New Deal for Communities

The National Evaluation

Research Reports

Raising Educational Achievement in Disadvantaged Areas

Research Report 30

Sheffield Hallam University

Raising Educational Achievement in Disadvantaged Areas

Research Report 30

Author:

Marie Lall
David Gillborn

Educational Policy Research Unit

CONTENTS

Executive Summary

'I think they are to be praised for delivering what the community wants.'
(Head of Out of School Science Club)

Newly compiled statistics by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) confirm the long established association between social disadvantages and lower than average levels of achievement in school. These issues are especially pronounced for boys from certain ethnic backgrounds, in particular working class white and Black Caribbean young men. This report focuses on work in one NDC Partnership (South Kilburn, Brent) which is attempting to improve performance in some of the most demanding circumstances.

A variety of projects are being developed. The most successful at present appears to be the use of 'After-school-centres.' These operate outside normal school hours (including during school holidays) and offer additional tuition and a range of courses that either supplement or extend the usual school-based curriculum.

The projects have been especially **successful** in certain respects:

- pupils feel a sense of excitement at learning in non-traditional settings
- parents appreciate the small teaching groups and more individualised attention
- parents also gain an awareness of the school curriculum by working on related projects/topics with their children

Key factors associated with successful initiatives are:

- setting provision in a range of locations: some young people (e.g. those who have been permanently excluded) are reluctant to engage with projects that are located in schools. On the other hand, pupils and parents sometimes feel more secure approaching centres that are in their usual school. The ability to locate projects in a range of centres helps work through such problems
- raising the visibility of projects helps to establish a positive sense of change in local communitie
- building on local links and consulting local residents is an excellent way of ensuring that work matches people's needs and is seen positively, rather than as an intrusion by outsiders

Some **barriers and problems** remain:

- the lack of a local secondary school means that students and parents are scattered among a high number of different schools - causing friction; lessening community cohesion; and meaning that any benefits from school-based approaches (such as the national *Aiming High* strategy) will be diluted
- recruiting staff: there have been problems recruiting sufficient numbers of staff, especially from the local community
- recruiting pupils: some projects are struggling to fill their places but having to turn away young people who happen not to live in the designated NDC area. This can cause resentment and discourage NDC residents whose non-NDC friends are excluded
- data collection and analysis is an important means of assessing what works and identifying lessons for the future (both positive and negative). Where the NDC pupils are dispersed across several different schools, however, the existing school-based systems may not offer a sound basis for analysis

- administrative problems can have serious effects, especially where they affect the continuity of provision. This is evidenced in South Kilburn in relation to the location of certain projects and the identity of service providers
- co-ordination between service providers (especially parts of the local council) is an important factor
- targeted strategies might be an effective way of meeting the particular needs of certain groups in the future, e.g. white working class and African-Caribbean young people

Introduction

Raising levels of achievement is the most common of all educational goals across the entire New Deal for Communities (NDC) initiative. Every Partnership has at least one project aimed explicitly at raising standards of attainment among primary and/or secondary pupils. For this reason, our evaluation of the education theme in NDC includes a focus on raising achievement in each of evaluation years. This report focuses on developments in South Kilburn NDC. The projects developed in this Partnership focus on providing out-of-school study centres and learning opportunities to pupils (involving those who currently attend full-time education as well as those who have 'dropped out' of the system).

The current projects vary in size and focus, but all aim to raise achievement in some form. Whilst some projects have been running for two years, others have only recently been established. All are still in the relatively early stages of development and long-term impact is as yet difficult to estimate.

This report covers the following areas:

- the context in which the raising achievement projects have been established and the problems they are trying to address
- the nature of the interventions in terms of objectives and targeted beneficiaries
- the way in which the raising achievement projects have been delivered; focusing in particular, on the different types of interventions that are offered and the assumptions behind these interventions
- current outcomes and impact of the projects
- key lessons that have been learnt so far

The Local Context

The development of raising achievement projects in NDC areas is a major part of the Partnerships' broader education strategies. Consequently, the projects should be seen in the context of a wider set of interventions which, in turn, might aim to increase parental involvement, help avoid school exclusions, or improve lifelong learning for the community. Many interventions also run hand-in-hand with specific youth programmes, some of which have been established under a different thematic heading (such as crime reduction).

Socio-Economic Context

The socio-economic context in which the raising achievement projects have been developed is common to many NDC areas, with pronounced levels of disadvantage. A brief review of some key indicators gives a snap shot of some of the main issues.

The local unemployment level runs at 16.3% (national 3.1%) and the unemployment rate for those under 20 is 21.6%.[1] Levels of educational achievement in NDC areas is well below the national average. In South Kilburn the percentage of pupils gaining five or more higher grade passes (A*-C) in their GCSE examinations is lower than both the National and Borough average. 44% of local adults have poor literacy and numeracy skills. In addition, data from the NDC household survey reveals that residents in South Kilburn have a significantly higher level of distrust of local schools than the average NDC resident nationally.[2]

---

[1] Partnership baseline information
[2] MORI data analysed by Dr Mike Grimsley, Sheffield Hallam University.

Ethnic Diversity

NDC Partnerships are more ethnically diverse on average than the population as a whole (around 23% of NDC residents nationally are of Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) heritage compared with 9% in Britain).[3] The South Kilburn (Brent) NDC is amongst the most ethnically diverse in the entire initiative:

- less than half of residents self-classify as white (46.5%)
- only five NDCs have a lower proportion of white residents
- around four in ten residents self-identified as 'Black' in the Census (44.8%)

Nationally, it is known that, on average, African Caribbean, Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils tend to complete their compulsory schooling with lower than average GCSE grades (see below). This means that in some NDCs there may be a particular need to address the attainment of minority ethnic pupils. This is certainly an issue of which the NDC is aware although whether any of the specific projects have a conscious BME focus is not so clear:

> *'Well, we have nothing in the contract with NDC that specifies percentages of BME or gender. Obviously that's a focus because that's the majority of the target group. In our own targets we've got sixty five percent, both the black plus other ethnic minorities is sixty five percent and male is sixty five percent.'* (Fairbridge project manager)

The Policy Context

Raising standards of educational achievement continues to be a major policy concern nationally. The implementation of new data monitoring arrangements mean that schools and policy makers now have more precise data than ever before on the educational attainments of school age pupils. In addition, new national initiatives have been launched that promise to have a particular impact on areas where a high proportion of children are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Data on educational progress and achievement (5-16): The introduction of the Pupil Level Annual Schools Census (PLASC) means that the separate attainments of every pupil in state maintained schools can now be tracked throughout their educational career. The data includes a note of pupils' gender, ethnic origin and whether they receive free school meals (FSM) - a rough proxy for social disadvantage.

The first analysis of how much progress pupils make between each of the so-called 'Key Stages' of education revealed that gender, ethnicity and FSM are all strongly associated with differences in progress.

- pupils in receipt of FSM make less progress at every stage of their education - 'Non-FSM pupils progress more than FSM pupils from each prior attainment level in each subject at every Key Stage'
- 'White pupils, when looked at by gender and pupil level FSM are one of the worst progressing ethnic groups…'
- 'Black Caribbean pupils, whether FSM or non-FSM, boys or girls make below average progress at all Key Stages.' (DfES, 2003)

---

[3] Source: MORI

The cumulative effects of these differences are most pronounced at the end of compulsory schooling (see Table 1).

- in 2002, the most recent year for which complete data are available, more than half (53.7%) of all pupils not receiving FSM completed their compulsory schooling by achieving five or more higher grade (A*-C) GCSEs or their equivalent: less than a quarter (23%) of FSM pupils achieved similar results
- on average girls achieved more highly than boys of the same social background and ethnic origin. Overall, 59.3% of non-FSM girls achieved five A*-C passes compared with 27.3% of FSM girls. For boys the figures were 48.2% non-FSM and 18.8% FSM
- the lowest achieving group of boys were Black Caribbean boys in receipt of FSM (14.9%) followed by white FSM boys (16.1%)
- for girls the lowest achieving group were white girls in receipt of FSM (23.6%) followed by FSM girls categorized as Black Other (27.7%) and Black Caribbean FSM girls (28.1%). (DfES, 2004, see Table 54a)

The issues facing South Kilburn NDC, therefore, are echoed nationally in ethnically diverse areas of pronounced social disadvantage.

Raising the achievement of minority ethnic pupils: Aiming High: An important recent development in this field has been the launch of a major policy initiative that seeks to raise the achievements of minority ethnic pupils. The *Aiming High* strategy resulted from a national consultation exercise and was launched in October 2003. The main features of the programme are:

- dedicated work in 30 secondary schools with a high proportion of African-Caribbean pupils; including additional resources, the provision of an external consultant to each school, and support through the National College for School Leadership
- improved training for primary teachers to meet the needs of bilingual pupils through the national primary strategy
- the publication of improved monitoring data at the national and local level
- issuing new guidance on how best to support the achievement of Black pupils in secondary schools

It is clear, therefore, that the issues that South Kilburn NDC is seeking address (especially in relation to the achievement of Black and White boys from disadvantaged backgrounds) are receiving focused attention at a national level also. It is possible that these developments will add to the Partnership's future work on this issue. At the same time, of course, there may be wider lessons to be learnt from the experiences of this Partnership (see below).

Table 1: Achievements at GCSE/GNVQ in 2002, by ethnic origin, free school meal provision and gender

GCSE/GNVQ 5 or more A*-C	Non FSM						FSM					
	15 year olds			% achieving			15 year olds			% achieving		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
White	207,413	200,197	407,610	48.5	59.5	53.9	28,854	27,913	56,767	16.1	23.6	19.8
Black Caribbean	2,787	2,697	5,484	25.2	40.6	32.8	1,107	1,111	2,218	14.9	28.1	21.5
Black African	2,056	2,158	4,214	37.8	51.8	45.0	1,302	1,291	2,593	20.9	30.4	25.6
Black Other	1,462	1,518	2,980	32.8	49.8	41.4	667	718	1,385	17.8	27.7	23.0
Indian	6,227	5,816	12,043	60.3	71.9	65.9	968	889	1,857	35.5	48.4	41.7
Pakistani	4,280	3,976	8,256	36.6	50.9	43.5	3,018	2,756	5,774	27.3	36.4	31.6
Bangladeshi	1,024	939	1,963	42.2	53.6	47.6	1,601	1,573	3,174	35.5	46.3	40.9
Chinese	875	842	1,717	68.1	76.4	72.2	127	118	245	62.2	58.5	60.4
Other	3,912	3,722	7,634	46.7	60.3	53.3	1,565	1,438	3,003	24.0	38.4	30.9
Unclassified[2]	13,120	12,777	25,897	48.8	59.3	54.0	1,755	1,855	3,610	19.1	29.3	24.4
All pupils	243,156	234,642	477,798	48.2	59.3	53.7	40,964	39,662	80,626	18.8	27.3	23.0

[1] Includes pupils for which information was not sought or refused

[2] Includes information refused or not obtained and pupils categorised using the new ethnic group classifications.

 ' * ' = 5 or less, ' - ' = Not applicable

Source: Department for Education & Skills (2004) table 54a

Main Barriers to Raising Achievement as Seen Locally

Local residents and NDC workers identified a number of problems that stopped pupils from doing well or remaining in education. They included the lack of a local secondary school, parents' own experience with schools, the widespread use of drugs and a group culture of young people hanging about in the streets.

The local secondary school was torn down thirteen years ago. Before the children would go from a local primary to the local secondary school as one cohort, now they travel to twenty-six different secondary schools across London.

> 'You've got the dense housing, all the children going to the local primary school and then they're scattered. Then they come back and they fight because you've got lots of different schools so the green blazers fight the blue blazers. No coherence. Then the parents are coming to a parents' meeting - parents who are probably fairly school wary - without their mates and without anyone else. They come to school meetings where they know nobody and they don't come back. So the parental support you have in primary school drops away in the secondary school.' (Manager of the City Learning Centre)

Children in school face many barriers and there is a sense among some in the project that the increased pressure to perform in formal assessments (for schools, teachers and pupils) may be having unforeseen negative consequences:

> 'It's too large classes, it's too much monitoring, it's too much focusing on numeracy and literacy. I think this trend towards continually testing young people and testing their teachers makes it easier for people to fall through the cracks. If the teachers are focusing on the statistics, and how many young people pass X class, then they are not able to focus on other achievement.' (Fairbridge Project manager)

Parents often have had a bad experience with schools themselves. This, combined with the dispersal around numerous (distant) secondary schools, can manifest itself in a lack of parental involvement, which is also associated with lower levels of attainment. (Lall, Cambell and Gillborn, 2004)

> '…A number of our parents have actually missed out on education. Our parents are very young.' (Head teacher running Family Learning at a Primary School)

This is compounded by the levels of crime and the high visibility of drug use in the area:

> 'A lot of them have been excluded from all the existing projects. A lot of the youth clubs have said - we are not working with these young people anymore, they are too much trouble. So there obviously is an issue, with the young people just hanging around. That's when they start to get into trouble. There's problems with drugs and problems with crime, particularly car crime.' (Fairbridge Team leader)

As pointed out above, drugs and crime can lead to even more disaffection as the young people are not welcome at mainstream youth centres and projects. If still at school many feel un-heard and discouraged.

> 'A general comment we get from most of the young people who dropped out of school is that they don't feel, at school, that they are listened to. I've heard that a number of times. They feel that the teachers don't like them, don't want to hear what they have to

say. And that comes back to, I think, the whole pressure that teachers are under, to work with so many young people, on their own, basically, with no support.' (Fairbridge Trainee Development Worker)

When asked what stopped local young people from achieving, a secondary school teacher was less prepared to see their own actions (or inaction) as part of the picture. For them, the explanation was seen to lie with the students and/or the community:

'I don't know. I mean, if I knew I would sell it and make a lot of money. I would sell that formula of what stops people from achieving, and believe me I wouldn't be here. (…) I don't think it's a lack of facilities or energy or will. It's something else - barriers in themselves just seem to be collective barriers and they all have their effects.' (Head of Out of School Science Club)

The Nature of the Interventions

Two models of Raising Achievement projects have been developed by this Partnership. They are described below as 'after school study centres' and 'family learning'. A greater emphasis in this report has been placed on the study centres, which appear to be the more successful of the two approaches.

After School Study Centres

South Kilburn NDC has set up three out of school study centres. One is based at a primary school and is aimed at primary school aged children; one is located in a secondary school and focuses on science for secondary school children; and another is based at a city learning centre for secondary aged pupils. A further community based study centre has just been opened to cater for those pupils who have been excluded temporarily, permanently or those who have effectively 'dropped out' of the educational system.

'Fairbridge' is a national organisation that aims to deliver long-term personal development to young people. They work with people who are between thirteen and twenty-five years old to increase their confidence, motivation and skills. *The Fairbridge Centre* has three full time members of staff: a project manager, a team leader and a trainee development worker. They have target outputs of reaching 180 young people over three years at a cost of £457,589.

'The majority of our young people are truants or outside education. A lifestyle of criminality or drugs and many don't have a positive role model support. And what Fairbridge does is, we open doors for them to give them opportunities. (…) Our project will tackle the source of disaffection of the young people in Kilburn, and do that by reducing their barriers to learning, it will raise their education, attainment, and increase their motivation, basically. That's our aims and relevance of the project.' (Fairbridge Manager, Main office)

The after school study centres based in schools are staffed by teachers and their learning assistants on top of their daily jobs. There are also volunteer mentors, and in the primary school, parents are heavily involved in helping with the tuition. The City learning centre provides tutors who are not based at the local schools.

'The project [science after school provision] is centred around providing out of school provision for 150 pupils within the NW6 postal code area, targeted by New Deals money and we address under achievement in science in years seven to eleven. (…) The total provision, across the entire year-groups (…) it works out around one hundred and forty hour's provision. (…) If you look to an equivalent school year it's around a third of their teaching in science. (…) The holiday provision gives us a chance to do things we

wouldn't normally be able to do within two hours. And it's particularly relevant for year nine [13 and 14 year olds] and year eleven [15 and 16 year olds], where a focused approach for revision and targeting achievement in SATS for year nine, or GCSEs…' (Head of Out of School Science Club)

At the primary school centre tuition is offered every day for different subjects and different groups. Parents are invited to come and take part as often as they can.

'We begin with settling the children into classes after home time, and they have a sandwich and some juice and (…) we sit with the children and help them. (…) Most of them need extra help so we can alternate or pull the tables together.' (Teaching assistant at Primary after school club)

All after school study centres were set up after extensive community consultation, but schools and other agencies were also involved in the consultation.

'I think the driving force is from the community. NDC works from a kind of... they work inversely to a typical hierarchy where they actually request the desires and wants of the community that they serve. And it was seen, by that community, to address the under-achievement of young children within this area, particularly in science. I think their concern was that science was a very important skill to have, and if we look at the jobs, it accounts for probably at least twenty five per cent of the employment opportunities. So NDC were asked by the residents to put in place some kind of programme that provided out of school provision to address the gap in performance between this area and local or similar areas…' (Head of Out of School Science Club)

Family learning

The NDC has also has set up a learning families project that is delivered at various locations by different providers. Family learning involves children learning together with their parents on a variety of different courses. In one instance the Brent Adult Centre delivers the project for Education (BASES). Another part of the project is delivered by a primary school on its premises. Real Action delivers a third part of the project. This project is focused on children and parents learning together and offers a variety of courses for parents with children in diverse areas.

Other

Aside from the two models described above, South Kilburn NDC also has a widening opportunities fund which is a pot of money that young people, and organisations that offer services to young people, can access to send them away on trips or help with university fees or books.

SKNDC has recently set up a Family Liaison Officers project and a Transitions and Pathways Classrooms project. The Family Liaison Officers Project involves employing three family liaison officers, one at each primary school in the SKNDC area, who will work with parents, children and school staff to deal with issues that may not be specifically related to education but that are having an impact of the children's education. This project is being delivered over three years in partnership with the Brent Social Services, who are contributing fifty per cent of match funding.

The Transitions and Pathways Classrooms Project is to project three new classrooms at the very popular Kilburn Park Foundation School. This will enable the school to be double stream and thus for more South Kilburn young people to attend school locally and to benefit from the high quality of education at this local junior school. This project is being delivered in partnership with the London Borough of Brent Education Authority, who has contributed a

significant proportion of the project costs. The school themselves have raised money towards the cost of the new classrooms.

Beneficiaries

All the projects adopt a broad and inclusive approach. Originally there was some discussion of the possibility of schemes focused on particular groups (e.g. minority ethnic youth) but these do not appear to have come to fruition. In practice, a more wide range, and inclusive, approach has been adopted.

> *'We are from a very diverse community so it is actually attracting (…) all ethnic origins, genders.'* (Education Co-ordinator)

In some NDC Partnerships there is an issue with regard to how far the projects have managed to reach the hardest to help. Most interventions are voluntary and not all children or parents benefit. In South Kilburn the main issue revolves around how to get children into schools which are not their own.

> *'…See the problem that we are finding with the school-based ones is that it is only for children going to that school and you know we haven't really got any set targets around specifically that sort of hard to reach group so you know it is open to everybody in the school…'* (Education Co-ordinator)

As a result it is planned that the out of school Fairbridge Centre will provide programmes for those who are not in a school setting or who are unable or unwilling to take up school-based projects. In order to attract those young people it is anticipated that a lot of outreach work will have to be done:

> *'So we work at engaging the hardest to reach young people. And we build them up to a stage, or the young people themselves, build up to a stage with our support where after six months, a year, or a year and a half, they leave Fairbridge and go into education for the first time, or employment, or voluntary work. (…) Our ethos is that young people have to come here voluntary and want to develop change in themselves, actually.'* (Fairbridge Manager, Main office)

Aims and Objectives

The main aim of the SKNDC projects is to raise educational achievement. However, the majority of participants see achievement in a broad sense, that goes beyond formal certification and includes personal development, choice and opportunities.

> *'…Raising achievement, helping young people with their homework, project work, course work - things like this. It is basically extra tuition helping them to achieve their SATs, their GCSEs. (…) Our milestones are set around GCSE attainment but also around offering choice to individuals rather than raising aspirations, and although I think ultimately (…) they want to get good grades in their GCSE's and A level's and SATS, we also see that because of the diverse population we have we want to, as I say, raise people's expectations and reduce the barriers and offer them a choice.'* (Education Co-ordinator)

The main focus is on secondary school aged pupils, as they are seen as the most vulnerable and those who have most been let down by the system.

'The problem we have is when they get to secondary school and they disperse all around the boroughs. This is why we want to concentrate a lot of our resources into the secondary schools, so this is why we have the two centres and we are opening the community one which will be addressing specifically secondary school aged children.'
(Education Co-ordinator)

Since a large number of children drop out of school or are excluded, non-school based provision was planned. This was to help re-engage and motivate young people as well as giving them a chance to learn and achieve.

'We wanted one which wasn't school-based because it is notoriously difficult to get children to go into other schools. So we wanted something which was not school - based (…) especially to attract the children that don't actually go into the schools.'
(Education Co-ordinator)

Delivery

Many projects are delivered through the schools, some jointly with other organisations such as the Brent Adult Centre for Education or Fairbridge. Others are working closely with organisations such as Connexions. Contracting with external agencies has helped develop linkages and networks that also will help mainstreaming at the end of the life of the NDC initiative. Fairbridge, in particular, has a wide network of links all around the country and is planning to remain in South Kilburn, even after NDC money has run out.

'We are absolutely going to stay there after three years. Because it fits in very much, strategically, with our plans for London…' (Fairbridge Manager, Main office)

'I've been building a resource library here, and there's all different things, if people have particular issues, that can be addressed locally and particular things that they want to develop, that they are already interested in, such as drama. But also Fairbridge has very particular links with The Spirit, which is a big tall ship off the coast of Scotland, which we can refer people on to. And a music project in Kent, and also another project in Scotland called the Venture Trust, which is an outdoor residential programme.'
(Fairbridge Trainee development worker)

Reaching the pupils

The relatively small size of teaching groups in the after school centres was one of the factors that arose most frequently in discussions with teachers and parents. This was seen as especially useful where pupils had additional language or other needs:

'We have children here from 36 ethnic groups and speak a range of 26 languages, so we would be looking at children who are underachieving and looking at ways of supporting so we would actually target those families individual families.' (Head teacher running Family Learning at a Primary School)

Pupils enjoy the after school work and seem to gain a sense of excitement from the fact that it is combined with food, drink and play:

'First of all we have drinks and sandwiches. (…) And then they bring up the trays and stuff like that and they get to wash, then we learn, well in my class we learnt time.'
(Primary Pupil at after school study centre)

'You learn stuff. (…) Like, maths and literacy, sometimes we do…sometimes we do science and you got this globe and its turns around this the same time as the world does.' (Primary Pupil at after school study centre)

They also find that often the next day they are ahead of their peers and their confidence is boosted by them being able to offer help and advice.

'I think the next day we do it at school and sometimes some don't get it and we get to help them. And like if we have to do…we use some work at the school and if what we would have to do tomorrow, we done it all, we know when we finish we can help other people.' (Primary Pupil at after school study centre)

At the Fairbridge centre accessing the young people is a little more difficult. Attendance is purely voluntary. The young people start with an 'Access' course that includes a residential stay away from their home. After that they have to decide how they want to use the available services and what they want to achieve. Those who do decide to stay on get a lot of individual attention and help. Achievement is really measure on a case by case basis, which in itself encourages the young people to stay with the programme.

'[After the Access course] they get their own personal development plan. That's when we start looking at what exactly that person wants to achieve out of coming to Fairbridge. Now, again, I'm going to be very realistic here, some young people want to come to Fairbridge to look people in the eye and say - good morning and good afternoon to you. Because some of these people, the Access course here, are classic, caps on, eyes down, they don't look at anybody. But when they've got their certificate the caps are back, they are looking in people's eyes, and you can see - wow, this is great! They are motivated again. So when they enter the follow on programme they put together their own development plan. That can be - "Yes, I want to get a job." Or - "I want to come to Fairbridge three times a week, get up on time, be here on time, start looking people in the eye".' (Fairbridge Manager, Main office)

'We are lucky in that we can work on a one-to-four ratio. It's obvious but the more individual personal attention that people get, the more they are going to be able to achieve because they get more encouragement.' (Fairbridge Trainee development worker)

Working with Parents

Both the primary after school provision and the families learning involves parents in their children's learning. It is hoped that these projects will help families learn together but also provide a more stable and secure environment, especially for very young children.

'Well we're looking at our new families, our refugee's, asylum seekers and the families in temporary accommodation, especially families who were put in very substandard accommodation. The children had no facilities, there was stress in the family, so they're coming into this environment spending time. We hope that the children will become familiar with these surroundings and their parents will be less stressed and be more encouraging to the children. Unless a child is looked after we're not going to succeed in the school and we do set very high standards for achievement in the school. Then we have children who in the EAL [English as an Additional Language] who need the support from the parents - who themselves have missed out on education and opportunities - who would not have the skills to support the children's learning. Who are not aware of their own strengths in supporting their children's learning.' (Head teacher running Family Learning at a Primary School)

The family learning project held at a local primary school focuses its sessions around themes which are accessible to all families. It has been very successful in making the link between learning and everyday issues, such as food.

> *'We actually then work on themes, and we worked on the theme of foods and did all our mathematics learning and this means the families support their children after school by doing and involving activities that would naturally occur in the home and activities where the parent would not need additional resources. So the theme of food has been running through our whole year's work and we've had some very good sessions on that. Looking very broadly at what children eat, when children eat…encouraging them to eat and then getting down to introducing the literacy, reading names and dates and measuring quantities. And from there we developed story boxes.'* (Head teacher running Family Learning at a Primary School)

The families who attend the after school sessions at the other local primary school all speak very highly of the school and of the project. They feel more involved in their children's learning and are happy to develop personal links with the teaching staff.

> *'…The teacher has explained that mainly the after school club will be emphasising on the things they have been teaching that day, so on Wednesdays we are watching the literacy, like today they were revising about verbs and on Thursday it's numeracy, maths.'* (Volunteer Parent)

Working through/with schools

Placing the after school education provision in schools has the advantage of parents and pupils feeling comfortable in well known surroundings, recruiting pupils to stay on after school and forging links between the schools and the families. There are other advantages too, such as teachers and learning assistants getting to know their pupils better:

> *'So you get the to know the children, that sort of learning, you're in the classroom, which is all about work, it is about getting down to learning but there's also the side of the child that you learn about their character as you go along. (…) Sometimes a child starts later on in the term, they're new, you can see how they progress within themselves, personality wise, confidence, you know, you have some mainly shy people who put their hand up and after a while, they're so eager, so its' a learning process (…) to learn of the pupil's who are in your class and they are also learning about you and what your expectations are of the child and their expectation of you as a teacher and a learning support assistant.'* (Learning support assistant at Primary after school club)

Although Fairbridge is an out of school provision, they do work closely with the local schools, offering support to those who are about to be excluded or those who are at risk of exclusion.

> *'The relationship is a two-way thing, they either, a teacher or an outreach worker will say - "we are going to exclude Susan Smith, could you please take her on? Interview her, see if she wants to come to Fairbridge." The other relationship we have with schools is they say, "this young person is on the verge of being excluded and they would benefit from perhaps a day a week at Fairbridge." So they come to school four days a week and if they voluntarily want to attend Fairbridge for a day a week, could you do your bit as well, to stop that person from being excluded? So we work with both excluded pupils and pupils who are about to be excluded.'* (Fairbridge Manager, Main office)

A key factor in the successful relationship with schools, therefore, is the project's ability to offer flexible provision that meshes with the schools' needs and concerns as well as those of the child.

Outcomes and Impact

After school study centres offer children a secure and familiar environment in which to do their homework. Help is at hand for those who need it and a range of activities are on offer for those who want to go beyond what is taught in their school.

> *'There are lots of reasons for starting it, mainly the fact that many of these children have no where to go in the evenings, they want to do homework but when they go home, home isn't a place where they can work from. Home very often has many people in it, a lot of noise, a lot of televisions. And there's a lot of noise here but in the next half hour they'll settle down and they'll start to work. Whereas at home very often they can't work because the television's too loud, there's no table and there's actually no one to help them.'* (Manager of the City Learning Centre)

One of the main outcomes of the family learning project is increased parental involvement in school and in the children's learning. In the Families Learning project the parents were asked by the delivering school what they wanted. In the course of the project, delivery was adapted to meet the needs of the parents, such as providing a crèche to boost attendance.

> *'…We've always been interested in working closely with families within our school, and within our budget it wasn't something we could extend to giving staff that opportunity to work with families. So we actually welcomed the funding for the project (…) We invited the families to come, all families to come and talk about it (…) see what they would like us to offer them and so we consulted with them on the days, the time, on how we would run it as a family project.'* (Head teacher running Family Learning at a Primary School)

Achievement in the broadest sense has been raised. The out of school study centre run by the City Learning Centre maintains a record of the baseline at which a child joins and how they progress:

> *'I would like to be allowed to look at achievement totally broadly but we do of course look at SATS. We'll be looking at GCSE results. We test them when they come in, we test them again a term later to see if they have achieved. We also make some judgements, with them, about confidence, sociability, general socialisation.'* (Manager of the City Learning Centre)

The centre's work is now built into the school's systems. For example, where there are problems with the progress being made by a child in the NDC area, the centre is seen as a good way of offering additional help.

> *'If the school on their review day finds an NDC child who has low achievement on the review day, then they write to us and then that child as part of the review is told to attend here on Wednesday or Thursday evenings for six weeks. And that is quite good - it's a good way of introducing children to the centre and it targets them with their parents. We would love to have more parental involvement but the geography's against us.'* (Manager of the City Learning Centre)

At other schools results have also been coming in. Attendance is rising at the after school science project as pupils realise that this extra tuition helps them with homework and exam results. The project also arranges for job placements, which in turn make the subject area more accessible and relevant.

> *'This year we are placing year elevens [15 and 16 year olds], fifteen, with extended work placements within a science related career.'* (Head of Out of School Science Club)

At the local Fairbridge Centre there are no tangible results yet, as the centre had only recently opened when we visited. Based on results elsewhere, however, confidence is high:

> *'Last year, of the three thousand young people that joined Fairbridge, one thousand five hundred of them moved on in the first year from Fairbridge to education, training or a job. And there are two other stats: one in two excluded pupils or persistent truants return to education after they are involved with Fairbridge. As you probably know there's a national average of one in seven. We've developed a one in two rate. And thirdly we have established a satellite team in Salford, Greater Manchester, which is very much like Kilburn actually, and there, in that area, juvenile crime has fallen by thirty per cent.'* (Fairbridge Manager, Main office)

What Works?

Being able to site centres in a range of locations has proven to be especially useful. Young people who have been excluded from school may face problems returning to a school-based centre; on the other hand, for many students and parents the attraction of a centre is that it is in a familiar location with people who they know:

> *'The one that has worked the best has been the primary after school study centre (…) because it attracts most pupils and is very well run. (…) I think that's because we don't have a problem with the primary school children because the schools are very good (…) and the children are actually really keen to learn and actually want to go to these lessons. And also the head teacher is very, very dedicated and you know she has contributed a lot to making this successful.'* (Education Co-ordinator)

Raising the local visibility of centres is vital. Clearly this is important in spreading word of the facilities and resources on offer; in addition, it raises expectations and gives a sense that things are changing - improving:

> *'We've been well received, in general, by the residents and local people, and other organisations, a lot of positive feedback, and a lot of positive feedback from the Brent-wise organisations. More or less, their response was - where have you been? We really want you to be in Brent, and working with our young people. And that's brilliant. What works well is having a shop front, and having a location on the street, and building links with local community.'* (Fairbridge Team leader)

Extensive advertising has also helped to draw attention to the various options on offer. In the case of the Science project it has led to key years being oversubscribed.

> *'By advertising, by sending letters home, all sorts of means, a slow process. The momentum begins to roll, and in year nine and eleven we are actually over-subscribed.'* (Head of Out of School Science Club)

Information also gets passed on through the local community by word of mouth. Fairbridge hope to involve the local community by employing volunteers, liaising with local organisations and groups and by making people aware of their mission:

> *'There's a huge role to play, in actually disseminating information about what we do, to the young people, because obviously we can't hope to reach everybody at exactly the right moment. But what we do is we tell other people in the local community, who hopefully, in turn, will pass that information on to the people who we want to come here. So we do rely on the community quite heavily.'* (Fairbridge Team leader)

New Deal for Communities: The National Evaluation
Research Report 30: Raising Educational Achievement in Disadvantaged Areas

13

Building links with local communities, therefore, is an essential part of the process. Listening to residents' concerns, by finding imaginative ways of consulting, and working closely with local schools, have proven to be an excellent basis for the developments in South Kilburn.

South Kilburn NDC seems to have struck a cord with both the residents and those who deliver the projects. Many of the teachers and NDC staff interviewed lived locally and knew the needs of the area well.

> *'I think they are to be praised for delivering what the community wants.'* (Head of Out of School Science Club)

Problems Encountered/Barriers to be overcome

Recruiting Staff

Recruitment has been a problem in many ways. The NDC has had difficulties filling posts and in some particular cases filling projects. The Families Learning project had to in part be subcontracted to a local Primary school (which has done an excellent job) whilst more permanent staff was found to run the project. This does not ensure continuity for the families involved and makes it difficult to evaluate results for the project theme of family learning.

Like many NDC projects there is a commitment to work closely with local residents and, where possible, to draw employees from the local community. At present, however, this is proving to be more difficult than was anticipated:

> *'We want to, where possible, ensure we employ local people in Kilburn, but I must say, we did all the short listing for the jobs yesterday and there's nobody applied from Kilburn for any of the jobs. And that's a little bit disappointing.'* (Fairbridge Manager, Main office)

Clearly this is an area where more targeted work needs to take place.

Recruiting Pupils

Recruiting clients for various projects has also proved problematic. Some projects are not attracting the numbers they had hoped for. On the other hand, projects can find themselves turning away potential clients because of restrictions related to the funding stream. The Fairbridge programme is only open to NDC residents and it has turned away a number of local young people who simply live in the wrong street (or even on the wrong *side* of the street). This effectively means that clusters of friends might not be able to take part together and this in turn will reduce participation. Perhaps even more significantly, such issues reflect badly on the NDC initiative more generally. The levels of social disadvantage locally do not end with the tightly drawn barriers of the NDC areas: to exclude people in this way can cause ill-feeling and resentment. The spectre of an NDC 'postcode' dispute benefits no one.

> *'There's young people who live in the area who we can accept. We can accept young people who live at a set number of postcodes, that's a very short list (…) There also becomes a bit of an issue with friendships. A classic example yesterday, I went to talk to somebody at the careers place, community careers, and he came in with his best mate who he hangs around with all the time. And I was telling them about Fairbridge, and only one of them is on my cards. That may well stop one of them, who isn't in the postcode, from coming.'* (Fairbridge Project Manager)

In addition, there is a sense that if the centres could work with young people from a wider area, this might benefit the NDC directly because the young people on NDC streets do not necessarily live in the area itself:

> *'There are also young people who cause trouble on the estate, and we have had youth workers, managers of youth clubs, shop keepers, wardens, everybody telling us - that young person, or those four don't live here, but they cause trouble here. They just come here and hang out here and cause trouble here, they rob and just spend time on the street. And that, in itself is raising the fear of crime in the area.'* (Fairbridge Project Manager)

The NDC has agreed that when Fairbridge gets extra funding they can open doors to non-NDC residents, however the immediate effect on outreach is that they have to turn people away.

The City Learning centre is facing a similar dilemma, although they have the option of filling the project with non-resident children once the SKNDC children have taken their places:

> *'The queue outside are those that are waiting to see if we fill up with South Kilburn children by four o' clock. If we're not full then the others can come in and that's what the queue is. We allow 30 in, we can't have more. If we're going to do what we want to do then we can't have more.'* (Manager of the City Learning Centre)

Baseline Data

The relatively short life span of the initiatives to date makes it unrealistic to expect dramatic changes in formal assessment data at this time. However, there is a problem about the original baseline data that will also reflect in such calculations. The original NDC data was collected across the nearby schools giving an inaccurate picture of achievement. In part this was due to the fact that there is no local secondary school and that SKNDC children disperse to 26 secondary schools across Brent and Westminster LEA.

> *'Well one of the problems that we have actually had is the PLASC data is school based and the actual schools that they used weren't really reflective of the South Kilburn population. (…) Well, one of the schools, we only had 15 pupils at. And there were three schools in the baseline so their results didn't truly reflect what our children were achieving. Now we've just changed the methodology, whereas we're using ten schools which are weighted and weighted as to how many pupils attend each school so our baseline has changed now.'* (Education Co-ordinator)

This highlights a genuine problem where an area-based initiative does not easily match onto the existing educational provision. Where NDC pupils are dispersed across numerous schools the analysis of school-based data can become problematic.

Administration

There are a number of problems associated with various administrative issues. One of the most important concerns a disruption to continuity caused by the need to move premises. The locations of several projects are being changed due to administrative problems. Both the City Learning Centre and the Fairbridge Centre are in temporary accommodation at the moment. Whilst this will mean that they are located more centrally, a move brings other problems with it. In the case of Fairbridge it could mean discouraging those who have begun to know the centre at its present location, in the case of the City learning Centre it mean that there will be no disabled access and certain children will not be able to take part as before.

> *'The fact that the new site that we are hoping to run has no disabled access is appalling because it means that are the facilities within 100 yards of where [a resident] lives that*

he will not be able to attend and he will still have to be bussed up.[4] (Manager of the City Learning Centre)

> *'The temporary premises has been... it's been very good to set up, and really exciting, it's fantastic premises, but it has hindered outreach to a certain extent, in that we can't come trumpeting in - this is where we are! We'll see what the effects are when we move, and whether it proves a hurdle. Because now, knowing where we are and knowing what we do, we may find that they come here once, find it shut, and that's enough of a hurdle to stop them accessing again for a while.'* (Fairbridge Project Manager)

A lack of certainty and continuity of provider has particularly affected one project. Family Learning was originally split between several providers and then subcontracted to a local school. The school had originally bid to do something similar but had been turned down. The irony is that the school has had no problems in filling its places and the other branches of family learning have.

> *'I'm quite concerned about the family learning ones to be honest. I think that we should just have one deliverer splitting it into two deliverers hasn't really worked…'* (Education Co-ordinator)

Episodes like this can cause uncertainty and resentment where the changes appear to show a lack of direction. All partners need to be kept in the picture and forward planning should emphasize the importance of continuity, especially where existing schemes are showing tangible results:

> *'I actually put in a bid to run a learning project for families, especially for EAL families (…) and then in November I was approached to run this project and I was given a sum of money to do it. And then I was asked to continue during the summer term and that was the end of it and as far as I knew. Well I thought I might be asked to rerun it again because it was very successful.* '(Head teacher running Family Learning at a Primary School)

Relationship between NDC, council/LEA and schools

Co-ordination between different local service providers is not always easy to achieve. This issues can sometimes appear trivial but it is certain that good cooperation between NDCs and parts of the local council can be a significant factor in supporting success:

> *'If the housing department could, where I possible, take school terms into account when moving children in and out of the area they would make a considerable difference to the way that the children socialised and got into schools and the children's achievements. Moving the child six weeks before their SATS is going to do considerable damage to their achievements.'* (Manager of the City Learning Centre)

Targeting interventions

We noted earlier in this report that the South Kilburn NDC is one of the most ethnically diverse of all the Partnerships in the initiative. Diversity can be a source of tremendous strength and vitality but it can also present challenges. In relation to educational achievement this Partnership faces a particular challenge because it caters to a high proportion of white working class and African Caribbean young people - two groups who currently experience some of the most pronounced inequalities of achievement in compulsory education. This issue was often

---

[4] It is understood that disabled access to the premises was agreed after the research for this report had been completed.

raised by people when we discussed the challenges facing the area but it is unclear whether any of the main initiatives have particularly targeted either of these groups.

When certain groups are known to be at risk of educational failure it makes sense to consider ways in which they might face particular, distinctive hurdles. In the past, at both a national and a local level, so-called 'colour-blind' approaches (which do not distinguish between different groups' needs and expectations) have not been the most effective.[5] The Partnership should urgently consider ways in which certain strategies might be developed to meet the particular needs of distinct client groups. Such a process is by no means simple nor straightforward but may have significant benefits in terms of raising achievement in the future.

Conclusions

Raising levels of educational achievement in areas of pronounced social disadvantage is one of the most challenging aspects of the NDC initiative. South Kilburn (Brent) NDC is beginning to establish a range of approaches that focus on raising achievement across the spectrum of primary and secondary school pupils. In view of the relatively short time that most of the projects have been active, it is not possible to offer simple summary statistics that capture a significant impact on educational outcomes at this point. Nevertheless, there is growing confidence in the area that the changes are having real and positive effects.

This report has highlighted some of the ways that progress is being made, but we have also identified a number of issues that have yet to be resolved and could usefully be given greater attention in the future.

The projects have been especially **successful** in certain respects:

- pupils feel a sense of excitement at learning in non-traditional settings

- parents appreciate the small teaching groups and more individualised attention

- parents also gain an awareness of the school curriculum by working on related projects/topics with their children

Key factors associated with successful initiatives are:

- setting provision in a range of locations: some young people (e.g. those who have been permanently excluded) are reluctant to engage with projects that are located in schools. On the other hand, pupils and parents sometimes feel more secure approaching centres that are in their usual school. The ability to locate projects in a range of centres helps work through such problems

- raising the visibility of projects helps to establish a positive sense of change in local communities

- building on local links and consulting local residents is an excellent way of ensuring that work matches people's needs and is seen positively, rather than as an intrusion by outsiders

---

[5] See, for example, the earlier report on the educational inclusion of Black and Minority Ethnic pupils in NDC initiatives (Rausch and Gillborn 2003).

Some **barriers and problems** remain:

- **The lack of a local secondary school** means that students and parents are scattered among a high number of different schools - causing friction; lessening community cohesion; and meaning that any benefits from school-based approaches (such as the national *Aiming High* strategy) will be diluted
- **Recruiting staff:** there have been problems recruiting sufficient numbers of staff, especially from the local community
- **Recruiting pupils**: some projects are struggling to fill their places but having to turn away young people who happen not to live in the designated NDC area. This can cause resentment and discourage NDC residents whose non-NDC friends are excluded
- **Data collection and analysis** is an important means of assessing what works and identifying lessons for the future (both positive and negative). Where the NDC pupils are dispersed across several different schools, however, the existing school-based systems may not offer a sound basis for analysis
- **Administrative problems** can have serious effects, especially where they affect the continuity of provision. This is evidenced in South Kilburn in relation to the location of certain projects and the identity of service providers
- **Co-ordination** between service providers (especially parts of the local council) is an important factor
- **Targeted strategies** might be an effective way of meeting the particular needs of certain groups in the future, e.g. white working class and African-Caribbean young people

References

Campbell, C., Gillborn, D. and Lall, M (2004) *Parental Involvement in Education - Research Report 31.* Sheffield, CRESR.

Department for Education and Skills (2003) *Statistics of Education: Pupil Progress by Pupil Characteristics: 2002.* London, DfES.

Department for Education and Skills (2004) *National Curriculum Assessment and GCSE/GNVQ Attainment by Pupil Characteristics, in England, 2002 (final) and 2003 (provisional).* London, DfES.

Rausch, C. and Gillborn, D. (2003) *Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Inclusion - Research Report 12.* New Deal for Communities: National Evaluation. Sheffield, CRESR.