platform is designed to facilitate networking opportunities between schools, settings and colleges that have delivered IOA projects and those that are considering implementing similar approaches.

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<sup>28</sup> See: [Ipswich Opportunity Area Suffolk TA Network](#) (viewed on 20 May 2022 ).

<sup>29</sup> IOA (2022) Ipswich Opportunity Area – Impact report April 2022, page 11 (currently unpublished).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> More information about the Eastern Opportunity Areas ‘Big Ideas’ Online Sharing Hub is available here: [Ipswich Opportunity Area The Eastern Opportunity Area Sharing Learning Hub](#) (viewed on 15 May 2022).



## Priority 1: Ensure all children in Ipswich are prepared to learn for life by developing key behaviours such as resilience and self-regulation

### Context

The Ipswich Delivery Plan noted that disadvantaged pupils were less likely to exceed levels in many individual learning goals (ILGs) compared to their non-disadvantaged peers.<sup>32</sup> Although the percentage of Ipswich children were achieving a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage was in line with the national average, children from disadvantaged backgrounds consistently achieved lower levels of development than their non-disadvantaged peers. The early years stage was identified as a chance to close the gap in the original delivery plan. School leaders noted that children regularly started school without some of the key behaviours needed to fulfil their potential, such as agency, resiliency, and self-regulation. Moreover, school leaders had noted that all children started school with the behaviours to fulfil their potential.

### What was done?

- The IOA pursued seven major projects for this priority, comprising 24 discrete activities. Activities included a combination of CPD, pupil wellbeing interventions and direct grants to schools and early years settings, assessment tools (such as WellComm), network co-ordination and funded roles in schools.
- The largest spend project was the SWERL programme. In the IOA 33 schools undertook SWERL. Through SWERL, UCL supported schools to audit their approach to supporting pupils' emotional and mental health needs and assisted each school to create an action plan and obtained funding for implementation.

### What were some key outcomes?

- 95% of headteachers reported that SWERL had contributed to improvements in staff and pupil wellbeing and 86% agreed that their involvement in SWERL had enabled them to mitigate some of the effects of COVID-19 on the wellbeing of their school community. Knowledge and expertise has been built up through the development of a sustainable network of six Resilience and Wellbeing Hubs.
- Remote Learning Assistants supported over 1,000 pupils to engage with remote learning during the lockdowns.

<sup>32</sup> Ipswich Opportunity Area Delivery Plan (2018). [Department for Education – Social Mobility Delivery Plan – Ipswich, page 21](#) (viewed on 5 May 2022)

**In its delivery plan, the IOA set out the following targets for priority 1:<sup>33</sup>**

- By 2021, the gap between the percentage of disadvantaged pupils and all other pupils who achieve a good level of development at the end of Early Years Foundation Stage will be half what it was in September 2017.
- By 2021, the gap between the pupil absence rates for disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils in Ipswich in primary and secondary schools will be half what they were in September 2017.
- By 2021, 50% of fourteen to nineteen-year-olds and 25% of eleven to thirteen-year-olds in Ipswich will be engaging regularly in youth social action.
- By 2021, parents who have been supported through this programme will perceive their child to have more developed social and emotional skills compared to a baseline established in September 2018.

**What has this Opportunity Area programme done towards meeting the original delivery aims as set out in the delivery plan?**

Overall, under priority 1, the IOA conducted seven major projects, consisting of 24 activities over five years. For this priority, the IOA had a programme of activities that included family support work, with outreach activities with parents, carers and families to support children's early language and to encourage positive learning behaviours. Practitioner work was developed using evidence-based approaches to help support children to develop social and emotional behaviours. The IOA also set up a comprehensive programme of youth social action, which was led and designed by disadvantaged children.

- The IOA launched its first project for this priority in August 2018, a school-parent communication trial.
- During the first three years, further activities included CPD, pupil wellbeing interventions and assessment tools, network co-ordination and funded roles in schools.
- Many IOA projects drew on external stakeholders to co-design and co-develop projects in their settings. This process included input from the local programme team members, the Partnership Board, school/setting leaders, and voluntary and community sector and practitioners themselves to ensure they would adequately meet local needs and priorities.

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<sup>33</sup> Ipswich Opportunity Area Delivery Plan (2018). [Department for Education – Social Mobility Delivery Plan – Ipswich, page 21](#) (viewed on 5 May 2022)page 25.

The largest funded project in terms of cost was **Supporting Wellbeing, Emotional Resilience and Learning Programme (SWERL)**, a knowledge-exchange programme designed by UCL,<sup>34</sup> which involved 33 schools in Ipswich and a further 10 in Felixstowe.<sup>35</sup> Its rationale has been to bring together research and practitioner expertise to develop a whole-school approach to wellbeing and mental health. To access up to £10,000 to support the well-being and mental health needs of their pupils, schools had to assess their needs and create an implementation plan.

- Schools were supported to conduct a thorough audit of their approach to mental health and wellbeing, across seven domains, using a consistent framework. This informed the development of bespoke action plans to improve provision for pupils.
- Knowledge and expertise from SWERL have been built upon through the development of a sustainable network of six Resilience and Wellbeing Hubs, sharing best practices and provisions across Ipswich.

### **What can be said about the perceived and/or measured progress that has been made in achieving these aims?**

This evaluation reviewed high-level IOA reports, IOA-produced headteacher surveys, as well as specific documents and evaluations<sup>36</sup> relating to the projects that were conducted within this priority. Overall, it is possible to point to some individual projects making tangible progress, though it was not possible to determine how quantifiably successful the IOA had been in meeting the four targets it set out in its delivery plan. Some of these tangible successes are highlighted below:

- The IOA reports that by December 2021, 92% of early years practitioners in schools and settings felt that all or most children made strong progress in speech and language, and social and emotional development.<sup>37</sup> By December 2021, 95% of headteachers reported that SWERL had contributed to improvements in staff and pupil wellbeing. Of school leaders, 52% believed that SWERL had an impact on improved pupil attendance.

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<sup>34</sup> Ipswich Opportunity Newsletter (2021). [Ipswich Opportunity Area Newsletter](#), June 2021 (viewed on 10 May 2022).

<sup>35</sup> Felixstowe was selected by the DfE as a twinning partner of the IOA, to share learning and expertise from successful IOA projects, aid collaboration and address local need. Felixstowe was chosen because it had characteristics similar to Ipswich: both have similar levels of deprivation and are aligned on some key priorities (see NatCen report (2022) pages 127–128) for further discussion on IOA twinning.

<sup>36</sup> For example, Tyrell, K (2019). [Ipswich Opportunity Area: Youth Social Action. Measuring the levels of young people's engagement in social action](#). University of Suffolk (viewed on 10 June 2022).

<sup>37</sup> Ipswich Opportunity Area – What's Changed? (2022). [Sustaining-Opportunities-IOA-Impact-report-January-2022](#), page 7 (viewed on 9 May 2022).

- One project, the Early Speech, Language and Communication (SLC) assessment tool (WellComm), had improved outcomes for 274 children across 15 settings. The project saw an improvement in early years literacy, led to better-quality referrals to speech and language services, and provided detailed tracking data for children in need of additional SLC support. At the time of writing, 15 more settings were currently taking part in the project.
- The National Literacy Trust has trained 116 early years practitioners from 66 settings as Child Development Champions who are skilled in techniques known to support children’s language development and assist families to continue their child’s learning at home. After completing the project, practitioners reported that they:<sup>38</sup>
  - had greater knowledge & skills to support children's communication, social and emotional development
  - were more likely to introduce changes to the nursery environment to stimulate greater chat and play
  - were more likely to engage and involve parents in activities to support their child's language and communication development at home
  - shared their learning with other early years workers in the setting and will continue to do so.

A very significant 95% of headteachers reported that SWERL had contributed to improvements in staff and pupil wellbeing and 86% agreed that their involvement in SWERL had enabled them to mitigate some of the effects of COVID-19 on the wellbeing of their school community. Remote Learning Support Assistants supported over 1,000 pupils to engage with remote learning during national lockdowns.

Tools that formed part of the IOA’s strategy have continued to be used. Most settings now use the WellComm assessment tool to assess and monitor children’s early speech and language development, and many have adopted the Highfield Resilience Tracker to monitor and support children’s early resilience and emotional development.<sup>39</sup>

A key project was the **Learning Behaviour Leads** (LBL), which has been used to train key staff in the EEF guidance on the five pillars of the Learning Behaviour Framework – Metacognition, Social and Emotional Learning, Behaviour and Parental

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<sup>38</sup> National Literacy Trust (2019). [We Celebrate Ipswich’s New Child Development Champions](#). 23 July 2019 (viewed on 1 June 2022).

<sup>39</sup> IOA (2019). [Sustaining Opportunities – What’s Changed in the Ipswich Opportunity Area](#). January 2022 (viewed on 27 May 2022).

Engagement.<sup>40</sup> The LBL has also been used to connect with local community partners who “provide complementary support to young children beyond the school gate through an inclusion grant”.<sup>41</sup> The LBL Network emerged from the IOA programme, which has enabled the cascading of learning and contributed to the “development of whole schools approaches to improving learning behaviours”.<sup>42</sup> This view was expressed in the most recent IOA-developed monitoring survey sent to headteachers:

*My knowledge is stronger and I am confident it will have a big impact regarding the behaviour. I have gained another staff member to support in behaviour, strategies are now in place and I am able to pass this onto new staff so they can enable the tools for themselves.*<sup>43</sup>

The LBL project was also a core component of tackling the social and emotional skills for children. One LBL noted that they were keen for the network to continue because of this.

*The importance of emotional intelligence and learning has never been more closely linked. Continuing to explore alternative support for our most vulnerable children and keeping abreast of the newest research is vital moving forward.*<sup>44</sup>

On **Youth Social Action**, the IOA had set a target to get 50% of fourteen- to nineteen-year-olds and 25% of eleven- to thirteen-year-olds in Ipswich engaging regularly in youth social action. Though this headline target was not met, the IOA made progress with this. An evaluation completed by the University of Suffolk sought to “measure the baseline level of young people engaging in social action activities across Ipswich, also considering wider Suffolk”.<sup>45</sup> It did this by surveying participants about their participation in youth social action over the last 12 months. There were 236 respondents, of which 51% were school-aged, 29% in college and the others either in university, in employment, apprenticeships or potentially unemployed. The survey found that young people in Ipswich found that “the majority of young people engage in some form of social action, the most frequent being supporting others in a voluntary capacity and the least frequent being supporting and developing their local community”, though these activities were often infrequent (not monthly).<sup>46</sup> The

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<sup>40</sup> See IOA website: <https://ipswichopportunityarea.co.uk/learning-behaviour-leads/> (viewed on 10 June 2022).

<sup>41</sup> See IOA website: <https://ipswichopportunityarea.co.uk/learning-behaviour-leads/> (viewed on 10 June 2022).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Learning Behaviour Leads Survey (2022). IOA developed monitoring surveys. March 2022.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Tyrell, K (2019). Ipswich Opportunity Area: Youth Social Action. Measuring the levels of young people’s engagement in social action.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. page 20.

survey suggested that around 42% of young people in Ipswich were engaging in regular social action.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Tyrell, K (2019). Ipswich Opportunity Area: Youth Social Action. Measuring the levels of young people's engagement in social action. page 19.

## Priority 2: Strengthen the teaching profession in Ipswich by providing world-class support and development

### Context

The IOA noted that education providers struggled to “recruit and retain high-quality education professionals and support staff”.<sup>48</sup> This difficulty was consistent across primary schools and further education colleges, particularly in English and science, technology engineering and maths (STEM). Ipswich’s share of National Leaders of Education (NLE) was low compared to nationally. In response, the IOA sought to increase the NLEs’ levels of reported satisfaction with their roles, decrease the vacancy rates in primary and secondary schools and make a concerted effort to increase the number of NLEs to at least average level in the country.

### What was done?

- The IOA set out three major projects with this priority, comprising 15 activities.
- CPD provision informed bespoke action plans, releasing direct grants to schools (such as through the Workforce Development Audit).

### What were some key outcomes?

- The Teacher Development Trust and the EEF supported 50 schools to develop and implement £1.2m in bespoke workforce development plans.
- In Ipswich schools, 12 school leadership roles have been created to ensure successful implementation and integration of key IOA programmes to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

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<sup>48</sup> Ipswich Opportunity Area – What’s Changed? (2022). [Sustaining-Opportunities-IOA-Impact-report-January-2022, page 29](#) (viewed 9 May 2022).

### **The IOA set themselves the following targets:**

- By 2021, childcare and education professionals will report a higher level of job satisfaction, as measured by a survey based on the 'job satisfaction' questions in TALIS<sup>49</sup>, compared to a baseline established in the spring term of 2018.
- By 2021, the full-time teacher vacancy rates in primary and secondary schools will have reduced and will be below the national average.
- By 2021, the focus on professional and career development within the education profession will mean that the proportion of NLEs per 1,000 primary and secondary pupils in Ipswich is at least equal to national average.

### **What has this Opportunity Area programme done towards meeting the original aims as set out in the delivery plan?**

The IOA set out three major projects concerning this priority, comprising 15 activities throughout the programme. The activities pursued by the IOA ranged from CPD provision (Research School Network Training, peer networks and the Workforce Development Audit), coaching and mentoring support for managers and NQTs, literacy support as well as direct grants to schools (such as the Workforce Development Audit).

The Research School Network training was delivered by Unity Research School and involved sharing best practices, helping practitioners embed research, sustaining engagement, upskilling practitioners and teachers and improving ongoing professional development. There were grants made to early years settings, which provided access to resources, and continued engagement through the cascading of learning. The IOA supported 34 early years practitioners to achieve their level 3, and a further 11 practitioners to achieve level 4, through Ekklan-accredited speech, language and communication training.

Some key takeaways from this priority include:

- £1.2m invested in workforce development grants to schools. Schools received between £10,000 and £50,000 each to invest in additional staff development above their planned CPD programmes

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<sup>49</sup> TALIS refers to the Teaching and Learning International Survey, which is run the Organisation for Economics Co-operation and Development (OECD) and provides views and practices of headteachers and teachers.



- 50 school leaders participated in leadership development and professional coaching
- 12 Senior School Lead roles created in Ipswich schools
- 40 new NQT mentors trained.

### **What can be said about the perceived and/or measured progress that has been made in achieving these aims?**

This evaluation reviewed high-level IOA reports, IOA-produced headteacher surveys as well as specific documents and evaluations relating to the projects that were conducted within this priority. Overall, it is possible to point to some individual projects making tangible progress, though it was not possible to determine how quantifiably successful the IOA had been in meeting the three targets it set out in its delivery plan. Some of these tangible successes are highlighted below:<sup>50</sup>

- In Ipswich, 50 schools created action plans for a Workforce Development Strategy in partnership with the Teacher Development Trust and the EEF.
- Grants to 50 school leaders across Ipswich schools who participated in leadership development delivered by the University of Bath, with a 95% satisfaction rate in increased strategic leadership confidence levels. This was supplemented by coaching and mentoring training, with early-career support for NQTs also provided through a network of NQT mentors, with 40 new mentors trained in 2019 and 2020.
- A teaching experience programme in 2019/20 was cut short by the COVID-19 pandemic but achieved some early outcomes. Fourteen student tutors were offered placements, and 51 applicants for teaching work experience were matched to offers from 37 schools in Ipswich.

In two IOA stakeholder meetings the UEA research team attended, participants highlighted that the schools in the IOA programme were in a better position following the IOA provision, in terms of the engagement of the people involved and sharing of practices and experiences. They felt that training was a key priority in the IOA's programme as well as forging links and networks with the research school. There had been positive feedback from schools and parents.

**Sustainability and Legacy.** The IOA has also launched a Suffolk-wide TA Network in collaboration with the EEF and the local authority. There are currently 405

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<sup>50</sup> IOA (2022). [Sustaining Opportunities – What's Changed in the Ipswich Opportunity Area?](#) January 2022 (viewed on 27 May 2022).

members and 78% of IOA schools/colleges are engaged, strengthening professional development and strategic deployment of TAs.

Feedback from beneficiaries of the funding has been presented in the OA's publication 'Sustaining Opportunities – What's Changed in the Ipswich Opportunity Area?'<sup>51</sup>

*The IOA programme has had a huge impact here. It has allowed many staff and students to access training and resources that would otherwise have been out of reach within the normal school budget. It has also been the catalyst for a large amount of very collaborative work with colleagues from other academies. Andy Smith, Westbourne Academy<sup>52</sup>*

*We genuinely believe that the extra capacity that has been provided by the IOA school lead role and the work with other local schools and within our MAT [ Multi Academy Trust ] was a significant part of our gaining a Good status by Ofsted following a number of years as Requires Improvement. Senior School Lead Role – Ipswich School<sup>53</sup>*

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<sup>51</sup> IOA (2022), [Sustaining Opportunities – What's Changed in the Ipswich Opportunity Area?](#) January 2022, page 10 (viewed on 27 May 2022).

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. page 10.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

## Priority 3: Improve attainment for disadvantaged pupils by embedding evidence-based practice in the teaching of English and maths

### Context

The educational performance of “all pupils” in Ipswich was low at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4, especially disadvantaged pupils nationally. A third of disadvantaged key stage 2 pupils did not meet the expected standard in reading, writing and maths in 2016, and at key stage 4, Attainment 8 scores were lower than the national average. School leaders had highlighted that pupils needed more support “to develop analytical, writing and comprehension skills”.<sup>54</sup> The delivery team set its focus on maths and English improvement to increase attainment overall, and for disadvantaged pupils across the board.

### What was done?

- Four overarching and substantial projects, comprising nine activities. These projects involved funding for Implementation Lead roles in schools and early year settings, funding IOA school leads across primaries and secondaries, and tailoring support for key stage 2, the What a Difference a Day Makes GCSE maths tuition programme.
- The Ipswich Evidence-Based Practice Fund (EBPF) offered grants to schools and early years settings, which resulted in 16 projects being successfully completed across 12 schools and across two trusts. This project was evaluated by Cambridge University.<sup>55</sup>

### What were some key outcomes?

- A bespoke key stage 2 improvement project delivered by EKO Trust was perceived to have led to an average improvement of between 27% and 37% in the percentage of pupils achieving their ARE in reading, writing and maths. key stage 3 maths and English projects funded in all Ipswich secondaries.
- Key stage 4 maths intervention project delivered positive impacts on GCSE maths grades and aspirations.
- The Implementation Lead Network is active. The project resulted in training for 35 middle leaders and early years practitioners. They were trained and supported to deliver bespoke projects to drive improvements in early literacy/numeracy, maths and English.
- Eight secondaries are delivering evidence-based literacy programmes to improve outcomes for struggling readers.

<sup>54</sup> Ipswich Opportunity Area Delivery Plan (2018). [Department for Education – Social Mobility Delivery Plan – Ipswich \(viewed on 5 May 2022\)](#).

<sup>55</sup> Hofmann, R & Llie, S (2022). [A Theory-Led Evaluation of Scalable Intervention to Promote Evidence-Based, Research-Informed Practice in Schools to Address Attainment Gaps](#). University of Cambridge (viewed on 12 June 2022).

### **The IOA set themselves the following targets:**

- By 2021, attainment at key stage 2 and key stage 4 will be in the top half of all local authority districts in England.
- By 2021, the gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and all pupils will be half of what it was in September 2017.
- By 2021, the average Progress 8 score of disadvantaged pupils will be in the top half of all local authority districts in England.
- By 2021, the proportion of pupils achieving level 2 in English and maths by age 16 will exceed the national average.

### **What has this Opportunity Area programme done towards meeting the original delivery aims as set out in the delivery plan?**

The IOA approached this priority with a combination of funding school leaders and practitioners and offering direct funding to schools and settings. Overall, there were four overarching and substantial projects, comprising nine activities. Activities were organised were related to:

- improving pupil outcomes through the EBPF
- funding 12 school leads across primary and secondary
- improving outcomes in English and maths
- implementing an online pupil intervention (a summer step-up programme) in response to the pandemic, which was an adaptation of the established What a Difference a Day Makes maths GCSE tutoring programme, which switched to virtual delivery, in response to the pandemic. The programme also supported year 11 pupils to make a successful transition to their post-16 destination.

### **What can be said about the perceived and/or measured progress that has been made in achieving these aims?**

This evaluation reviewed high-level IOA reports and IOA-developed surveys that were completed by headteachers and early years setting managers as well as specific documents and evaluations relating to the projects that were conducted within this priority. Overall, it is possible to point to some individual projects making tangible progress on attainment, though it was not possible to determine how

quantifiably successful the IOA had been in meeting the three headline targets it set out in its delivery plan. Some of these tangible successes are highlighted below.<sup>56</sup>

- A bespoke key stage 2 improvement project delivered by EKO Trust was perceived to have led to an average improvement of between 27% and 37% in the percentage of pupils achieving their ARE in reading, writing and maths.
- The IOA reported that the cohort of pupils who completed the What a Difference A Day Makes programme has seen average improvements of 1.3 grades in maths assessments.<sup>57</sup> This programme is a Saturday morning intervention bringing local teachers and year 11 pupils together at the University of Suffolk to spend 24 hours of extra study to boost their maths skills ahead of GCSEs. This project was replicated in the Norwich Opportunity Area. Pupils reported a positive impact studying in the university environment has had on their ability to see themselves in higher education.<sup>58</sup>
- Key stage 3 maths and English projects are funded in all Ipswich secondaries.
- The Implementation Lead Network is active. The project resulted in training for 35 middle leaders and early years practitioners. They were trained and supported to deliver bespoke projects to drive improvements in early literacy/numeracy, maths and English.
- Eight secondaries are delivering evidence-based literacy programmes to struggling readers.
- By July 2021, in a benchmarking report by Juniper Education<sup>59</sup> comparing 17 IOA primary schools to 6,000 schools nationally, year 6 children in Ipswich out-performed their peers at teacher-assessed combined reading, writing and maths – with 70% of Ipswich children in a representative sample of schools reaching age-related expectations compared to 63% nationally.<sup>60</sup>
- In a July 2021 survey,<sup>61</sup> 71% of headteachers in Ipswich schools and colleges agreed that research evidence-based practice for addressing the disadvantage gap was now better embedded within their schools compared to previous years.
- The IOA has pointed to ‘individual project outcomes creating ‘some strong foundations for a local network of practitioners with good examples of

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<sup>56</sup> IOA (2022). [Sustaining Opportunities – What’s Changed in the Ipswich Opportunity Area?](#) January 2022 (viewed on 27 May 2022).

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. page 13.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Juniper Benchmark Analysis. Ipswich. Autumn 2021–22.

<sup>60</sup> IOA (2022). [Sustaining Opportunities – What’s Changed in the Ipswich Opportunity Area?](#) January 2022 (viewed on 27 May 2022).

<sup>61</sup> Source of data from IOA unpublished monitoring surveys.

evidence-based change”.<sup>62</sup> For instance, Suffolk One “demonstrated a clear and significant positive impact on progress in Year 12 Biology students’.<sup>63</sup> Another (Suffolk New College) has used tailored IT support packages to tackle the achievement gaps in maths and English for disadvantaged students. This has led to learners achieving early entry at Levels 1 and 2.

- **Sustainability and Legacy.** Both the Implementation Leads (ILs) and early year ILs have been financially supported with £2,000 in their role to create Cascading Learning Action Plans. An IOA-developed survey was conducted with ILs in spring 2022. Every IL (34 respondents) agreed or strongly agreed that this £2,000 funding was key in securing the quality of implementation and outcomes for children.<sup>64</sup> Out of 34 respondents, 22 were either confident or very confident that they could achieve the aims set out in their Cascading Learning Action Plan.

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<sup>62</sup> IOA (2022). [Sustaining Opportunities – What's Changed in the Ipswich Opportunity Area?](#) January 2022, page 13 (viewed on 27 May 2022).

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Survey data on Implementation Leads (2022). IOA developed monitoring surveys. April 2022

## Priority 4: Inspire and equip young people with the skills and guidance they need to pursue an ambitious career pathway

### Context

The IOA delivery team noted that disadvantaged pupils at key stage 4 were less likely to be in a sustained positive destination (education, employment or training) during this period than other pupils in Ipswich. It was a similar case at key stage 5 (5.4% of young people were NEET, compared to 2.7%). Although apprenticeship take-up was encouragingly higher than average, Ipswich pupils are less likely to progress on to higher education than their national peers. It was noted that average gross weekly wages were below the national average (£509 compared to £552 nationally in 2017). Businesses were finding it difficult to engage schools, though stakeholders agreed more needed to be done to help young people develop the skills and experience to access higher-paid jobs in and around the town.<sup>65</sup>

### What was done?

- Two projects were conducted for this priority, comprising eight separate activities. These included interventions on preventative NEET support, improving outcomes for alternative provision pupils, funded Transition Coaches, careers tool development, various forms of CPD, parent information events and projects such as Primary World of Work.
- One of the biggest spend projects was run by Suffolk County Council and involved improving outcomes for alternative provision pupils, through the IOA's Transition and Reintegration Project.

### What were some key outcomes?

- 200 alternative provision pupils were supported to reintegrate into mainstream through the IOA's Transition and Reintegration Project, resulting in a reduction in NEET figures and an improvement in the percentage securing a sustained destination.
- 120 year 9 to 10 pupils were supported through a NEET-prevention programme, leading to improvements in attendance and punctuality.
- Targeted Youth Social Action project in the four most disadvantaged wards.
- 22 primaries and early years settings have accessed a Primary World of Work programme of aspirations and career-related activities.
- 1,262 parents benefited from engagement with higher-education parent ambassadors.

<sup>65</sup> Ipswich Opportunity Area Delivery Plan (2018). [Department for Education – Social Mobility Delivery Plan – Ipswich, page 38 \(viewed on 5 May 2022\)](#).

### **The IOA set themselves the following targets:**

- By 2021, 95% of disadvantaged young people will be in a sustained positive destination (in education, employment or training) for at least the first two terms after finishing key stage 4.
- By 2021, 90% of disadvantaged young people will be in a sustained positive destination for at least the first two terms after finishing key stage 5.
- By 2021, 44% of disadvantaged young people will go on to higher education.
- By 2021, the percentage of 16- to 18-year-olds who are NEET will be half what it was in September 2017.
- By 2021, all schools in Ipswich will have achieved at least six of the eight Gatsby benchmarks

### **What has this Opportunity Area programme done towards meeting the original delivery aims as set out in the delivery plan?**

Two projects (Improving Outcomes for Pupils at Risk of NEET and Inspiring Ambitious Careers) were conducted for this priority, comprising eight separate activities. Much of the provision in this priority was delivered by Suffolk County Council. This included:

- Interventions on preventative NEET support.
- Improving outcomes for alternative provision pupils, which was an 18-month project run by Suffolk Council.
- Transition coaches.
- Careers tool development, ICanBeA, delivered by the Suffolk County Council.
- Various forms of CPD, such as the Careers Leader training and Managing Careers.
- Parent information events such as the Parent Champion Network was delivered by Network for East Anglian Collaborative Outreach (NEACO) and are still run on a sustainable basis with funding by the University of Suffolk and NEACO.
- Projects such as Primary World of Work benefited 22 schools and settings.
- One of the biggest-spend projects was run by Suffolk County Council and involved improving outcomes for alternative provision pupils, through the IOA's Transition and Reintegration Project.



## What can be said about the perceived and/or measured progress that has been made in achieving these aims?

Overall, it is possible to point to some individual projects making tangible progress, though it was not possible to determine how quantifiably successful the IOA had been in meeting the four targets it set out in its delivery plan. Some of these tangible successes are highlighted below:

- In the first three years of the programme, 68,685 encounters between Ipswich young people and local employers had taken place, exceeding the three-year target by 59%. Sixteen schools and colleges in Ipswich are matched to at least one Enterprise Adviser and Ipswich outperforms against OA and national averages in seven out of the eight Gatsby benchmarks.<sup>66</sup>
- The IOA funded both Inspire Suffolk and Volunteering Matters to work with 120 pupils in years 9 and 10 who were identified as being at risk of NEET on the Achieve programme. Attendance and punctuality improved for the students taking part, who were less likely to exhibit challenging behaviour resulting in referral to internal inclusion units.
- The University of Suffolk partnered with NEACO to create Parent Champions to support parents in encouraging their children to consider university or high-level apprenticeships as an option. Fifty-seven parent champion activities were achieved, creating 1,262 encounters between parents at events before the COVID lockdown. A significant 82% of parents said activities had made them more likely to encourage their child to consider higher education.<sup>67</sup>

The IOA invested over £500,000 to trial a new blueprint supporting pupils in alternative provisions to reintegrate back into a mainstream setting. The OA notes that the project “supported over 200 pupils, increasing the proportion of pupils sustaining post-16 education by 28% and ensuring a 48% decrease in young people becoming NEET between Jan 2019 and Jan 2020”.<sup>68</sup>

- The IOA Primary World of Work programme was able to introduce employers to 20 Ipswich primary schools (about two-thirds). This enabled younger children to take part in activities to discover more about the world of work. The IOA notes that a primary equivalent to the Gatsby benchmark toolkit has been developed to enable primary schools to evaluate their early careers related learning.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Ipswich Opportunity Area – What’s Changed? (2022). [Sustaining-Opportunities-IOA-Impact-report-January-2022](#), page 16 (viewed on 9 May 2022).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. page16.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ipswich Opportunity Area – What’s Changed? (2022). [Sustaining-Opportunities-IOA-Impact-report-January-2022](#), page 16 (viewed on 9 May 2022).

- The IOA extending its CPD offer, for practitioners in schools, with eight new careers advisers achieving the level 6 Diploma in Career Guidance and Development.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Ipswich Opportunity Area – What’s Changed? (2022). [Sustaining-Opportunities-IOA-Impact-report-January-2022](#), page 16 (viewed on 9 May 2022).

## 3 Conclusions and Considerations for the Future

### 3.1 Conclusions

This synthesis evaluation of the Ipswich Opportunity Area aimed to:

1. Understand what the IOA did in trying to meet the original delivery aims set out in the delivery plan.
2. Examine the perceived and/or measured progress made by the IOA in achieving these aims.

In this chapter, we discuss the findings for both of these questions, as well as provide some considerations for the future.

### 3.2 Programme Delivery (RQ1)

This evaluation took account of the large breadth of projects (16) composed of activities<sup>71</sup> (62) across each of the four priorities. The beneficiaries of these activities were equally substantial and included schools, teachers, parents and pupils. Some themes emerged in terms of the way the programme was delivered:

- The IOA leadership embraced the place-based approach to the programme. Developing projects included input from the local programme team members, the Partnership Board, school/setting leaders, voluntary and community sector and practitioners themselves to ensure they would adequately meet local needs and priorities. In the first three years of the programme, the IOA relied more heavily on procuring third parties to develop interventions, though as the programme developed there were more examples of interventions being driven by bottom-up consultation with local partners. In years 4 and 5, programmes became fewer but more focused and mature, and have led to legacy networks and groups being formed. Many of these projects drew on external national partners that supported local practitioners with training, auditing and planning processes from which they were able to design bespoke solutions to respond to the needs of their school or setting (such as workforce development, attainment and wellbeing and resilience).

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<sup>71</sup> Many projects used multiple activities to intervene in different ways with varying beneficiaries, such as supporting pupils and parents. For instance, the focus on “Careers” had activities that focused primarily on pupils (Primary World of Work) and parents (Parent Champion network).

- The IOA notes that 99% of educational establishments in Ipswich have benefited from funded OA programmes.<sup>72</sup> This report has highlighted some successful projects, though there was a feeling from some stakeholders that a handful of projects were not as successful as hoped and that lessons should be learnt for the future.
- Each priority activity has been backed by the development of professional groups and networks to ensure that lessons, reflections and future planning have been both bottom-up and sustainable. The evaluation team met several of these working groups and networks throughout the synthesis evaluation work. The TA Network and the six Wellbeing and Resilience Hubs are examples of this.
- Feedback from a range of stakeholders (including stakeholder meeting conversations) noted that a key strength of the OA was that it acted as a neutral broker between schools/settings and the local authority. It was perceived that holding a neutral position enabled the IOA team to act as an independent and objective facilitator, thereby securing a stronger sense of co-ownership amongst local partners and potentially improving project outcomes.
- Work has started with the ‘IOA transition working group’, which has been “working collaboratively across early years, primary, secondary and FE [further education] and with Suffolk County Council”.<sup>73</sup> The legacy networks and relationships that have been forged between schools/settings and stakeholders will be important for ensuring the future sustainability of the IOA’s work and learning once funding rolls off. The sustainability of these networks and groups has been discussed by the Partnership Board,<sup>74</sup> as well as by practitioners making up these networks who have been surveyed annually by IOA’s monitoring surveys. These surveys have typically asked about each of the network’s perceived value to the practitioners involved and to others, how they have rated their ability to cascade lessons, the value of training as well as their ability to positively impact outcomes for schools, colleagues and pupils).<sup>75</sup>
- The IOA programme has resulted in some high-profile projects, such as SWERL. Many of these have been evaluated independently and have helped to form the centrepiece of twinning work. For instance, Felixstowe has benefited from the SWERL project. Knowledge and expertise from SWERL

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<sup>72</sup> Ipswich Opportunity Area (2020) [Summer Term Newsletter](#). July 2020 (viewed on 30 May 2022).

<sup>73</sup> Ipswich Opportunity Area (2022) Ipswich Opportunity Area – Impact report. April 2022.

<sup>74</sup> IOA Legacy Transition Plan (2022). 25 May 2022. Unpublished.

<sup>75</sup> IOA Survey Data – Spring 2022. Unpublished.

have been built upon through the development of a sustainable network of six Resilience and Wellbeing Hubs, sharing best practices and CPD, mental health and wellbeing provisions.

- The IOA team noted that the delivery of some projects was severely disrupted by COVID-19. However, the pandemic also led to adapted or new interventions being adopted or becoming more pertinent, especially relating to mental health and wellbeing, which the IOA had spent a great deal of time and energy on early on in the programme. The IOA was thus well placed to support schools to mitigate the worst effects of the pandemic.

### **3.3 Perceived and Measured Progress (RQ2)**

This evaluation sought to understand the perceived and measured progress that has been made in achieving the aims set out in the initial delivery plan. It did this through analysing secondary document analysis, considering survey data conducted by the IOA, interviewing the Programme Manager and speaking to strategic stakeholders, programme leads and project beneficiaries at three networks and groups.

- As already noted, the evidential base on which this evaluation draws did not allow for quantifiable, systematic and robust data to be obtained in relation to headline targets set out in the initial delivery plan and the degree to which they have been achieved.
- In terms of measuring quantifiable progress, the evaluation team can point to some individual projects that offered tangible progress for pupils. In terms of attainment (priority 3), a key stage 2 improvement project delivered by EKO Trust led to an average improvement of between 27% and 37% in the percentage of pupils achieving their ARE in reading, and writing and maths. In key stage 4, pupils who took part in the What a Difference a Day Makes programme have seen average improvements of 1.3 grades in maths assessments, and have noted the positive impact studying in the university environment has had on their ability to see themselves in higher education.
- The evaluation team noted the number of well-built and resourced networks and groups that would have not emerged without IOA programme funding. Stakeholders in these groups (such as the Early Years Implementation Lead Network) spoke about the value of having dedicated meeting time with other practitioners and IOA leads. They also spoke of having received a high standard of training and further learning opportunities. The IOA's survey data also found that 71% of headteachers in Ipswich schools and colleges agreed that research evidence-based practice for addressing the disadvantage gap

was now better embedded within their schools compared to previous years.

In conversations with stakeholders during stakeholder meetings, much was made of the significant positive changes in the way working practices' developed between educational settings and multiple local stakeholders because of the IOA. Getting a high level of buy-in into the Transition Charter is a good example of this. The evaluation team noted that across the networks and groups, stakeholders talked about having an improved sense of what Ipswich needed to do to improve life chances for its young people from a distinctly place-based perspective.

### 3.4 UEA/OA Seminar Findings

As noted earlier in this report, the evaluation team was able to share the full report prior to publication with several OA stakeholders who attended a half-day seminar held at the UEA. This section includes some reflections from stakeholders at both OAs, CEOs, some Partnership Board members, Norfolk and Suffolk county councils, school leaders, OA Programme Managers, DfE leads and members of UEA's Outreach and Widening Participation teams.

Three questions were circulated to attendees in advance of the seminar and formed the basis of a group discussion and feedback session. The feedback from six groups of participants (including one conducted on Microsoft Teams) were collated by the OA delivery team and shared with the evaluation team to summarise and take account of in the final reports.

- **Q1: Do you agree with the evaluation findings and recommendations? Are there any surprises?** Five of the six groups commented on this question. On the question of measurable outcomes, multiple groups recognised the report's findings that there were issues around data, and agreed it was very hard to make conclusive links between the work of the OAs and the outcome improvements stakeholders had seen, though they expressed disappointment that this was the case. Similarly, across each group that answered this question, there was a shared recognition that both OAs had approached the programme to achieve the longer-term goals of the programme and not just to shift data in the short term. Referencing the softer changes to working practices, another group commented that the OA had helped set up systems that made sense for everyone and that these would continue. Although in some cases, funding support roles would mean issues for schools for next year, including some of the Norwich Opportunity Area (NOA) inclusion work.

One group felt the evaluation team might have tried to do more to show how different parts of the school improvement offer and landscape had been improved because of OA work. Another group felt the evaluation team should have spoken to more people, and the evaluation was unlikely to be a broad enough reflection of the programme. Stories of practical change on the ground may have been missed as a result. Though the evaluation team had suggested the geographical boundary of the OA had been helpful in providing focus, one group cited an example when it had been divisive and undermined collaboration between schools in the same catchment area. This occurred when one school had fallen within and another outside of the OA boundary. One group disagreed with the report's comment about the creation of a cliff edge for funding. Many of the things that had generated impact did not need significant funding (such as Transitions Work) and it was the collaboration and partnerships that were most important.

- **Q2: What difference has the OA programme made in Norwich and Ipswich that will contribute to greater social mobility?** All six groups answered this question. There were recurring discussions about the positive impact on working practices, systems, and culture change. At secondary school level, there was now a different landscape with improved communication between schools, less of a catchment focus and more support for Norwich families and children. Broadly, there was a willingness to ask for help, career progression and promotion between city schools.

Stakeholders identified certain priorities and projects as being very successful. For Norwich, this included Communication Champions, a programme that was being rolled out to other parts of Norfolk. Additionally, the inclusion work had improved cultural changes. Although there was no hard data to improve impact, there were significant improvements in networking and attitude changes towards tackling inclusion. For Ipswich, most difference has come in the last year with projects such as Learning Behaviour Leads and the ILs. SWERL and the Wellbeing and Resilience Hub has had the most traction, with schools reporting them as being helpful in supporting pupils in schools.

Some stakeholders discussed how the programme has been extremely successful in raising awareness of deprivation in Norwich and the needs of disadvantaged learners. There were now more regular and open conversations about this in schools and with parents. OA schools were better placed to respond to the challenges of the pandemic as a result.

Nearly all groups noted that social mobility was a long-term (generational) issue and that the programme had not been happening in a vacuum. Most

recently, this included the cost-of-living crisis that would make it harder to disentangle the long-term impact of the programme. As the world had changed the past two years, so likely had many of the barriers, therefore making it difficult to say what the impact had been. One group noted that the barriers to social mobility had not necessarily been removed because the social inequalities the OAs faced were wider than the remit of the programme. However, the programme had increased schools' capacity and strength to tackle barriers. It was raised that analysing the changes to Ofsted reports since 2017 would be an interesting study to see if themes such as culture change and working practices were referenced.

**Q3: What would you recommend to others setting up a similar programme?** Five out of six groups answered this question. Overall, groups noted that any future programme should set a clearer framework from the outset with tighter, measurable parameters. More time should be invested up front in planning the theory of change and what measures would be used to track and evaluate impact, as well as to establish connections with local providers. Multiple groups commented how targets could and should have been put in place from the start and that an in-house data analyst could have been embedded into the programme early on.

Though the extension of funding had been positive, multiple stakeholders across groups had only been able to plan a year at a time and so focus was often short term. If they had known the programme would be five years of funding from the start, they could have been more ambitious with community change. Some stakeholders noted that the sustainability of projects should have been explicitly built in at the very start to ensure that learning would be taken forward

Over 180 activities had been conducted between both OAs. This scattergun approach had been overwhelming for schools. In future programmes, less activity and more time spent considering how to tackle and address inequalities, with joined-up thinking on housing, health and the long term could be beneficial.

### **3.5 Considerations for the Future**

This report offers some thoughts on considerations for the future.



- The IOA enthusiastically embraced the place-based approach to social mobility, set out by the Education Secretary in 2017.<sup>76</sup> This broad approach resulted in projects being pursued relating to mental health and wellbeing (one example being the SWERL project), offering substantial amounts of CPD provision and supporting parents. Future projects and policies should consider the lessons and benefits<sup>77</sup> of a place-based approach to tackling disadvantages and empowering local leaders to improve social mobility outcomes. For instance, initiatives such as SWERL were a result of a place-based approach to social mobility. Local barriers such as school engagement and attendance were identified in discussions with local stakeholders, which then led to a focus on social, emotional and mental health needs that were flagged up as a high priority.
- Teachers and other educational practitioners have played a key role in the IOA's programme, with a focus on decreasing vacancy rates and improving access to CPD. Ipswich's teachers will continue to play a key role moving forward. The IOA programme has attempted to develop an environment where teachers can engage with funding, training and resources. Teachers will need protected time and space (such as through 'buy out') to continue engaging with the resources and networks on offer, including DfE offers such as curriculum hubs, teaching school hubs and the research school network. The IOA has noted that protected time outside day-to-day teaching is necessary to pursue evidence-based projects and not just current CPD.<sup>78</sup> For the joined-up 'ways of working' between practitioners and schools to continue, new teachers must appreciate the value of engaging with the networks and resources available to them, as well as appreciating the unique circumstances of disadvantage and its impact on Ipswich's children.
- More consideration should be given to developing similar projects with a robust evaluation framework from the start. The evidence base of this evaluation was too reliant on small-scale surveys and short conversations with stakeholders in their meetings for the UEA evaluation team to say anything significant about the measured progress of the programme on headline targets. This emphasis on evaluation is important to learn what worked well and what did not at a broad programme level, given one of the goals of the OA was to identify new approaches and innovation in different

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<sup>76</sup> Justine Greening (2017) [Education at the core of social mobility](#). 19 January 2017 (viewed on 01 June 2022).

<sup>77</sup> Projects such as the Workforce Development Programme have been picked up by the DfE's [Opportunity Area's Insight Guide: Teacher Recruitment and Retention, and Workforce Development](#) (viewed on 10 June 2022).

<sup>78</sup> Ipswich Opportunity Area – What's Changed? (2022). [Sustaining-Opportunities-IOA-Impact-report-January-2022](#), page 26 (viewed on 9 May 2022).

settings, and actively spread this to other similar places that can benefit.<sup>79</sup> The Sharing and Learning Hub does, however, have case studies for individual projects, which will be beneficial for future interventions.

The IOA responded to the findings of a Cambridge University report into the evidence-based practice fund that found implementation and evaluation practice was not strong enough,<sup>80</sup> through the creation of the School Leads, Education Evidence Leads and the IL projects in the fourth and fifth years of the programme.

- The success of the IOA is largely contingent on the ability of local partners to sustain some of the most successful projects and where possible to extend and scale them up in Ipswich and over a wider area. In part, this will be dependent on future funding from different partners. A fully developed framework of how to achieve these aims (scale-up and sustain) ought to be developed and shared with all stakeholders.<sup>81</sup> This is particularly pertinent if most of the legacy assets and groups are not situated within an enduring institution such as the local authority (with ring-fenced funding). The IOA will need to find structures and communication channels to enable these stakeholders to get together “around a shared challenge” to continue driving change for Ipswich.<sup>82</sup>
- The range of stakeholders involved in the design, implementation and sustainability of all IOA initiatives is wide and it kept growing as the programme developed. More consideration ought to be given to creating meaningful and long-lasting relationships amongst all stakeholders so that the benefits of such a place-based and close-partnership approach can outlive the duration of the IOA programme.

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<sup>79</sup> Justine Greening (2017). [Education at the core of social mobility](#) (viewed on 01 June 2022).

<sup>80</sup> Hofmann, R & Llie, S (2022). [A Theory-Led Evaluation of Scalable Intervention to Promote Evidence-Based, Research-Informed Practice in Schools to Address Attainment Gaps](#). University of Cambridge (viewed on 12 June 2022).

<sup>81</sup> IOA Legacy Transition Plan (2022). 25 May 2022. Unpublished.

<sup>82</sup> Ipswich Opportunity Area – What’s Changed? (2022). [Sustaining-Opportunities-IOA-Impact-report-January-2022, page 26](#) (viewed on 9 May 2022).

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## Appendix 1: Selected project summaries

### Project summary A

<b>Priority 1 – Ensure all children in Ipswich are prepared to learn for life by developing key behaviours such as resilience and self-regulation</b>
<b>The Wellbeing and Emotional Resilience through Learning (SWERL)</b>
<b>Project context</b> <p>SWERL is a knowledge-exchange programme designed by UCL, which brought together research and practitioner expertise to develop improved whole-school approaches to mental health and wellbeing. Schools were supported to conduct a thorough audit of their approach to mental health and wellbeing, across seven domains and using a consistent framework. This informed the development of bespoke action plans to improve provision for pupils. Knowledge and expertise from SWERL has been built upon through the development of a sustainable network of six Resilience and Wellbeing Hubs, sharing best practice and provision across Ipswich.</p>
<b>What was done?</b> <p>Overall, £436,591 was spent from 2017 to 2022 to implement the SWERL project. IOA funded a wide range of activities in this project, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Ipswich Resilience and Wellbeing Hub Network to build on the knowledge and expertise resulting from the previous SWERL project.</li></ul> <p>Five further activities were complementary to the SWERL project and are now activities sitting within UCL's SWERL.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Adult Mental Health First Aid</li><li>✓ Key stage 2 Healthwatch survey trial</li><li>✓ Psychology &amp; Therapeutic Service</li><li>✓ Developmental Movement Play Training</li><li>✓ Psychology &amp; Therapeutic Service</li></ul>
<b>Outcomes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ 30 schools in Ipswich received CPD and support to audit their school needs using the SWERL framework</li><li>✓ 95% of headteachers reported that SWERL had contributed to improvements in staff and pupil wellbeing by December 2021</li><li>✓ 52% of school leaders noted SWERL had an impact on improved pupil attendance</li></ul>

## Project summary B

<b>Priority 1 – Ensure all children in Ipswich are prepared to learn for life by developing key behaviours such as resilience and self-regulation</b>
<b>Early Education Network (formerly Strong School Start)</b>
<b>Project context</b> <p>Strong School Start aimed to work in the early years and community space to provide opportunities for families, practitioners and support organisations to collaborate, thus ensuring children get the best start in life and confidently begin school ready to access all of the opportunities it offers. The Early Education Network is a network of Family Support Assistants in early years settings and Early Years Transition Leads in schools who have collaborated to share expertise and develop stronger collaborative systems around transition, such as a common transfer document and children's passport for information sharing, as well as consistent approaches to transition support and activities across schools and settings.</p> <p><i>“It has provided opportunities to work with schools and other settings, so we all are doing the same things regarding school transitions. These relationships that have been built are a crucial part in ensuring smooth transitions.”</i> (Family Support Assistant feedback)</p>
<b>What was done?</b> <p>Overall, £343,881 was spent from 2017 to 2022 to implement the Early Education Network projects. The IOA funded a wide range of activities in these projects, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Development of Family Support Assistants (FSA) Network</li><li>✓ Early Years Transition Leads (EYTL) Network</li><li>✓ CPD and pupil interventions</li><li>✓ Early SLC Assessment Tool</li></ul>
<b>Outcomes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ 86% of headteachers felt the project was influencing their approach to early transition and school readiness</li><li>✓ 76% of the practitioners felt that most children were making strong progress in early speech and language from their starting points</li><li>✓ 90% of the practitioners felt that most children were making strong progress in their personal, social and emotional development</li><li>✓ 93% of headteachers would like to continue the EYTL role and a third of them felt that they could commit to this without funding</li><li>✓ 91% of practitioners were keen that the network continues</li></ul>

## Project summary C

<b>Priority 2 – Strengthen the teaching profession in Ipswich by providing world-class support and development</b>
<b>Workforce Development Strategy</b>
<b>Project context</b> <p>The Workforce Development Strategy, in collaboration with the Teacher Development Trust, supported 50 Ipswich schools in developing action plans. Schools received additional staff development funding above and beyond their planned CPD programmes, and school leaders participated in leadership development, as well as early-career support for NQTs provided through a network of NQT mentors.</p> <p><i>“The IOA programme has had a huge impact here. It has allowed many staff and students to access training and resources that would otherwise have been out of reach within the normal school budget. It has also been the catalyst for a large amount of very collaborative work with colleagues from other academies.”</i> (IOA Strategic Stakeholder feedback)</p>
<b>What was done?</b> <p>Overall, £1,211,751 was spent from 2017 to 2022 to implement the Workforce Development Strategy project. The IOA funded a wide range of activities in this project, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ CPD and Audit Consultancy</li><li>✓ Leadership Skills Development</li><li>✓ Leadership Skills Coaching</li><li>✓ NQT Peer Mentoring</li><li>✓ NQT Peer Network</li></ul>
<b>Outcomes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ 95% satisfaction rate in increased strategic leadership confidence levels</li><li>✓ 40 new mentors trained in 2019 and 2020</li><li>✓ 50 school leaders participated in leadership development and professional coaching</li></ul>

## Project summary D

<b>Priority 3 – Improve attainment for disadvantaged pupils by embedding evidence-based practice in the teaching of English and maths</b>
<b>What a Difference a Day Makes (WADADM)</b>  <b>Project context</b>  It is a Saturday morning intervention bringing local teachers and year 11 pupils together at the University of Suffolk to spend 24 hours of extra study to boost their maths skills ahead of GCSEs.  <i>“What A Difference a Day Makes has had the biggest impact on my achievement this year because my maths improved, the learning environment was much more relaxed, and I got to make new friends.”</i> (Year 11 student feedback)
<b>What was done?</b>  Overall, £91,453 was spent from 2017 to 2022 to implement the WADADM project. IOA funded a wide range of activities in this project, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Recruitment of maths &amp; English teachers</li><li>✓ University of Suffolk support</li><li>✓ Mentoring support</li><li>✓ Online pupil intervention</li><li>✓ GCSE Support Programme</li></ul>
<b>Outcomes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Year 11 students have seen average improvements of 1.3 grades in maths assessments, and feedback the positive impact studying in the university environment has had on their ability to see themselves in higher education</li></ul>



## Project summary E

### **Priority 3 – Improve attainment for disadvantaged pupils by embedding evidence-based practice in the teaching of English and maths**

#### **The Evidence- Based Practice**

##### **Project context**

The Ipswich Evidence-Based Practice project was designed for schools to implement evidence-based programmes to improve maths and English teaching and learning, with support from EEF Research Schools and the maths Hub. Participating schools were assisted in implementing a variety of approaches ranging from curriculum to pedagogical development and assessment. EKO Trust was commissioned to provide bespoke 1:1 support packages to schools with significant underachievement at key stage 2. Three secondaries collaborated on projects, including a focus on maths, led by Northgate High school; phonics, led by Ipswich Academy, and EAL, led by Westbourne Academy.

*“All the high level of engagement that we've had throughout the whole of the programme has really helped with sustainability and legacy going forward.”*  
(IOA Strategic Stakeholder feedback)

##### **What was done?**

Overall, £980,000 was spent from 2017 to 2022 to implement the Evidence-Based Practice project. The IOA funded a wide range of activities in this project, such as:

- ✓ Key stage 2 tailored support (EKO Trust)
- ✓ Key state 3 English and maths
- ✓ Project development in schools
- ✓ Evaluation process

##### **Outcomes**

- ✓ Across schools, key stage 2 outcomes demonstrated a shift in the proportion of students meeting the expected standard in reading, writing or maths against their baselines, with increases typically in the range of 27% to 37%
- ✓ Year 6 children in Ipswich out-performed their peers at teacher-assessed combined reading, writing and maths – with 70% of Ipswich children in a representative sample of schools reaching age-related expectations compared to 63% nationally
- ✓ In a July 2021 survey, 71% of headteachers in Ipswich schools and colleges agreed that research evidence-based practice for addressing the disadvantage gap was now better embedded within their schools compared to previous years.

## Project summary F

<b>Priority 4 – Inspire and equip young people with the skills and guidance they need to pursue an ambitious career pathway</b>
<b>The Enterprise Adviser Network</b>
<b>Project context</b> <p>Through the Enterprise Adviser Network, the Careers and Enterprise Company has assisted schools in developing career strategies and increasing employer engagement. This was done to help schools improve the quality of career advice and to train career leaders. This included delivering a programme of work inspiration activities to primary school children and assisting young people who are not in education, employment, or training after high school or college to successfully transition into work or study.</p> <p><i>“IOA schools demonstrated strong resilience and willingness to participate with the careers programme despite the challenges.” (IOA Strategic Stakeholder feedback)</i></p>
<b>What was done?</b> <p>Overall, £170,706 was spent between 2017 and 2022 to implement The Enterprise Adviser Network project. The IOA funded a wide range of activities in this project, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Careers tool development</li><li>✓ Managing Careers</li><li>✓ Careers Leader training</li><li>✓ Primary World of Work</li></ul>
<b>Outcomes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ 68,685 encounters between Ipswich young people and local employers have taken place, exceeding the three-year target by 59%</li><li>✓ All 16 schools and colleges in Ipswich are matched to at least one Enterprise Adviser and Ipswich outperforms against OA and national averages in seven out of the eight Gatsby benchmarks</li><li>✓ CPD has been funded for careers practitioners in schools, with eight new career advisers achieving the level 6 Diploma in Career Guidance and Development</li></ul>

## Annex

### Summary of the data, material, methodology and process used in the synthesis evaluation report

#### 1. Introduction

The synthesis evaluation was tasked with understanding what the Ipswich Opportunity Area (IOA) did in an attempt to meet the original delivery aims outlined in its delivery plan. Moreover, it investigated both perceived and measured progress made towards its headline targets.

The evaluation team conducted a documentary analysis of a range of descriptive secondary data, outcomes/frameworks and other relevant documentation relating to the whole programme. The data analysis phase of the research ran between mid March and mid May 2022. The evaluation drew on published and unpublished documentation. This Annex/document provides context to data and material that used in this evaluation (unpublished and published) and outlines the methodology and processes that were adopted throughout.

#### 2. Unpublished Documents and Data

The analysis of unpublished documents and data aimed at eliciting meaning, gaining understanding and developing empirical knowledge of the Ipswich Opportunity Area programme. The evaluation team was granted access to the Ipswich Opportunity Area on Microsoft Teams. Overwhelmingly, documents were mostly qualitative and text-rich and included progress charts, PowerPoint presentations, reporting material produced by the Ipswich Opportunity Area and third-party partners, surveys, meeting minutes, monitoring documents and pre-evaluation reports. The following sources were extensively researched:

Document	Description
Partnership Board Meeting Reports (2020 to 2021)	The Partnership Board delivers high oversight and direction to the IOA programme. The data is mostly internal but found its way into interim reports such as IOA Impact Report 2022. The partnership board meeting folder comprises 10 meeting agenda documents (Word/PDF). The meeting agenda documents were used to provide information about the topics to be discussed, as well as progress towards headline targets, the meeting cycle, action and decisions required, programme risks, next steps and recommendations, and time frames. This included updates

	on the IOA programme delivery by priority area, legacy, school proposals and approaches, and funding issues.
Educational Leaders Meeting Reports (2020 to 2021)	The IOA Educational Leaders have worked to fully influence the OA strategy and shape delivery and take collective responsibility for securing the legacy of the OA after Department for Education funding stops. The primary and secondary headteacher meeting folders are the main sources. The primary and secondary school heads' meeting folders contain 12 documents (Word/PDF) related to programme update and roll-out, schools' offers, proposals, engagement, COVID-19 response, sustainability and decisions and actions required.
Activities Surveys (2020 to 2021)	The IOA designed and delivered surveys for the following projects and activities (16 Excel documents): Felixstowe IL report and baseline, Early Years Implementation Leads (EYIL) report and baseline, funding return managers and headteachers, learning behaviour leads baseline practitioner perceptions, strong school practitioner, parent survey, EYFS nurseries, EYFS schools, family support assistants (FSA), and mental health and wellbeing outcomes.
Spring Survey 2022 – Sustaining Opportunities (2017 to 2021)	This impact report was based on IOA's Spring Survey, which was conducted between 18 March and 4 April 2022. In this report, 135 leaders and practitioners responded, including 45 headteachers (90% of those involved in the IOA), 14 setting managers (82% of those involved in the IOA), and the majority of practitioners actively involved in the Year 5 networks linked to the three key project strands: working in the early years and community space, supporting children's learning and securing better achievement for children and young people in maths and English. It enquired about the year 5 IOA programme's impact thus far, their confidence in the plans for ensuring the sustainability of IOA activity and outcomes, and their perceptions of the challenges that will remain for children, families and educators after the programme ends in August 2022.
Twinning Action Plan – Felixstowe (2020 to 2022)	The IOA partnered with Felixstowe schools for the 2020/2021 academic year as a result of the DfE's drive to twin OAs. Mental Health, Wellbeing Resilience, Transitions, and Aspirations were identified as priorities by Felixstowe school leaders. The IOA provided funding to schools to implement UCL's SWERL ('Supporting Wellbeing and Emotional Resilience through Learning') programme. Schools are assisted in conducting a detailed audit of their approach to supporting students' wellbeing and resilience, as well as developing and implementing bespoke improvement plans tailored to their specific needs. Projects

	<p>were being carried out throughout 2021/2022. Schools' information and approaches, funding, census, offers, learning frameworks, proposals, legacy, and memorandum of understanding were amongst the 16 documents (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and PDF) examined.</p>
<p>Individual Activities (selected examples)</p>	
<p>The Wellbeing and Emotional Resilience through Learning – SWERL (2018 to 2021)</p>	<p>The SWERL encouraged schools to consider the entire school system in order to reduce risk and create an environment conducive to staff and student mental health. In the SWERL's data, 72 documents (Word, recording videos, PowerPoint, PDF and Excel) were found that were related to SWERL's impact, audit tool, clinics, funding, cohort applications, agenda, participants, data collection, action plan, O'Brien and Roberts domains, University College London handbook and back-on-track guidance.</p>
<p>Workforce Development (2019 to 2020)</p>	<p>The Workforce Development programme was established to provide additional staff development funding to IOA schools in addition to their planned CPD programmes, including for leadership development. In the workforce development folder, 156 documents (Word, Excel and PDF) were examined, including workforce development plans, SQW CPD plans, training needs analyses, approval process and condition letter, funding allocation, evaluation form, and update interim report.</p>
<p>The Evidence Based Practice Fund (2017 to 2020)</p>	<p>The Evidence Based Practice Fund (EBPF) evaluation report, produced by Faculty of Education University of Cambridge in October 2020, covered the three East Anglia OAs: Ipswich, Norfolk, and Fenland and East Cambridgeshire. This report provides an understanding of how the EBPF has been operating, with a particular focus on the experiences of the schools undertaking EBPF-funded projects, as well as the Research Schools supporting the implementation of EBPF projects in each OA. It used a mixed-methods approach to investigate the EBPF and a process-oriented perspective to evaluate it, focusing on how EBPF was implemented and participants' experiences with it. It investigates participants' own conclusions from EBPF-supported projects. The research design was built around three main components: surveys, document analysis and a theory of change workshop</p>
<p>The Primary World of Work (2018 to 2020)</p>	<p>The Primary World of Work initiative was created to ensure that Ipswich's primary students have access to a wide range of career-related learning and world of work opportunities, to raise children's aspirations, combat gender stereotypes and provide insight into future careers. The IOA developed a primary school Gatsby benchmark to ensure that primary schools are providing the full range of recommended experiences and opportunities for career-related learning, as well as evidence of the impact of this work. Seven</p>

	documents (Word, PowerPoint and Excel) were examined in the Primary World of Work folder, including the project's aims, objectives, and updates, the primary assessment tool and Gatsby Benchmark, the initial research report, and the evaluation report, and the project end report.
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### 3. Published Sources

The national evaluations, impact reports and newsletters of the IOA have increased understanding of the programme and provided all stakeholders with an unbiased assessment that ensures accountability and generates learning, building on success and correcting what is not working. The following published documents were thoroughly researched:

Sustaining Opportunities – What's Changed in the Ipswich Opportunity Area? January 2022 – This report summarises the programme's impact in each priority area since its inception in 2017, including the IOA's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and legacy (IOA assets). More information about this report can be found here: <https://ipswichopportunityarea.co.uk/impact/>

Department for Education (DfE) – Opportunity Areas Insight Guide Careers – This guide highlights a number of Opportunity Area place-based careers projects that have addressed complex and multifaceted barriers to social mobility and regional inequality. Some of the best examples of local solutions to local problems are presented here, ranging from best practice sharing networks to post-16 NEET (not in education, employment, or training) reduction. More information about this guide is available at: <https://ipswichopportunityarea.co.uk/impact/>

Department for Education (DfE) – Opportunity Areas Insight Guide – Teacher Recruitment and Retention, and Workforce Development – It highlights several Opportunity Area place-based projects that have addressed complex and multifaceted barriers to social mobility and regional inequality. They cover a variety of topics in teacher recruitment and retention, as well as workforce development, ranging from maximising digital platforms to laying the groundwork for Teaching School Hubs. More information about this guide is available at: <https://ipswichopportunityarea.co.uk/impact/>

Department for Education (DfE) – Opportunity Areas Insight Guide – Early Years – It features a selection of Opportunity Area place-based early childhood projects that have addressed complex and multifaceted barriers to social mobility and regional inequality. They cover a wide range of topics in early childhood education, from best

practice sharing networks to early literacy programmes. More information about this guide is available at: <https://ipswichopportunityarea.co.uk/impact/>

OA Newsletters – The Ipswich Opportunity Area Newsletter provided updates for projects and programmes in each priority area, as well as key dates and contacts for Norwich schools. Between March 2018 and June 2021, six newsletters were published. More information about the newsletters is available at: <https://ipswichopportunityarea.co.uk/our-newsletter/>

## List of all projects in their priority

Below is a list of all projects and their activities colour coded to their respective priority. Hyperlinks take the reader to the Eastern Opportunity Areas' Learning Hub, which provides more information on the project.

### Key

Priority 1
Priority 2
Priority 3
Priority 4

Project	Type	Activity Name
Parenting Support Programme	App	
School-parent communication trials	Texts to parents	Improving Communications
Youth Social Action programme	Intervention with Young People	Youth Social Action
Improving Mental Health in Schools	CPD	SWERL
	Grants to schools	
	CPD	Adult Mental Health First Aid
	Pupil wellbeing assessment survey	Key stage 2 Healthwatch survey trial
	CPD and support from education psychologists	<a href="#">Psychology &amp; Therapeutic Service</a>
	Pupil wellbeing interventions	<a href="#">Vision and Voice</a>

	Funded roles in schools and early years settings	<a href="#">Ipswich Resilience and Wellbeing Network</a>
Supporting Engagement	Network co-ordination	Suffolk TA Network
	Funded roles in schools	Learning Behaviour Lead (LBL) Network
	Grants to schools	LBL inclusion grants
	CPD	LBL training
	Grants to schools and early learning settings	Tell Your Story fund
Improving transition	Development of comms, process and tools across schools	IOA transition project (year 6 to 7)
	Grants to schools	Transition activities (year 6 to 7)
Improving GLD outcomes in early years (becoming the Strong School Start Network' in year 5)	Tool – with support to embed	Highfield Resilience Tracker
	CPD	Thrive
	Grants to schools	GLD grants
	CPD and pupil interventions	<a href="#">Healthy Movers</a>
	Early SLC assessment tool	<a href="#">WellComm Assessment Tool</a>
	Funded roles in early years settings	Family support assistants (FSA)
	Funded roles in schools	Early years transition leads (EYTL)
Collaborative grant	Strong School Start fund	
Early Years Practitioner Development Programme – Strengthening Professional Competencies	CPD for early years staff in schools and settings	<a href="#">Champions for Children</a>
		<a href="#">Developmental Movement Play</a>
		<a href="#">Elklan</a>
	Grants to early years settings	Training grants
	Online conference	SEND Conference
	Literacy support for early years parents and practitioners	Lets Talk Reading
Coaching support for managers	<a href="#">Coaching &amp; Mentoring</a>	
Workforce Development (Schools and Colleges)	CPD and audit consultancy	Workforce Development Audits
	Grants to schools	Workforce Development Grants
	CPD	Leadership Skills Development
	CPD	Leadership Skills Coaching
	CPD	<a href="#">NQT Peer Mentoring</a>
	Network co-ordination	NQT peer networks



<a href="#">Improving Pupil Outcomes through evidence-based practice</a>	Grants to schools and early years settings	Ipswich Evidence Based Practice Fund
	CPD	Research School Network training
	Funded roles in schools and early years settings	<a href="#">Implementation Leads (ILs)</a>
<a href="#">Ipswich School Leads</a>	Funded roles in schools	IOA School Leads
Improving pupil outcomes in English and Maths	Consultancy	Key state 2 tailored support
	Grants to schools	Key stage 3 English and maths
	Collaborative pupil intervention programme	<a href="#">What A Difference A Day Makes (WADADM)</a>
	CPD and backfill for TAs	Catch Up Literacy
	Licences for online pupil interventions	Reading Plus
Responding to the Challenges of COVID	Funded roles in early years settings	FSA's
	Grants to early years settings	Early years transition project
	Funded roles in schools	Remote learning support assistants
	Online pupil intervention	WADADM Summer Step-Up programme
	English as an additional language (EAL) family intervention through Community Champions	Support for Families with Remote Learning
	Family intervention	Support for Families with Remote Learning
	Improving outcomes for pupils at risk of becoming NEET	Pupil interventions
Pupil interventions		Improving outcomes for (Alternative Provision) pupils
Funded roles in schools		Transition coaches
Inspiring Ambitious Careers	Careers tool development	ICanBeA
	CPD	Managing Careers
	CPD	Careers leader training
	Parent information events	Parent Champion network
	CPD and pupil activities	<a href="#">Primary World of Work</a>
Accreditation	Funded awards	Awards Place