WHAT'S THE ALTERNATIVE?

EFFECTIVE SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE DISENGAGING FROM MAINSTREAM EDUCATION

Prince's Trust

A research project commissioned by The Prince's Trust

Pat Thomson and Jodie Pennacchia

Supported by
HSBC

The University of Nottingham

UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

THERE'S POTENTIAL
BEHIID EVERY STATISTIC

Authors:

Pat Thomson PSM PhD is Professor of Education
in the School of Education, The University of Nottingham.

Jodie Pennacccchia is a doctoral researcher in the
Schools of Sociology and Education, The University
of Nottingham.

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FOREWORD

Across the UK, too many young people struggle in mainstream schools.

They often face challenges – both in education and at home – which make it difficult to achieve the qualifications and build the skills they need to make a good transition into employment or further training.

We know that in England alone, in 2012-13, there were 9,900 young people in some form of alternative education when the time came to sit their GCSEs. Only 1.7 per cent of them achieved five A*-C GCSEs (including English and Maths). This is a huge waste of potential, both for the individual young people, who can't fulfil their ambitions and aspirations, and for our economy which fails to benefit from their talents and ideas.

These young people, and their parents and teachers, rely on alternative provision for a second chance at education. As the UK's leading youth charity, The Prince's Trust works with over 10,000 disaffected learners each year, supporting them to rebuild their confidence, re-engage with learning and create a good foundation for the future.

With funding from HSBC, a longstanding supporter of The Trust, we commissioned this research in order to understand better how we can ensure high quality in the work we do with young people who are struggling at school. As well as guiding the development of our own programmes, we hope that the findings and recommendations in this report have a wider impact for the benefit of disadvantaged young people.

The case studies which accompany this report are truly inspiring and show how much all young people can achieve with the right support. We know there are many people out there who are dedicated to making that vital difference. We hope this compelling new research from Nottingham University will help them learn from, sustain and build upon the great work which is happening. The research also makes a strong case to policymakers, demonstrating the need for more consistent support and the effective systems required to ensure quality for everyone. Young people deserve no less.

Martina Milburn, CBE
Chief Executive
The Prince's Trust

HSBC

I feel extremely proud that HSBC has been helping young people across the UK – for many years – to develop the skills and knowledge they need to achieve their full potential. However, I am acutely aware that more needs to be done in this area.

Since 2012 we have been working in partnership with The Prince's Trust on the Fairbridge programme, focusing our support on young people aged 13 to 17 who have either been excluded from school, or are at risk of exclusion. We are investing £5 million pounds in resources and support over five years and so far, we have helped over 2,200 disadvantaged young people to gain new skills and rebuild confidence; 75 per cent of them have now re-engaged with education or training, or moved into employment.

I am particularly proud that many of my colleagues at HSBC have given their personal time and energy to helping these young people.

To be really effective we first need to understand the specific challenges that our young people face. Therefore, I am delighted that we are now sponsoring a brand new piece of research which will help us really get to grips with the issue of exclusion.

I hope that the findings and recommendations of this report will contribute to helping even more young people across the UK.

Antonio Simoes
CEO
HSBC UK

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Alternative education offers opportunities for young people to secure the kinds of qualifications, learning and life skills that will make a difference to them in the present and in the future. Young people and their families, schools and alternative providers are keen to ensure that the alternative education on offer is of the highest quality. The quality question is now more pressing than ever, as the trend for schools and local authorities to commission alternative education provision gathers momentum.

This research project, commissioned by The Prince's Trust with funding from HSBC, investigated quality in alternative education through a comprehensive international literature review, 17 case studies across the United Kingdom, and consultations with key stakeholders.

The research found that there was universal support for Ofsted inspection of all modes of alternative provision and general support for the development of a kitemark quality scheme. A kitemark was seen as a potential mechanism to avoid on-going and inefficient duplication of inspections of alternative education by local authorities and schools.

The data revealed three major modes of provision. Mode A, regular schooling, offers a full educational entitlement. Mode B offers full time enrolment and, generally, a modified curriculum. Mode C offers complementary programmes to young people who are enrolled in Mode A or B schooling. At present all alternative providers, regardless of mode, are required to register as schools; this is inappropriate for Mode C which offers short-term programmes in conjunction with a Mode A or B provision. Quality in Mode B and C is best judged as 'progress made' rather than by the criteria against which Mode A schools are judged.

Alternative education providers in Modes B and C shared some core values, including: safety and care; relationality and the social; choice and autonomy, a wholistic view; advocacy and justice; partnership and sharing. Quality alternative providers build these values into their staff selection, training and performance management systems. A kite mark system should require alternative education providers to demonstrate how these values underpin their policies and practices. Our study confirmed existing research showing that key practices in alternative education focus on: staff-student relationships and interactions; relevant and engaging curriculum and pedagogy; agency and independence; attention to health and welfare; human size; and skilful staff. These were clearly demonstrated in our case studies. In addition we found that high quality alternative education provision relied on common practices:

→Positive regard for the young person

→Relationships were a learning goal in their own right

→Flexibility in programming

→Attention to space and place

→Transitions were carefully thought through

→Safety and security were paramount

→Progress was regularly monitored

→Community and partnership with schools and other agencies was critical

→Meeting and going beyond expectations was common

→Quality staff were the key

→Monitoring and evaluation were regular and used

→Programmes went beyond the remedial towards the democratic

There were also emphases common to each mode of alternative education. High quality Mode B provision took a wholistic approach to the young person, providing additional support where necessary. They offered access to meaningful qualifications, regularly assessed progress and made time for effective transitions either back to school, or to further education and training. Mode C providers ensured quality when the offer was complementary to regular school rather than a duplication, established effective two-way communication with schools and ensured that regular feedback was given to the school. These practices will form a useful base from which to develop a quality kitemark scheme.

The study did find six significant barriers to achieving quality on a systemic scale.

(1) While individual alternative education providers often had good information about what happened to young people with whom they worked, there was little against which they could benchmark their own data. There is very inadequate information about student outcomes in alternative education across the four nations and large-scale longitudinal data is needed.

(2) There is considerable variation in the ways in which staff in alternative education are selected, their qualifications, training, how they are supported and supervised, and their levels of remuneration. Staff would value opportunities to share practice and to engage in joint training.

(3) There is an urgent need to ensure that girls, rural and isolated young people and young people of Caribbean and Traveller/Gypsy Roma heritage are receiving their educational entitlement. Despite their presence in exclusion and truancy figures, these young people are largely missing from alternative provision outside of London. We still know too little about how referral processes, the alternative curriculum offer and community practices might be implicated in these inequitable access patterns.

(4) While quality alternative education providers worked hard on communication, there are variable information and communication systems across the sector and sometimes poor information flow between schools and alternative providers. There is room for the development of online systems to facilitate information sharing.

(5) There is also a general lack of transparency about funding for alternative provision with the potential for a detrimental impact on quality and equity across the country. This is particularly of concern in Mode B provision, where it seems that some voluntary sector providers have to rely more heavily on fund raising than is desirable.

(6) The curriculum provision in alternative education can sometimes lack challenge, be insufficiently focused on learning and provide marginal qualifications. There is a lack of clarity about what constitutes a minimum curriculum entitlement, particularly in Mode B, given the needs of young people in alternative programmes.

These six barriers are not amenable to change effected through a quality kite mark system, and require more co-ordinated activity. Central government authorities could work with schools and alternative education providers to address them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation One:

That the government provide support to the alternative education sector to develop a kite-mark quality system. Local Authorities (LAs) and schools should use the kite-mark as an assurance of quality rather than duplicating quality assurance procedures.

Recommendation Two:

Registration by Ofsted as schools is inappropriate for Mode C provision which by its nature is not designed to offer a full curriculum. Ofsted should clarify that Mode C do not need to register.

Recommendation Three:

Governments should support the development of a new Mode C registration system. This should be linked to the development of the new quality kite mark scheme.

Recommendation Four:

Differences between Mode B and Mode C should be reflected in the quality kite mark criteria:

(1) Mode B should be judged on a 'progress-made' basis rather than be compared to regular schools.

(2) Because of the reliance of Mode C on the enrolling school (Mode A or B), Mode C programmes should be judged on 'progress made' but also against different criteria which recognise Mode C's complementary purposes. A Mode C quality framework should focus on the quality of relationships and activities and the potential to start the young person off on a different pathway.

Recommendation Five:

Alternative education providers should set an expectation that their provision will demonstrate core values and quality practices, and use recruitment, professional development and performance processes to ensure that they are understood and practised by staff.

Recommendation Six:

Commissioners and schools should look for evidence of core values and practices when selecting provision for young people.

Recommendation Seven:

Securing the quality kite mark should require evidence that core shared values and practices are integral to all aspects of the provision.

Recommendation Eight:

There is a need for a level of consistent and centrally-held data on educational outcomes in alternative education. Providers and commissioners should be involved in setting consistent metrics which are meaningful and feasible to collect; however there is also a role for central government agencies in leading and implementing this process.

Recommendation Nine:

There is a need for a level of consistent and centrally-held data on staff in alternative education. Providers and commissioners should be involved in setting consistent metrics which are meaningful and feasible to collect; however there is also a role for central government agencies in leading and implementing this process.

Recommendation Ten:

Central government should support the sector to build national staff networks so that information about practice and training opportunities can be shared.

Recommendation Eleven:

Commissioners and schools should routinely examine their patterns of exclusion, attendance and referral to alternative education. They should work cooperatively with local community organisations to develop viable and inclusive alternative programmes.

Recommendation Twelve:

Commissioners, schools and alternative education providers need to work together to share information. Central government agencies should fund a national innovations project to develop a platform for information sharing.

Recommendation Thirteen:

Central government agencies should (a) establish benchmark costings for quality Mode B alternative education and make these publicly available and (b) work with commissioners and schools to develop protocols for the ways in which statutory and equity funds are passed on to alternative providers.

Recommendation Fourteen:

Commissioners and schools should use long term contract arrangements with alternative education providers wherever possible.

Recommendation Fifteen:

Alternative education providers need to focus strongly on the learning needs of young people and ensure that staff are adequately trained to cater for them. They need to ensure that young people have high challenge and appropriate choice in their learning. The full curriculum offer needs to be made explicit in all prospectus materials.

Recommendation Sixteen:

Commissioners and schools should consider how to involve alternative education providers in their training programmes. Central government should support a partnership between teacher training agencies and alternative education providers to provide a national skills development programme for the alternative education sector.

INTRODUCTION

Across the United Kingdom a minority of young people struggle with their secondary schooling. While the vast majority of young people appear to do well in this phase of education, some do not. They and their schools do not get along. Some young people may simply not come to school at all, or come infrequently. Others may act in ways that their school does not accept, and many may be 'absent presents' who withdraw from engagement with the programmes on offer.

It is very important that these young people are not denied the opportunity of a good education, and the chance to be and become a person who enjoys and contributes to society through citizenship, community, family life, and employment. Schools have been helped to find new pathways and new opportunities for many young people who do not initially do well, through alternative education.

Young people who are asked about their experiences in alternative education always talk about the importance of finding new adults with whom they can talk and form meaningful relationships, and the value they put on the care and guidance they have received. They are often able to pinpoint key moments, experiences and interactions which were significant in supporting them to change what may have seemed like an inevitable unhappy future. The alternative education sector is characterised by staff and organisations with strong commitments to making a difference for young people who might otherwise miss out on the education to which they are entitled. Their passion and energies are directed to attending to the interests, needs and hopes of young people who might otherwise fare badly in the wider world.

Alternative education is thus important work. It is an investment in particular young people who very often simply need a different approach, a second chance, an opportunity to turn over a new leaf. This takes not only dedication and energy, but also skill and knowledge. The voluntary sector makes a significant contribution to the provision of alternative education, and through their organisations and networks, the wider public also shows their support.

This research is concerned with young people aged between 12-16 and with the alternative education that they receive. We were particularly focused on 'good' alternative education. Across the United Kingdom there has been an ongoing interest in the question of quality alternative education. There have already been a number of key studies of alternative education in the UK (Centre for Social Justice, 2011; Estyn, 2007; House of Commons Education Committee, 2011; Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2012, 2013; Ofsted, 2011a; Ogg & Kail, 2010; PINS Scotland, 2012; Reed, 2005; C. Taylor, 2012; Welsh Assembly Government, 2011) and all of these have highlighted the need for schools, families and young people to be confident that the alternative education on offer is valuable and of the highest possible standard. The concern with quality is now even more pressing with reviews of alternative provision in Wales and Northern Ireland, and a trial of school based commissioning of alternative provision just completed in England (Institute of Education (University of London) and the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), 2014).

We thus did not set out to investigate the causes of young people's difficulties in regular schools. We focused instead on what alternative education offers that is different to the usual ways of 'doing school'. We wanted to know how alternative education provided additional opportunities for young people to take up the education to which they have a right. We wanted to examine the question of quality and how it might be understood. We thus worked with alternative education providers and programmes who were able to show us what good practice looked like.

Our research (explained in detail in the next section) is reported in three separate ways:

(1) a comprehensive review of the international literatures

(2) seventeen individual case studies, and

(3) this report which presents the analysis across the cases.

All of these are available on The Prince's Trust website princes-trust.org.uk/learninghub

We are very grateful for the active support of all of the young people, staff and organisations who gave us their time and allowed us into their lives. We were gratified by the support for the research; all of our participants shared the concern that there needs to be more and better information about quality in alternative education. We were privileged to see highly skilled staff working with young people and to get an insight into the everyday practices that support them to transform their life possibilities. We thank them for their generosity and hope that we have reflected what we were shown and told in ways that they find positive and useful.

SECTION ONE:
The Research

The research project *"What's the alternative? Effective support for young people disengaging from the mainstream"* examines alternative education provision for 12- 16 year olds across the UK.

It has focused on short and longer term part-time provision as well as short and longer term full-time provision. The research was commissioned by The Prince's Trust, with funding from HSBC.

Much of the UK research that has already been conducted on alternative education has either been commissioned by government, has taken a school system perspective or has focused on young people's experiences.

There is as yet little systematic criteria to ascertain whether the alternative education provision that is available is effective and/or worthwhile – the lack of information creates considerable dilemmas for schools, students and their families. This study therefore deliberately focused on the experiences of 'good' alternative education providers, staff and students, seeking to elaborate on what they did that accorded them their positive reputations. We also consulted school staff and system personnel about their expectations of alternative provision. Unfortunately the project time-frame did not allow us to systematically seek the views of families and carers.

Scope of the research

We have taken the definition of alternative education from the official guidance to English schools which states that it is intended

> *"… for pupils who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, would not otherwise receive suitable education; education arranged by schools for pupils on a fixed period exclusion; and pupils being directed by schools to off-site provision to improve their behaviour."* (Department for Education, 2013)

We have looked at alternative education provisions in all four UK nations. The four school systems are not the same and neither are the ways in which alternative education is understood and organised. This has provided us with an analytic and reporting challenge. Because of the sheer size of the English system, we have spent, and do spend in this report, more time on the English cases. Nevertheless, the comparison between the four nations is often interesting (see Appendix 1.)

Our research has not covered young people in hospitals, in young offenders institutions or who are home-schooled. Our primary focus has been on the range of alternatives that are on offer either as short-term breaks from school, part-time complements to the regular school, or full-time schooling alternatives; this is a typology we develop later in the report (see section three).

Exclusion and attendance data tell us something about those who might be referred to alternative education programmes.

(1) Exclusion

Schools who have on roll young people who are excluded for fixed terms are often keen to find options that will keep them in education. English schools are legally obliged to find alternatives if young people are to be excluded for more than five days and local authorities in England

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have statutory responsibility for those who are permanently excluded[1]. In 2012-2013[2], English headteachers placed 3.52% of their pupils on fixed term exclusion, and permanently excluded 0.06%. Translating this into actual numbers shows the true scale of the issue – 3,600 boys and 1,030 girls were legally moved out of a school either to another mainstream school or to some kind of alternative. A further 68, 280 girls and 199, 240 boys were excluded for a short time, nearly half for only one day. At least some of the remainder may also have been considered eligible for alternative provision. Exclusions are generally highest among 13-14 year olds and for disruptive behaviour; there is however a worrying trend of increasing primary school exclusions.

The ratio of fixed and permanent exclusions to the total school population are roughly similar in Scotland with both Wales and Northern Ireland showing very low numbers of pupils permanently excluded – 99 in Wales and 19 in Northern Ireland. However, the number of students in alternative provision significantly exceeds the number who are permanently excluded. This can be clearly seen in Wales, which does report on the numbers of pupils in alternative provision, where 2,367 pupils were in some form of alternative education, 1,225 of whom were in provision outside a regular school.

There is some cause for modest celebration in relation to the capacities of school systems to cater for all of the young people for whom they have responsibility. Both England and Scotland can demonstrate substantial reductions in fixed and permanent exclusions among the 12-16 year old age group over the last decade. But there are concerning common patterns across the four nations in relation to exclusion. Pupils who come from homes with 'higher deprivation' and who have 'additional support needs' are disproportionately excluded (the Scottish terminology, the English terminology is Free School Meals and Special Educational Needs). The English data that shows disproportionate numbers of young people of Black Caribbean and Anglo-Caribbean heritage and Traveller/Gypsy Roma are among those who are excluded.

(2) Attendance
England, Scotland and Wales all report that habitual truancy is reducing[3]. The number of persistent absentees fell in 2012/2013 in England from 7.4% overall in 2008/2009 to 4.6% in 2012/2013. The largest falls have been in secondary schools. Each country reports on attendance differently, with Northern Ireland benchmarking its authorised and unauthorised absences against the other three – N.I Scot. 2.6%, Eng. 1.2%, Scot 2.5%, Wales 1.3%.

In all of the four nations girls are absent at about the same rate as boys. This differs from exclusions data where boys are the clear majority. The English and Scottish attendance data show similar patterns of exclusion in relation to Free School Meals, Special Educational Needs and Traveller/Gypsy Roma pupils. In England pupils in designated special schools missed the most days.

We expected to find young people with these kinds of school experiences attending alternative education provisions.

The research questions
The project aimed to produce answers to the following questions:

What is a quality framework for alternative provision?

(a) What is effective practice in alternative provision?

→How are young people who are temporarily excluded supported to improve behaviour, attendance and attainment?

→How are young people who are permanently excluded supported to either reengage with education or training or progress to work?

(b) How can effective practice be applied more consistently across the sector?

→How is achievement monitored consistently?

→How might effective commissioning be implemented?

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[3] Attendance data for England https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-pupil-absence; Wales http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/absenteeism-secondary-schools/?lang=en; Scotland http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/TrendSchoolAttendance; Northern Ireland http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/facts-and-figures-new/education-statistics/32_statistics_and_research_-_statistics_on_education-pupil_attendance.htm

(c) How could the voluntary sector add further to the effectiveness of alternative provision? How can its contribution be protected and strengthened?

(d) What vocational offer should be included in alternative provision?

(e) How could alternative providers work more effectively with schools?

How might this be implemented?
What quality frameworks already operate in the sector, and which of their processes seem potentially fit for purpose?

The research design
The project ran from November 2013 to August 2014.

Stage One: December to January 2013: Production of an international literature review to be used to guide the research and for consultation with key stakeholders.

Stage Two: February to June 2013: Snapshot case study visits to seventeen alternative education sites. Table 1 shows the geographical spread. This was a purposive sample. There was no attempt to achieve a representative sample, but to investigate 'good practice' across a range of sites across the four nations. A 'snapshot' case study model was chosen. This generated a basic comparative set of information around key issues such as staffing, pedagogical principles, curriculum and communication with schools (for details, see the materials that accompany the case studies).

Table 1: Geographical spread of case studies

Country	Number of Case Studies	Regions/Local Authorities
England	11	**Liverpool** **Leeds** **Nottingham** **Coventry and Redditch** **London (x4)** **Bath** **Southampton** **One online provision based in Cheltenham, accessed across the country**
Northern Ireland	2	**Belfast** **South Eastern Education and Library Board Area**
Scotland	3	**Paisley** **North Lanarkshire (x2)**
Wales	1	**Cardiff**

Visits varied in length. The shortest was half a day (three hours) and the longest was three days. The length of visit depended on how much time the organisation was able to accommodate. In some cases, organisations prepared a schedule of discussions and observation for the researcher, and created a pack of documentary materials to take away. In other cases, the research was not scheduled in advance, and was an iterative process where staff and the researcher worked to understand what would be the most useful aspects of a provision to see and discuss, given the research questions. In these cases, the research tended to require a longer visit. The researcher would observe more of the provision, often whilst waiting for staff to become free for a conversation.

Information was captured using guided and informal conversations (both recorded and unrecorded), observation (which was captured in field notes during the visit and afterwards), documentary material, and photographs (for details, see the materials that accompany case studies.)

Stage Three: June-July 2013. Consultations
Alongside the 17 case studies, the research team have engaged with a number of other stakeholders, both through group consultation processes and through individual conversations.

→ We have had an external reference group consisting of seven members. We have met on two occasions to seek feedback on the (a) literature review and (b) preliminary findings. Appendix 2 lists the external reference group, where members have consented to be named in this report.

→ We held a consultation event which was attended by 14 stakeholders from mainstream schools, alternative provisions, local authorities, charities and think tanks. Those who were unable to make this event were contacted individually. Appendix 2 includes a list of those we consulted who have consented to be named in this report.

→ We discussed questions of quality in alternative provision with five Prince's Trust Young Ambassadors.

Analysis
The data was analysed using conventional social science methods (Silverman, 1997). Data was coded and thematised and a common case framework was developed in conversation with this process. Seventeen individual case studies, each between 6-10,000 words, were produced and these were then compared and contrasted in order to develop the cross-case analysis (Bassey, 1999; Yin, 1994).

Ethical concerns
All providers have given formal consent to be named. Individual case studies were returned to them for correction and comment. Snapshot case studies have been constructed using an appreciative protocol. All interviewees are anonymised and any concerns they individually reported have been kept confidential. Issues and concerns are discussed via cross-case analysis in accord with the principle of doing no harm. Young people were given Itunes vouchers in appreciation of their time and, if relevant, their travel and expenses were paid for.

SECTION TWO:
Quality Assurance

At a time when there will be more commissioning of alternative education services, and when there will be more school involvement in commissioning particularly in England, it is more important than ever that schools, families and young people are assured that the alternative education programme on offer to them is worthwhile.

We sought views on how this might take place.

We found that:

→ There was unanimous agreement among our case studies and those we consulted that there needed to be reliable quality assurance for the sector. Alternative providers operating a range of different models were all keen on having Ofsted inspection, as they saw this as the 'gold standard' for the system. Being inspected would be a legitimation that their provision was good.

→ There were mixed views about the value of a kite-mark scheme as was initially suggested by CfBT (Gutherson, Davies, & Daskiewicz, 2011). Providers were concerned about cost, about the amount of paperwork that might be involved, about its perceived value by schools and about how often they might have to apply. Schools were concerned about how accurate and how up to date a kite mark might be. On balance, commissioners were more positive about a kite-mark than providers. However, providers did see the utility of a kite-mark system to schools.

→ There were varying views about whether a 'mixed system' of both Ofsted inspection and a kite-mark system would be desirable. Some alternative education programmes have been subject to multiple inspections, according to varying frameworks and by varying institutions.

Although there is widespread concern that providers are not being sufficiently scrutinised, our case studies highlighted incidents where programmes have had multiple inspections in an academic year. At present, providers believe that it is possible that an alternative provision could be inspected by: Ofsted; LA quality team (or more than one, if it receives young people from more than one LA); and individual schools where these commission directly. These quality and inspection processes are all different. Providers are concerned that this might require several different kinds of paper work to be completed, and potentially require time away from delivery for a manager and other members of staff to speak with various inspection teams.

Clearly this might equate to a considerable administrative burden and in a worst-case scenario it could – perversely - have a negative impact on quality. However, there was recognition that such dual systems already exist – e.g. Investors in People – and that these serve complementary purposes. A kite-mark system could function as an alternative to all but Ofsted inspections.

→ The vast majority of those consulted and all of our case studies were certain that there should not be a one-size fits all quality assurance system. There were significant differences between types of alternative provision which would mean different types of quality assurance frameworks.

While being concerned about potential problems, there was agreement that the sector should be involved in

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[4] In education, there are generally three approaches to quality –
(1) a standards approach: this works with a set of benchmarks developed by the purchaser/commissioner, to be applied universally
(2) a fit for purpose framework: this uses criteria for quality, defined by the provider and user groups in relation to the purpose of the programme
(3) a value for money approach: Audit Commissions typically measure inputs against outputs of comparable services.

developing any 'fit-for-purpose' quality measure[4] rather than it being imposed without adequate consultation and participation.

Recommendation One:

That the government provide support to the alternative education sector to develop a kite-mark quality system.

LAs and schools should use the kite-mark as an assurance of quality rather than duplicating quality assurance procedures.

The next section of this report focuses on quality practices and what might be covered in a quality kite-mark programme. It begins by examining the question of different types of provision and the implications for quality assurance.

SECTION THREE:
Alternative Education Types and Quality

There is a vast range of alternative provision. In order to facilitate our research we have developed a typology of alternative provision[5]. This is more a heuristic than an exact model. It does however provide a way to think about the different responsibilities that alternative providers have. These are not all the same. In developing our typology, we have particularly focused on where the statutory responsibility lies for ensuring that the young person receives their educational entitlement of a full and balanced curriculum.

This typology differs from others where more emphasis has been placed on the type of programme, rather than the statutory obligations and rights of the child.

We have grouped educational provisions into three broad modes of education. These modes encapsulate so-called 'mainstream' education and alternative education. The three broad modes are referred to as Mode A, Mode B and Mode C. Within each of these modes there are two sub-modes. The sub-modes have been grouped together in each case to indicate their similarities.

Mode A
Mode A is 'mainstream' educational placements. These are fulltime and any young person can seek admission to them. The National Curriculum is generally followed, and a full curriculum is available in these schools.

A1 is a 'traditional' secondary school. Drawing on Slee's (2011) definition of a 'regular' school, we suggest that:

→ these schools are "governed by conventional wisdom, by the sequential assemblages of habits, traditional beliefs, practices and organisational preferences" (p. 14)

→ students and teachers work within traditional subjects and disciplines

→ grouping by ability and testing is common

→ there are strongly hierarchical relationships whereby the teacher, as expert, imparts knowledge to learners

→ there is age grade promotion

→ the typical class size is 25-30.

In contrast A2, although fulltime and available to all, provides alternative pedagogical approaches to a full range of curriculum areas. There may be additional curriculum features that go well beyond the national curriculum to create a dynamic, inclusive and coherent curriculum. Staff are able to demonstrate progress across these varied curriculum areas. There is likely to be a strong emphasis on pupil autonomy, and in radical versions of A2 pupils decide on their own timetable and attendance and make significant decisions about the school, alongside their peers and staff (Kraftl, 2013; Mills & McGregor, 2013).

Mode B
Mode B includes programmes that are formally understood as alternative provision or EOTAS according to the following definition:

Alternative provision can be defined as something in which a young person participates as part of their regular timetable, away from the site of the school or the pupil referral unit where they are enrolled, and not led by school staff (Ofsted, 2014).

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[5] There are other typologies of alternative provision which we analysed in our literature review (e.g. Aron & Zweig, 2003; Ofsted, 2011b; Raywid, 1990; Te Riele, 2007; Thomson & Russell, 2007).

We note that the Ofsted definition features the location of the provision. However the clear intent of the commissioning trial in England was that more educational alternatives would be developed in house by the student's home school. These may very well be full time, for example an annexe. Our definition therefore downplays the question of location. Our Mode B provision is a full-time offer which utilises alternative pedagogical approaches.

Mode B1 provides a full, or very nearly a full, curriculum offer according to the National Curriculum of the country it is in.

Mode B2 offers a reduced set of subjects, and not all curriculum areas are covered. Maths and English are always offered. Some of the timetable in these provisions is filled with alternative options including therapeutic elements, vocational and work orientated elements, and more informal kinds of social, health and cultural education. This is instead of the full range of credentialed subjects offered in Mode A.

Mode C
Mode C provisions also fall under Ofsted's (2014) definition of alternative provision, although some of these programmes are run by external providers on the school site. These alternative provisions are part-time or short-term. They do not offer a full National Curriculum, but instead offer a complementary curriculum and use alternative pedagogical approaches.

Mode C1 groups together alternative provisions that are part-time. Young people attend these provisions for part of the week and are usually enrolled in a mainstream school, PRU or one or more alternative provisions for the remainder of the week. These alternative provisions have a variable offer, for example, in our sample we saw:

→a motor vehicle maintenance course one day a week with built-in functional skills in English and Maths.

→an online provision that is typically used for up to 15 hours of a student timetable. All GCSE and functional skills qualifications are offered.

→an organisation with two provisions that would fall under category C1. First, a provision that offers a level one qualification in Practical Countryside Skills and a level two qualification in Practical Animal care alongside functional and/or GCSE qualifications in Maths and English. Second, a part-time provision that offers one-to-one academic tutoring in Maths and English.

→a provision that has KS4 students for two days per week, but in this time manages to cover all of the main curriculum areas (including Humanities and Modern Foreign Languages) as well as therapeutic, family and relaxation activities.

Mode C2 includes provisions that offer fewer overall hours of contact time, although this is can be arranged in a number of different ways. In our sample we saw one provision which provides a week of intensive residential work, another provides a residential and ten follow-on sessions, and one works with young people for a couple of hours a week across an academic year. These provisions only sometimes offer qualifications; they are generally focused on personal development and/or therapeutic education and wellbeing.

We summarise these modes in relation to our research sample in Table 2 (Overleaf).

There are two comments to make about this typology and the current policy framework in England in particular.

Current requirements for Mode B and C
At present all alternative providers in England are expected to offer a full curriculum, including literacy and numeracy. They are also required to register as independent schools, if run by charities and businesses.

Neither of these requirements are, in our view, appropriate for Mode C alternative provision, where students are engaged in short-term or medium-term part-time programmes.

→Responsibility for ensuring the educational entitlement of those who attend these programmes clearly rests with the commissioning school or local authority not with the alternative provider. The alternative provider is not offering a school experience and the requirement to register as a school per se, is inappropriate. Another kind of formal registration for Mode C providers could usefully be developed.

→Mode C programmes are intended to offer something very unlike the regular school. Indeed, their very capacity to offer something different in the short term may well be hindered by a requirement to attend to Mode A or B conventions. We suggest that different quality criteria are needed for Mode C than are applicable for Mode A and B. We begin this task through this research.

Table 2: Modes of alternative provision and case studies

Modes		Description/Definition	Our Case Studies
A	1	Traditional School Full GCSE Curriculum based on National Curriculum Standard measures of attainment and assessment Primarily ability based classes Age grade promotion. Typical class size of 25-30	N/A
	2	Alternative school Voluntary, open enrolment Full GCSE Curriculum Alternative pedagogical approaches but staff can demonstrate progress A coherent curriculum has been planned Additional diverse curriculum features Experimental Democratic schools with high student autonomy	N/A
B	1	Alternative provision Young people are generally referred Almost a full curriculum GCSEs offered Alternative pedagogical approach	A therapeutic provision in London A specialist emotional and behavioural difficulty school in North Lanarkshire A combined secure care, residential care and education provision in Paisley An Alternative Provision Academy in London
	2	Full time programme Students may or may not be referred Reduced GCSE curriculum Additional diverse curriculum features Alternative pedagogical approach Students are typically not reintegrated	A Pupil Referral Unit in Cardiff An Alternative Provision Free School in Liverpool A specialist music provision in London An Inclusion Support Provision in North Lanarkshire A KS4 provision in a Further Education College in London An Education and Library Board Alternative Provision in Northern Ireland
C	1	Part time reduced offer Attend here part of the time and mainstream/alternative provision school the rest of the time. Not all curriculum areas are covered Alternative pedagogical approach Additional diverse curriculum features Reintegration to full-time mainstream is a possibility in some cases	A specialist motor vehicle maintenance programme in Leeds A home-school link provision in Belfast A private provider with two provisions: a one-to-one tuition provision, and a farm-based outdoor learning provision An online provision catering for students across England, typically up to 15 hours per week
	2	Complementary activities Often a short term basis Buy-in or send the students out – may also be in house alternative May be a location changer, away from traditional learning contexts and spaces. More use of outdoors	A therapeutic farm-based provision in Bath A military inspired in-school provision in Nottingham A personal and social development programme focused on outdoor learning

Mode B2 is potentially contentious in terms of educational entitlement. Much of B2 provision in England does not offer the full range of GCSEs. Typically Humanities and Modern Foreign Languages are not included. In one sense then, students' entitlement to a full curriculum could be seen as diminished. Providers and those we consulted did not agree whether this was a significant problem.

Providers pointed out that the majority of the young people in B2 provision are likely to have experienced some difficulties and frustration with formal learning. B2 providers therefore focused on accelerating learning in key areas such as literacy and numeracy as well as opening the door to post-16 opportunities. For some students this requires a considerable amount of social and remedial academic education in order to achieve the core qualifications; skills like time-keeping and the ability to work with others are the key to post 16 options. If B2 providers spend time on these, and on giving young people a wider range of cultural and social experiences, this may stand them in better stead than time spent continuing to struggle with additional GCSEs and failing to tackle underlying difficulties. It may also pave the way to life long learning, enabling young people to access other 'missed' parts of the curriculum at a later stage. B2 providers wished to be judged on 'progress-made' towards a full entitlement, rather than being seen to have failed to 'undo' many years of lack of educational achievement in a relatively short space of time.

We suggest that, rather than focusing on qualifications per se as a measure of quality, the question for B2 providers is, following Slee,

> *"What knowledge, skills and dispositions do kids need to negotiate the world of the future? The questions then becomes how the alternative provision addresses the arrangements of educational resources and the workforce to deliver this new educational settlement."* (Slee, 2011, p14)

There might be some mileage, we suggest, in B2 providers thinking together about the kinds of alternative curriculum and pedagogy that would achieve this broad definition of an educational entitlement. We take this point up again later in relation to staffing and professional development, and information sharing across the sector.

Finding One:

There are three major modes of alternative provision. Mode A offers a full educational entitlement. Mode B offers full time enrolment and a modified curriculum. Mode C offers complementary programmes.

Recommendation Two

Recommendation Two: Registration by Ofsted as schools is inappropriate for Mode C provision which by its nature is not designed to offer a full curriculum. Ofsted should clarify that Mode C do not need to register.

Recommendation Three:

The government should support the development of a new Mode C registration system. This should be linked to the development of the new quality kite mark scheme.

Recommendation Four:

Differences between Mode B and Mode C should be reflected in the quality kite mark criteria:

(1) Mode B should be judged on a 'progress-made' basis rather than be compared to regular schools.

(2) Because of the reliance of Mode C on the enrolling school (Mode A or B) their programmes should be judged on 'progress-made' but also against different criteria which recognise its complementary purposes. A Mode C quality framework should focus on the quality of relationships and activities and the potential to start the young person off on a different pathway.

SECTION FOUR:
Quality Practices in Alternative Education

We report our research results in relation to quality in three parts:

(1) the values shared by quality providers

(2) affirmation of good practices from the research literatures

(3) quality practices specific to this new study

(1) A shared values base
We observed some key shared values and practices across Mode B and C providers.

a) Safety and care
Both Mode B and C alternative providers were concerned that students were clothed and fed. Many also gave students money for travel and had a welfare budget to cover the costs of personal needs e.g. haircuts. Many were involved in ensuring the young people had a roof over their heads. They were active in dealing with addiction, with lifestyle issues such as exercise, eating habits and smoking. They also made great efforts to ensure that safeguarding issues were appropriately addressed by relevant agencies.

b) Relationality and the social
Staff and students frequently talked about relationships. We saw it used to indicate:

→ the difference between alternative provision and the regular school where students were often known for their poor results and deficient learning

→ the means of developing attachments to others, part of the healing process

→ a way to develop a sense of identity – the means of being and becoming

Relationships were thus understood not a means to an end, a prerequisite for the real learning, but they were important social learning in their own right.

Staff in alternative provision have more time than regular school teachers for developing relationships and less students to get to know. Designated time

– 'tea and toast' – combined with a homely and relaxing atmosphere allowed staff and students to chat informally. Staff were relatively unguarded with young people and interested in knowing about them, their peer group, youth cultures and their recreational time. There was also always time for individual conversation, conflict resolution and counselling.

> *"They start the day with a drink and a chat to give the young people an opportunity to get things off their chest. They see students' mood change once they are listened to. They don't take a confrontational approach with the young people. They are not checked for uniform etc. The students are "treasured". They get a lot of attention, are treated a bit more like an adults, and the staff have banter with them. They do a gradual stretching of goals. They were praised in their Coventry LA QA report for the consistency and quality of relationships. At the LandEd provision the staff felt that their specialist knowledge was crucial in terms of earning the respect of the young people."* (Researcher field notes, Core Coventry and LandEd Provisions)

c) Choice and autonomy
Despite many young people being referred to alternative provision, staff always stressed that young people have a choice whether to attend. They make this choice everyday. They also saw that providing meaningful choices for young people was integral to alternative provision, and believed that making choices would enhance the young person's sense of agency and control.

d) A wholistic view
Staff in alternative provision recognised that many of the

young people in their care had experienced difficulties beyond school and that their task was to know about these, understand and provide support. This support often focused on relationships with peers and families/carers and extended to other health and welfare agencies.

However, while staff understood that many of the barriers young people faced were systemic, the social, economic and cultural issues were much less often discussed with young people than the therapeutic. There were two notable exceptions to this – a peace education module in a Scottish provision and a daily social discussion of world events in a Northern Ireland provision. Some of the alternative providers did engage the young people in service learning activities.

e) Advocacy and justice
Alternative providers were concerned that young people had the same access and opportunities as their peers. This was manifest in different ways – refusal to have second hand furniture and equipment, choosing to have qualified but more costly qualified staff, engaging in public activities that spread awareness about the sector. There was significant interest in challenging the binary of normal/alternative education which stigmatised both young people and those who worked with them.

f) Partnership and sharing
Alternative providers in our sample did not see themselves working alone. They were committed to working together with schools and other agencies in order to ensure young people's entitlements were realised. They were active in sharing information and celebrating success. They wanted to extend knowledge sharing beyond the individual young person and to have more impact and reciprocal sharing with regular schools and other alternative education providers.

These values provided a platform upon which everyday practice was established and maintained and against which decisions were made. They also speak to questions of quality in alternative education provision.

Finding Two:

Alternative education providers share core common values, including: safety and care; relationality and

the social; choice and autonomy, a wholistic view; advocacy and justice; partnership and sharing.

(2) Best practices in alternative education
We observed some key shared values and practices across Mode B and C providers.

Our case studies confirm findings from the literature on best practice[6]. While some of these practices are important across all educational modes, others are more relevant, or take on particular nuances, in relation to alternative education. We affirm that in high quality alternative provision there are:

a) Positive and productive staff-student relationships and interactions
Young people experience and value relationships with staff who: listen; are patient, prepared to have fun and are less formal; are fair, kind, and firm about rules; are prepared to negotiate; have clear, high and achievable expectations; see them as 'teachable' rather than as deficient in some way.

b) Relevant and engaging curriculum and pedagogy
The literature suggests that in alternative education the curriculum is: relevant and connected to young people's experiences, needs, aspirations and interests; has clear goals tailored to each individual; combines experiential learning with opportunities to catch up and accelerate learning; builds knowledge, skills and habits of mind; offers challenging tasks with real world applications; and uses feedback and authentic forms of assessment to build belief in the capacity to learn. There is flexibility, choice and routine; adult learning principles are used rather than didactic instructional methods. Students' learning is carefully monitored and progress is celebrated.

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[6] We reviewed the literature on best practices (e.g. 2nd chance, 2012; Aron, 2003; Batten & Russell, 1995; Bielby, Judkins, O'Donnell, & McCrone, 2012; Bush & Jones, 2002; Connor, 2006; Daniels et al., 2003; De Jong & Griffiths, 2006; Evans, 2010; Gable, Bullock, & Evans, 2006; Gazeley, Marrable, Brown, & Boddy, 2013; Gutherson, et al., 2011; Hallam & Rogers, 2008; Hargreaves, 2011; Kendall et al., 2007; Kinder et al., 2000; Martin & White, 2012; Mills & McGregor, 2010; Myconos, 2011; Nelson & O'Donnell, 2013; Quinn & Poirier, 2007; Quinn, Poirier, Faller, Gable, & Tonelson, 2006; Ross & Gray, 2005; J. Taylor, 2009; Thomson & Russell, 2007; Vulliamy & Webb, 2000; White, Martin, & Jeffes, 2012; Yohalem & Pittman, 2001)

This was largely the case in our sample, but within an overall national curriculum framing in Mode B.

c) Practices that foster agency and independence
The literature suggests that autonomy and independence are built through an offer to be and become someone different. All young people are able to have a say in their own learning, and about the overall programme and its operations.

Some Mode C alternative education deliberately focused on the chance to try out being someone different in a different location.

> *"They nearly all comment to me, when they come here, that the calm allows them to think and, within that, the doing allows them to discover a new way of being – a new physical self – as well as an emotional and mental self."* (Staff, Jamie's Farm)

However, having choice about learning was not clear-cut in our sample. While there was a great deal of student choice in some Mode B settings, in others there was much less. In some cases students had had the opportunity to add to or modify the national curriculum. More commonly, due to size and financial restrictions, the curriculum was largely fixed and lacked variety or the capacity to innovate. By and large in these circumstances young people were encouraged to set and evaluate their progress against predetermined goals. Within a defined curriculum/task they had autonomy over 'how far they wanted to go'. There was often considerable student choice in the selection of work experience placements. Many Mode B and C programmes involved young people in the selection of staff.

d) Close attention paid to health and welfare
While the focus is always on learning in its broadest sense, health and welfare services support those young people who might benefit from them. There is a family atmosphere in which young people are encouraged to discuss problems and issues, to resolve conflicts and build resources to deal with potential and actual life challenges.

e) A human size scale of activity
The alternative education on offer is smaller and more human than most traditional schools. There are smaller class sizes and lower teacher-student ratios. The facilities are generally good; ICTs are used to facilitate learning, not substitute for teaching, mentoring and coaching. Families/parents/carers are encouraged to become involved where feasible.

> *"Student said that she had never stayed through an entire English lesson in mainstream school from year 7-10, as she was "kicked out" of every lesson. She used to dislike being put on the spot so she would behave badly. Now she is slowly starting to get into English again. The smaller classes are helpful with this as she can focus and get more help (Researcher field notes, Everton Free School).*

> *The Motor Vehicle Maintenance facilities were excellent. The young people had the opportunity to work on different kinds of vehicles, and to learn in an environment that closely mirrors a working garage. They learn how to use a range of equipment and are overseen by a teacher with relevant work experience and a passion for the subject."* (Researcher field notes, Nacro's Education Centre Leeds[7])

f) Skilful staff
Staff are committed and highly skilled. They are well trained and engage in ongoing professional development. They have a positive orientation to behaviour and to participatory processes, are concerned that young people feel safe and secure and are well versed in wholistic learning and teaching.

This was generally true in our sample. But, while all staff were well trained and qualified, we did have some concerns about whether there was sufficient advanced training in special needs education in many of the sites. We also had some concerns in some locations about staff knowledge of the norms of academic attainment in regular schools. We say more about this later.

Finding Three:

Our study confirms existing research which finds that key practices in alternative education focus on: staff-student relationships and interactions; relevant and engaging curriculum and pedagogy; agency and independence; attention to health and welfare; human size; and skilful staff.

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[7] Nacro's Education Centre in Leeds provides a Mode C provision, but Nacro also provide Mode B provisions at this cente and across the country.

(3) Quality in UK alternative education practice

We now report the major quality practices that emerged from our research. Both Mode B and Mode C studies showed that high quality alternative education demonstrated:

a) Positive regard for the young person

Alternative providers categorically did not see themselves 'fixing' young people. They all saw the young people as essentially good and redeemable, with lives and paths that were not fixed. There was no pre-determined script. This principle underpinned all of the provisions. Mode C short-term provisions aimed to disrupt pre-existing patterns while long term Mode B provisions aimed to support young people to re-write their lives.

Alternative providers had a strong sense of the young person's right to choose, and while acknowledging the expectations and sanctions that might be accrued if the young person chose not to participate, they still built into their programmes regular occasions when they could talk about the choice to attend. They also offered choices in activities where feasible, and focused on choice-making as a process to be consciously undertaken.

> *"We'll be like 'No, no, no its important that you are here on your own free choice'…so that they feel it's their positive choice and we're encouraging them to make decisions… You're talking about control all the time - like you have control of your life, you are the one who is in control of your actions, nobody else is in control of your actions, what is it we need to do and change for life to be better because sometimes we have choices, they'll say 'mum got me out of bed that's why I'm here'*
>
> *'Yes but how did you get here?'*
>
> *'I got on a bus'*
>
> *'Okay so between you leaving the house and getting to the bus stop and getting on the bus and the bus travelling all the way into town and you getting off the bus and walking into here there's a million a different places you could've gone but you chose to come here…"* (Staff, Prince's Trust)

b) Relationships as a learning goal in their own right

Establishing relationships with staff and with the peer group was seen as the key to a young person's success. Relationships were usually an explicit topic of conversation, both at 'whole class' and individual levels. Establishing and maintaining relationships was seen as an integral part of the educational 'offer' made by alternative providers, rather than being simply a precondition for learning or a by-product of the teaching approach.

> *"When we have a crisis or we need to pull a young person back from a precipice it's the relationships that make that happen."* (Staff, Inclusion Support Base)

c) Flexibility in programming

Alternative providers were flexible in programming. Cohorts vary. Not only do alternative providers need to differentiate within a year group or cohort, the best alter their offer to accommodate the particular needs and nuances of different groups from one academic year to the next. Programmes that become too fixed in their offer may risk marginalising some students. Programme flexibility ensures that young people engage with elements of the curriculum but also that young people with Special Educational Needs are supported appropriately.

> *"Sometimes we make big changes to the timetable and one year we tried PSHE and a science Entry Level qualification; we tried a Child Development qualification. On paper the kids were all very interested, but in practice, they didn't enjoy the academic side so much and we tried it for a year but it didn't work. So we changed it to a different qualification the following year. So it's important to be flexible and what doesn't work one year might work in another."* (Staff, Bryn y Deryn)

d) Attention to space and place

In some cases the fact that alternative provision was away from mainstream school was crucial; the placement was seen as a fresh start away from the setting where labels and reputation were difficult to shake. However, in-school provision could successfully create a space for students too, although this was generally offered to students not at the permanent exclusion stage). However, an important part of providing a fresh start is being aware of previous relationships/history, and both difficulties and successes in the previous location (Goodley & Clough, 2004).

> *"The students were critical of the way that mainstream schools keep things on file, 'never forget', and 'drag things up from the past'. They felt that labels stick in school, whereas Vision 12 has provided them with a fresh start."* (Researcher field notes, Waltham Forest Vision 12 Programme)

e) Carefully thought through transitions

The most thorough processes included young people being visited at school and/or invited for a preliminary meeting. This was typically attended by a parent/carer and by another 'advocate' for the child, either from their school or Local Authority. In Mode B provision, young people would receive extra support to settle in, and their progress would be reviewed and their programme tweaked accordingly in the first few weeks.

> *"Referrals are dealt with at the LA allocation panel. The dates for panels are sent out well in advance, and cases will only be discussed if all of the required information is received in time. This ensures that the new provision receives appropriate information on new students. At this meeting all information is considered to ensure a well-thought through decision is made about the most appropriate placement for the young person. Once referred to Willowbank School, the headteacher convenes a further admissions meeting, inviting all relevant agencies. This enables a more personalised and detailed consideration of the pupil's timetabling and wider needs. New placements are reviewed after an initial period and altered accordingly."*
> (Researcher field notes, Willowbank School)

f) Safety and security as paramount

All programmes took very seriously issues of safety and safeguarding. They believed that young people needed to feel secure in their new environment, something many did not experience in regular school. In all provisions, entrance to the building was carefully monitored. Many had CCTV. Programmes run in college buildings required anyone who entered to have an ID badge. Some providers randomly searched young people; we recognise this is a contentious issue.

g) Regular monitoring of progress

Quality alternative provision had rigorous monitoring processes in place; behaviour and attainment were tracked lesson-by- lesson to provide a detailed profile of a young person's patterns of success and difficulty. This was then fed back into lesson planning. This feedback was often immediate, and teachers would adapt their lessons and approach to young people very quickly depending on the kind of day they were having. At all times the focus was on keeping the young person engaged and limiting negative experiences. Actual monitoring regimes varied widely. There was no 'one best way'.

> *"BYD opt for a positive behaviour management strategy; positive behaviour is supported and rewarded through a system of points and commendations. Five areas of behaviour are monitored in each lesson, and these adhere to the code of conduct points discussed under 'Rules and Behaviour'… This generates a detailed behaviour profile for each student. Students carry their folder from lesson to lesson so staff can see what sort of a day they are having and respond accordingly… Through this system they can monitor blips in behaviour which may prompt them to look more closely at what is going on in the wider context of a young person's life."*
> (Researcher field notes, Bryn y Deryn)

h) Regular communication with parents/carers, schools and other agencies was seen as critical

Positive calls home and positive exchanges with parents/carers were highly valued. Some dedicated staff to do this liaison work. The best alternative providers had creative ways of engaging parents, which included bringing them in to participate in sessions, delivered by specialists, alongside their son/daughter.

i) Meeting and going beyond expectations was common

The best provisions paid for staff to undertake additional training to ensure that they had the necessary skills and expertise to support all students, including those with very particular needs. We saw examples of staff trained to work with blind and deaf students and with a range of learning difficulties.

Despite the difficult contexts they work in, many managers said that their staff regularly go above and beyond their job description. Typically this included working unpaid hours, particularly where there were trips, celebrations or child protection cases. Alternative providers also often gave additional assistance to young people – bus passes, taxi fares, food. This was rarely costed into their fee schedules; for charities and social enterprises this meant additional fundraising activities.

> *"Despite their low-paid, and in some cases insecure, work X noted that the support staff go above and beyond their job description and pay. He believes that their job descriptions should be re-written and they should be paid to reflect this. For instance, it is not infrequent that an activity would mean staff staying beyond the hours they are paid for. X noted that no one complains or makes a point out of this because they are dedicated to the young people, but he did not think that some of the staff were getting a particularly fair deal."* (Researcher field notes, Mode B provision)

j) Quality staff were key

Having quality staff was seen as the key to providing a quality provision. There was wide recognition of the importance of attracting and keeping quality staff.

Although good staff were often presented as having qualities that you 'either have or you don't', providers were able to elaborate on what sorts of people these were and on what sort of skills they had. These included being compassionate and dedicated to the young people; flexible and relaxed; calm and able to de-escalate situations; people who are themselves, they are comfortable in their own skin and are happy to share 'the real them' with the young people; people who are resilient and don't take every problem home with them.

Quality staff sought to understand the broader context within which they are working. They kept up-to-date with policy developments and read relevant research. In some cases, senior members of staff saw it as part of their role to read and synthesise the latest policy and research so that this was accessible to all staff. In one example, the Local Authority performed this function. Some senior staff were engaged in wider research groups and networks, and were playing important roles in shaping the alternative education landscape.

> *"The Leeds City Council 14-19 quality team have a termly newsletter. They provide news on the various alternative provisions in the framework, a 'policy watch' section and a 'CPD spotlight'."* (Research Field notes)

k) Monitoring and evaluation were regular and used

Quality alternative education providers have evaluation and planning cycles. They seek independent evaluation and challenge from people they trust, and regularly review and reflect on how they can improve their practice.

> *"There is an on-going learning and improvement process within the organisation. Observations of lessons and concerns and problems fed back into the recruitment, induction and training processes. In some cases, commissioning schools request joint lesson observations, so Apricot teachers are evaluated by Apricot staff and staff from the commissioning school. Apricot Online welcomes independent inspection and quality assurance processes via Warwickshire LA, and where they have been indirectly subject to an Ofsted inspection. They value this feedback and would welcome direct inspection by Ofsted. They get feedback from young people on a half termly or termly basis by asking them to fill in a*

questionnaire. They also seek ongoing feedback throughout lessons, in terms of which activities students have enjoyed. Feedback from young people informs their referral process and training of teachers. They have a parent feedback process too." (Researcher field notes, Apricot Online)

l) Programmes went beyond the remedial towards the democratic

All of our case studies had some practices characteristically found in Mode A2 – things that are associated with a truly alternative schools; e.g. student voice, student councils, student involvement in recruitment. This was an important aspect of breaking patterns in Mode C, and a way of establishing new behaviours in Mode B.

Finding Four:

High quality alternative education provision relied on common practices:

→**Positive regard for the young person**

→**Relationships were a learning goal in their own right**

→**Flexibility in programming**

→**Attention to space and place**

→**Transitions were carefully thought through**

→**Safety and security were paramount**

→**Progress was regularly monitored**

→**Community and partnership with schools and other agencies was critical**

→**Meeting and going beyond expectations was common**

→**Quality staff were the key**

→**Monitoring and evaluation were regular and used**

→**Programmes went beyond the remedial towards the democratic**

There were additional quality practices in each of the two modes.

Quality in Mode B alternative education

The overall mission of alternative education is to

'interrupt' existing learned patterns of behaviour, to 'challenge' young people to do and be different, to 'stretch' their boundaries and sense of possibilities, and to 'transform' by offering new ways of being and becoming. Longer-term providers also aimed to provide a supported pathway to further education, training and /or employment. Many Mode B providers were not geared to reintegration into junior secondary schools; they saw the point of integration as the transition to college or work.

This is a considerable challenge which was felt acutely by many staff.

> *"…we have 36 weeks to turn their lives around i.e. turn them from twenty-five per cent attendance to eighty-five per cent attendance; get them positive again about education; get them to give a damn about it; get them to progress after that in terms of applying for colleges and careers. So careers advice; be engaged; be excited; be passionate and deliver five GCSE equivalents in thirty-six weeks with somebody who you have just met and who has five years of major social issues."* (Staff, DV8 Training)

Mode B was characterised by:

1) Taking a wholistic approach
Mode B provided a safe environment where young people might both succeed and safely fail. Alongside 'academic' lessons, a great deal of learning was designed to fill important voids in young people's life experiences and general knowledge. This included: travelling independently, applying for jobs, looking after yourself (health, actions in public places, safe risk taking), and knowing how to conduct yourself when you meet new people. This social learning was seen as crucial to progression in school and the wider community as it reduced the likelihood of further educational and social exclusion. Staff frequently took students on trips and residential camps in order to emphasise the 'real world' nature of learning.

2) Providing additional educational support where necessary
Some Mode B case studies had young people who were at risk of disengaging from this alternative. These were the most vulnerable young people. One of our case studies had a special provision for young people who struggled to stay in their main classes of ten and offered instead intensive one-to-one support and mentoring. In order to provide such personalised support, additional funding was needed over and above the usual. In such cases, the cost of providing for the student was generally significantly more than the commissioner was charged.

3) Offering access to meaningful qualifications
Young people in Mode B valued accreditation and wanted qualifications that were meaningful; they expected qualifications to have a tangible impact on their post 16 opportunities. Some young people had an acute sense of the lesser value of some of the qualifications on offer in alternative provision; they knew which qualifications are less valued and less valuable than GCSEs. Where they can access them, young people in Mode B generally do some GCSEs. It is often seen as inappropriate for them to do the same number of qualifications as they did at school; there may be more scope for achievement where they do fewer qualifications, but do better in them. Young people generally saw the value of Maths and English; they understood them as required for most post-16 options.

4) Assessing progress
Assessment of progress is a crucial measure of the success of Mode B provision. The best 'baseline' young people when they arrive, rather than simply relying on information from schools. However they appreciate good information from schools not only about the young people's needs and weaknesses but also their strengths and achievements. Providers review the accuracy of the targets they set for their young people, and they seek wider networks for moderation to ensure that they are not 'dumbing down' their marking.

> *"During the initial two week induction they baseline the young people. This includes CAT tests, Pupil Attitudes about Self and School (PASS), SEN diagnostic assessments and literacy and numeracy tests. They put all of this information onto the intranet so it is readily available for all staff. Based on these assessments challenging targets are set for learners. They expect three levels of progress across 2 key stages. Using this they work out how each young person should be progressing each term. All students have an individual plan which is reviewed in six-week cycles. One report is sent home to parents in the Autumn, and one in the summer. Schools will sometimes receive these reports, where reintegration is a goal. They aim for 100% accreditation."* (Researcher field notes, Bridge alternative provision Academy)

5) Making time for effective transitions:
In Mode B transitions into the provision were crucial. Young people were introduced to the provision, invited to see it with a parent/carer and given time to make

a decision about whether or not to attend. Their initial weeks in the provision were carefully monitored and included a thorough induction process.

> *"The school is given time to arrange a meeting with all parties to discuss a plan for transition to AEP. The manager attends this meeting and also arranges a home visit to discuss: any worries and concerns; the curriculum; travel arrangements; provides parents with policies and a guide to the provision. In some cases this visit is repeated several times to build up trust. This visit is seen as a positive beginning to relationships with parents, and it aims to establish a clear understanding of the service. Other meetings may be necessary prior to the placement beginning, particularly where other external agencies are involved. The young person will visit the provision with the parent/carer, once they have been offered a place. Then they can choose whether or not to accept the place."* (Researcher field notes, SEELB)

Where reintegration to school was a goal, there was continual communication with the regular school throughout the young person's placement, and staff from the school were encouraged to visit the student. Mode B also enabled reintegration by allowing young people to continue with the same examination boards and to continue to work for the examinations they would take when in their regular school.

Where they occurred, transitions back into mainstream settings were well-supported. A member of staff was responsible for reintegration; they would accompany the student to their mainstream school for a few weeks, enabling a staggered return.

> *"They have a designated reintegration officer. Once a pupil is referred they make contact with the school, hold an initial meeting, assess how they are settling in after two weeks and then meet to discuss how the young person is doing on a monthly basis. As they approach the end of the young person's placement, whether that be a one or two term placement, they begin to discuss and – if appropriate – plan their gradual reintegration into mainstream school. They offer a six week reintegration programme so, the reintegration staff member will go with them, and this support will ease off over the six weeks. Their reintegration programme was praised in the Ofsted report."* (Researcher field notes, Hawkswood Therapeutic Provision)

Post-16 transitions were a core component of the curriculum in Mode B. The young people were supported with all aspects of this process; decision-making, planning, applying, interviews, acquiring the necessary accreditation, and learning the social skills and knowledge that would be necessary to be successful. Quality Mode B providers kept in touch with the young people when they first moved on to their post-16 options, and some provided a support network throughout year 12.

> *"In the later years the emphasis on work experience in the school becomes increasingly important. KibbleWorks is a collective of social enterprises that provide employment and training to young people while offering services to the Renfrewshire community. KibbleWorks consists of: a community garden; a framing business; a horticultural business; a catering service; a lawnmower repair business; a re-use and recycling business; a promotional goods business; a mechanics service. Young people can access a range of tasters in different areas of employment. They offer City and Guilds qualifications through some of the KibbleWorks programmes. KibbleWorks also provide support with CV preparation and advice for young people ready to move on."* (Researcher field notes, Kibble)

Finding Five:

High quality Mode B provision shared common practices:

→**taking a wholistic approach**

→**providing additional educational support where necessary**

→**offering access to meaningful qualifications**

→**assessing progress**

→**making time for effective transitions**

Quality in Mode C alternative education

The mission of Mode C alternative education is, like that of Mode B, to 'interrupt' existing learned patterns of behaviour, to 'challenge' young people to do and be different, to 'stretch' their boundaries and sense of possibilities. However, because of the short-term nature of the provision, the goal is not to effect a transformation, but to begin a process.

> *"So the plan is to give them somewhere where they start to build some foundations for success*

in their lives and so if they have success with us they are more likely to go out and transfer that into other areas of their life." (Staff, Prince's Trust)

Short-term providers aim to disrupt existing trajectories, and offer some new resources for managing existing situations. They clearly rely on the home school, be it a regular school or a Mode B alternative provider, to prepare the young person for the Mode C experience, and then to follow on with them through for example mentoring, additional learning support or a more flexible curriculum. Quality Mode C therefore:

1) Offer something complementary to regular school
Mode C provision typically provides something that the regular school cannot. This might be on or off campus, be vocational, recreational, arts based or therapeutic. The emphasis is generally on 'soft skills' such as communication, cooperation, decision-making, behaving assertively but not aggressively, and so on.

2) Establish effective two way communication with schools
Schools needed to be aware of the aims and practices of the Mode C programme. This meant that both alternative education staff and teachers had to spend time talking in general, as well as about specific young people. It was crucial for schools to select young people who would benefit from the Mode C experience and, if relevant, to select the right mix of young people to ensure a productive peer dynamic.

3) Ensure regular feedback is given to the school
Mode C providers have to ensure that the school knows what the young person has achieved and what needs to be done to support them so that alternative provision interventions can be built on. Effective feedback thus not only supports continuity in students' experience but also allows successes to be reported as part of the regular school assessment system and celebrated by staff in both locations.

"A weekly report is sent to the school and parent/ carer. This details effort and behaviour in each of the sessions that week and how many effort and behaviour points young people have received. Weekly reports for the school focus on the positive points, and only mention major issues. They don't want schools to focus on the negative points and to nit-pick. During the placement staff will fill in a form about effective and ineffective strategies for working with the young person, which are then fed back to the school. After 8 weeks – at the half way point – they have a catch up meeting and report back to the school on what they have

seen and what ongoing support the young person needs. They can have an emergency catch-up at any point too if there is cause for concern." (Researcher field notes, The Link Centre)

Quality Mode C providers often followed up sometime after the programme with the school. Some kept in regular contact with young people and/or offered a 'drop-back' facility.

Finding Six:

Mode C providers ensure quality when they:

1) offer something complementary to regular school

2) establish effective two way communication with schools

3) ensure regular feedback is given to the school

Recommendation Five:

Alternative education providers should set an expectation that their provision will demonstrate core values and quality practices, and use recruitment, professional development and performance processes to ensure that they are understood and practised by staff.

Recommendation Six:

Commissioners and schools should look for evidence of core values and practices when selecting provision for young people.

Recommendation Seven:

Securing the quality kite mark should require evidence that core shared values and practices are integral to all aspects of the provision.

SECTION FIVE:
Barriers to Achieving Quality in Alternative Provision

Barriers to ensuring quality in alternative provision are not entirely within the control of individual alternative education providers.

While there are actions that individual providers can – and in the case of our quality providers do - take, these would be considerably enhanced if there were complementary activity undertaken by schools, local authorities and/or central government.

(1) Outcomes data

High quality alternative education providers are very concerned to track the young people with whom they have worked. Many have innovative ways of keeping touch with young people – for example using text messaging, postcards, and the capacity to 'drop in' and visit students. However, there is inadequate information about alternative education provision at the level beyond the individual programme.

→ We do not know how many programmes are actually in operation. In England, there is no composite national data about the number of alternative education providers that exist. Local authorities hold incomplete information. This is a key quality issue which may be resolved through a combined Mode B school registration, Mode C programme registration and quality kite mark system.

→ We do not know what happens to young people who attend alternative education programmes after they leave. There is no robust national information about the educational outcomes of young people in the various modes of alternative provision nor which types of alternative education provisions are more effective[8]. This is both a quality and equity issue.

Finding Seven:

There is inadequate information about student outcomes in alternative education across the four nations.

Recommendation Eight:

There is a need for a level of consistent and centrally-held data on educational outcomes in alternative education. Providers and commissioners should be involved in setting consistent metrics which are meaningful and feasible to collect; however there is also a role for central government agencies in leading and implementing this process.

(2) Staffing

High quality alternative education providers are strongly committed to their staff. They have standardised

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[8] We found in our literature review that there was a great deal of case study research across alternative education programmes - this largely focuses on best practices. There is also research which evaluates individual programmes, and a little of this is longitudinal (e.g. Carswell, Hanlon, O'Grady, Watts, & Pothong, 2009; Hallam, Rogers, Rhamie, & Shaw, 2007; Russell, Simmons, & Thompson, 2011). However, there are few large-scale systematic studies on the outcomes for cohorts of young people who participate in alternative education. One of the reasons for this is the sheer difficulty of tracking young people who have attended alternative education programmes. While it is possible to ascertain what their intentions are at the point when they leave a programme it is often difficult to maintain contact with them. What data there is about outcomes largely suggests that alternative education is good at changing patterns of attendance, engagement and behaviour, perhaps because wellbeing is a precursor to improvements in academic attainment (Clark et al., 2010; de Velasco et al., 2008; McCluskey, Lloyd, Riddell, & Fordyce, 2013; Nichols & Steffy, 1999; Nichols & Utesch, 2010; Te Riele, 2012).We suggest that there IS potential for the use of large longitudinal data sets in tracking young people in alternative education. One Australian study (Polidano, Tabasso, & Tseng, 2012) used the Longitudinal Studies of Australian Youth (LSAY) data set to examine three cohorts of early school leavers and their post school trajectories. Their findings are potentially pertinent to a younger age group; they noted that "programs that encourage an early return to study and programs that develop post-school career plans may be more effective than programs that concentrate on improving numeracy and literacy scores" (p.2).

recruitment, selection, professional development and promotion systems in place. However, across the sector:

→ **Staff are variously qualified and experienced.**
Most of the staff we saw had teaching, youth work or outdoor education qualifications. Therapeutic providers had trained psychologists and counsellors. In England in particular, we saw very few people with formal special education qualifications. While there was training for staff in the bigger alternative provision organisations, there was almost no specific training in literacy and numeracy. Staff had largely taught themselves what to do. This was much more of an issue in Mode B provision where providers aimed to provide an educational entitlement rather than a complementary experience.

→ **Attracting and keeping quality staff can be difficult.**
This is partly a question of funding and commissioning, and partly about the reputation of the sector. Commissioners are not always willing to pay what quality alternative education costs. In England, alternative education is highly marketised and this can have the effect of driving down cost, as alternative provisions compete for business. Alternative education provision is often subject to short term contracts with commissioners, or is commissioned on a place-by-place basis. This means that many alternative provisions are only able to offer staff short-term contracts, and they may not be able to match the pay of mainstream schools. Quality teachers may also not be attracted to work that is lower-paid and insecure, particularly where this work is in challenging contexts. Because alternative provision can suffer from a reputation as a 'lesser' educational offer, and be perceived as being particularly challenging because of the young people it typically involves, this may compound the difficulties of attracting and keeping quality staff.

> *"Staff: Some of the staff are on temporary contracts so they do not have job security. They have 5 support workers who only do an 18 hour week. This covers the morning session, when they are support staff. They pay them as teachers for the afternoon sessions in order to be able to offer them a living wage. They have had to construct this system of different job roles at different times of the day in order to offer a decent living wage so that they can attract and keep good staff."*
> (Researcher Field notes, Mode B Provision)

→ A secondment model in Scotland and Northern Ireland is helping to tackle this issue. For example, in Scotland all teaching staff are under the LA umbrella. In North

Lanarkshire teachers are regularly seconded from mainstream schools to work in alternative provisions for several years. They are seen as teachers with additional expertise and they share this when they return to the mainstream context. They also bring with them knowledge of the academic norms of regular schools, ensuring that standards and expectations remain equal between schools.

→ **There is some evidence of staff burnout and turnover.**
In some organisations this appeared to be accepted as the way the sector worked. We heard little about the ways in which charities and social enterprises worked to make their staffing sustainable and to manage turnover.

→ **Providing suitable, high-quality training and professional development for staff poses challenges.**
Many alternative provisions are too small to be able to offer the promotional opportunities that mainstream education can. Some staff queried the relevance of the training available to them. Often this was not specifically tailored to the alternative education context, and sometimes it was of poor quality, too expensive, or providers simply did not know about it. Providers also questioned why they were not called upon to lead training for mainstream teachers on how to support young people with challenging behaviour. There was some feeling that their expertise was not valued.

→ **Networking opportunities are limited.**
Across the board providers felt that there were not always adequate networks and opportunities in the sector. This included knowing where to look for accessible information on resources and opportunities. Often information was discovered by chance or through personal networks, and opportunities and funding often required a particularly strong, dedicated and adept person to navigate bureaucratic systems. This poses serious questions in terms of equity and entitlement for young people.

→ **Staff told us there were not enough opportunities to meet other providers and share best practice.**
This was true across all four countries. Where there was a strong LA model, for example in Scotland and Northern Ireland, there was a feeling that LAs tended to work alone and the most was not always made of opportunities to share practice and resources across LAs or Education and Library Boards.

→ **There were variable staff entitlements across the sector.**
Staff expressed concerns about pay levels, career progression, contracts and pensions.

Finding Eight:

There is considerable variation in the ways in which staff in alternative education are selected, their qualifications, training, how they are supported and supervised, and their levels of remuneration.

Recommendation Nine:

There is a need for a level of consistent and centrally-held data on staff in alternative education. Providers and commissioners should be involved in setting consistent metrics which are meaningful and feasible to collect; however there is also a role for central government agencies in leading and implementing this process.

Recommendation Ten:

Central government should support the sector to build national staff networks so that information about practice and training opportunities can be shared.

(3) The student population

High quality alternative education providers keep good data on the young people who attend their programmes. However, there are no comprehensive national statistics on the characteristics of young people accessing alternative provision across the UK. Based on inspection reports, the following characteristics seem prominent in the population:

→ Special Educational Needs (SEN), both with and without a statement

→ Behavioural, emotional and social difficulties

→ Emotional difficulties resulting in depression, anxiety and self-harm

→ Experiences of exclusion: 16 per cent of students in the Ofsted (2011) study had received a fixed-term exclusion from their school or unit

→ Students with weak Literacy and Numeracy

→ Boys outnumber girls (Ofsted, 2011; ETINI, 2012[9])

Staff from case studies in this research reported additional recurring characteristics:

→ Almost all of the case studies referred to their young people being 'disengaged from learning'. As well as 'poor behaviour', this often manifested itself in poor attendance

→ As well as 'severe emotional and behavioural' issues, other prevalent special education needs were: speech and communication needs; ADHD; autism; dyslexia

→ Young people who had been 'double excluded' i.e. excluded from two mainstream schools

→ Young people covered by the Pupil Premium

→ Looked after children and children with safeguarding concerns

→ Young people with 'a range of abilities'. Many staff stressed that some of their students were very academically able

→ White British students

→ Young people with long-term health problems

This data does not sit well with the figures on exclusion and attendance, nor on estimates of the numbers of young people who are missing from education altogether (Ofsted, 2013). It seems clear from the exclusion and attendance data that girls, Caribbean heritage and Traveller/Gypsy Roma young people ought to be significantly represented in alternative education provisions. Yet they are not.

We conclude from our research that:

→ There is inadequate national information about the patterns of referrals to alternative provision. We know very little about the ways in which schools refer young people to alternative education and on what basis. While there is some recent research into commissioning (Institute of Education (University of London) and the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), 2013, 2014) and older research into managed moves (e.g. Abdelnoor, 2007; Thomson, Harris, Vincent, & Toalster, 2005), we know very little about which young people are referred to what kinds of programmes and the reasons.

→ We are not well informed about the ways in which

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[9] ETI Northern Ireland, June 2012, Audit Of Inequalities Second Edition http://www.selb.org/equality/Documents/2013/ AuditofInequalities2ndEditionJune2012.pdf

alternative education provision is distributed geographically. The case studies that we undertook all serviced particular geographical areas. We were told about difficulties of access in some urban and rural areas.

→We saw one high quality single sex Mode C within school provision where a programme had been developed for a specific group of girls with high levels of success.

> *"The young girls are a particularly interesting case study. They are provided with a space to meet and they have their own uniform, and so are demarcated as a distinct group within the school. This affords them considerable status, but also comes with additional responsibilities, which they appear to enjoy. The girls have developed a strong rapport and are happy to undertake a range of activities – including very physical ones – because they do not have to do so in front of boys. They have developed a commitment to supporting their school and other young people; they assist younger students with their reading and have visited a local primary school to support students with special educational needs."* (Researcher field notes, Commando Joe's and Top Valley Academy)

Nevertheless, across the sector, girls are not always provided for as well as boys. While they are not excluded in the same numbers as boys, they truant in equal numbers to boys, and their educational entitlement must therefore be seen as being equally at risk (this is not a new situation, see Osler & Vincent, 2003). In the worst cases, alternative provisions are male domains, and girls have to tolerate sexist language from their peers, which goes unchallenged by staff. Often provisions have clearly been set up with boys in mind, and have had to be tailored once girls start to be referred. Staff may lack the kinds of specialist expertise needed by young people, predominantly girls, who have been victims of sexual exploitation. In some cases we saw curriculum offers were highly gendered, and girls were encouraged into traditional routes such as hair and beauty and childcare, as there was little else that interested them. Equally, it was sometimes assumed that boys wanted to do active and hands on tasks often related to manual trades (c.f. Thomson & Russell, 2007). There is not yet sufficient challenging of these stereotypes in alternative provisions. Additionally we also witnessed some instances of gendered language e.g. "Don't be a girl" which perhaps suggests a need for professional development for staff.

→In London we saw high quality provision in which

there was a mix of young people. It is notable that there had been considerable effort put into those programmes to make sure that they appealed to all prospective participants. However, across the country more generally, white British pupils appear to dominate alternative provision. In 13 of the provisions we saw, the pupils all appeared to be white British. Given the exclusion data, we see that the inequitable situation reported in previous research (Wright, Standen, John, German, & Patel, 2005; Wright, Standen, & Patel, 2009; Wright, Weekes, & McGlaughlin, 2000) remains much the same.

Finding Nine:

There is an urgent need to ensure that girls, rural and isolated young people and young people of Caribbean and Traveller/Gypsy Roma heritage are receiving their educational entitlement.

Recommendation Eleven:

Commissioners and schools should routinely examine their patterns of exclusion, attendance and referral to alternative education. They should work cooperatively with local community organisations to develop viable and inclusive alternative programmes.

(4) Information flow and communication systems
High quality alternative education providers took care with information flow, as explained. However, information and communication is not one way. Good communication depends on shared effort and shared systems.

→Information from referrers varies. Across the board we were told that the information provided by referring organisations is highly variable. This variability meant that, in some cases, the information provided was sparse, and insufficient for the alternative provider to make accurate initial arrangements for the young person in the provision, for instance in terms of supporting any special needs, relationships with external agencies, and differentiation. Furthermore, in cases where it was felt to be in the student's best interest to have a continued relationship with the referring school, this was felt to be very patchy. Some schools did not facilitate or support this continued relationship.

→The work done in the Mode C part time programme was not always picked up and continued by the home school, be it Mode B or A.

"Yeah. We've got a young girl at the moment who has got a support worker within school and she's seen the progress and so that progress is getting fed back to her through school which is amazing. She is now doing really well and has moved from the top of the exclusion list to the bottom of the exclusion list and that is because the feedback is getting back to her. We've been giving her feedback every day here saying that she is amazing and she's improved so much but unless the school recognises that then the relationship she has with the school hasn't changed." (Staff, Mode C Provision)

There needs to be careful planning between the mainstream school and the provider so that each knows what the other is doing, and that together there is a full offer. This was not always the case. It was often not clear for example who was responsible for supporting the young person with their post-16 options.

→There is a considerable administrative burden for alternative provisions in reporting back to lots of commissioners/referrals on attendance and attainment The systems for alternative providers to feed back to commissioners and referrers need to be thought about carefully to avoid administrative overkill. In most cases it is important that there is a continued flow of information between the provider and the commissioning school and/or LA. This is often in relation to attendance and attainment. However, where updates have to be done individually, by telephone, for multiple referrers/ commissioning organisations this can equate to a significant time burden for alternative providers. Some providers were moving towards online systems for logging attendance and attainment. The relevant parties are then provided with log-in details so they can check this information when they wish to, rather than having to be individually informed.

Finding Ten:

There are variable information and communication systems across the sector and sometimes poor information flow between schools and alternative providers.

Recommendation Twelve:

Commissioners, schools and alternative education providers need to work together to share information. Central government agencies should fund a national innovations project to develop a platform for information sharing.

5) Funding

→There is lack of transparency about the costs of alternative provision.
Across three of the four countries in the UK there are moves away from largely local authority government provision of alternative education to provisions that are either in–school, shared between schools or commissioned largely from the charity sector. Many of the voluntary sector alternative provisions we saw were making a very valuable contribution. However, in our research alternative provision providers perceived that the typical level of funding for Mode B programmes run by the charity sector often seemed significantly lower than that allocated to government-run Mode B alternative provision, where a range of top-ups were added to the basic allocation. Where this is the case it forced charities to rely on additional fundraising to cover the actual costs of provision. Concerns were raised with us that in effect, young people's access to educational provision (to which they have a legal right) could therefore become increasingly dependent on the fundraising efforts of charities and the good will of the public.

→There is concern that money allocated by central government to particular groups of pupils does not reach alternative provision providers. Most of our English case studies queried whether the pupil premium was being directed towards the students they catered for or whether it was being predominantly directed to in-school staffing.

"It does make me quite cross when I phone a school and they will be talking about this young person and they'll say that they don't have the money but I'm pretty sure that the Pupil Premium doesn't get spent on that individual a lot of the time and that money could be used for a really effective programme." (Staff, Mode B provision)

However, there was also concern that funds for Special Education support was not always available to alternative education providers.

It is difficult for alternative providers to take these questions up with schools particularly if they are in contractual situations and rely on good relations in order to stay in business. Providers are also anxious to offer the young person some level of provision and are therefore reluctant to turn them away on the grounds that the rest of their entitlement isn't being met. As noted earlier, some of our case studies reported spending far more than they had received in order to ensure the young person was catered for.

→Funding for some providers is very insecure.
The practice in England of selling individual places and courses brings in funds on a rolling basis, but does not provide security. Alternative education providers in this situation find it difficult to plan and to attract and keep staff. Very often they have to dedicate staff time to securing funding. We were told of alternative providers who have 'gone broke' leaving schools and young people stranded. More long-term contracts with referrers and commissioners would be beneficial to alternative provision organisations and would also lay the ground work for more secure relationships to be developed.

Finding Eleven:

There is a lack of transparency about funding for alternative provision with the potential for a detrimental impact on quality and equity across the country.

Recommendation Thirteen:

Central government agencies should (a) establish benchmark costings for quality Mode B alternative education and make these publicly available and (b) work with commissioners and schools to develop protocols for the ways in which statutory and equity funds are passed on to alternative providers.

Recommendation Fourteen:

Commissioners and schools should use long term contract arrangements with alternative education providers wherever possible.

6) Curriculum
Concerns have been expressed in previous research about curriculum, pedagogy and credentialing in alternative education. The high quality provision that we saw did all provide a strongly supported environment in which young people could learn. However, we found only one Mode B alternative education provision where learning was foregrounded. Here, rather than the starting point being the difficulties of the young person, the starting point and emphasis was on learning right at the outset.

Our research affirms the presence of continued issues in this area:

→Lack of challenge
There is sometimes an assumption that all young people in alternative provision need remedial support. This is not the case. However, in some instances schools may have failed to pass on information about a young person's actual academic levels of attainment, and focused solely on behaviour.

> *"Pupils said that they weren't being stretched enough academically and they found the work pointless if it wasn't linked to accreditation They thought that Maths and English were particularly important since these were required by the majority of college courses, and they have to continue to study them until they got a C grade or equivalent."* (Researcher field notes, Mode B provision)

→Qualifications that were not useful
While most Mode B and Mode C providers do provide credentials many of these are not valued by the young people. Changes to cross credit arrangements with the GCSE have made it more difficult for providers to offer anything other than exam board qualifications or recognised awards such as Duke of Edinburgh or Arts Award.

> *"The qualifications in alternative provision are at quite a low level so that everyone can achieve them but then they become more of an idiot badge than a celebration…If everyone is getting one then they are not worth much…I understand the logic of them but the application needs to be slightly different."* (Staff, Mode C provision)

→Lack of choice in curriculum
While a few Mode B alternative education providers were making use of online providers in order to supplement their curriculum, the majority were compelled by their size and funding, to restrict what they offered. This meant that young people were offered programmes that were not always their first choice. However, as already noted, we also saw a great deal of highly gendered vocational offerings.

While Mode B and C staff recognise that literacy and numeracy are crucial for young people's success, not all of them feel comfortable or competent in this area of teaching. We found that in many Mode B provisions which offer a full time and long-term educational programme, there were no staff who had had specialist training in these areas. Most C1 provisions also taught Maths and English but lacked staff with specialist expertise. We also noticed some reluctance among staff to engage with literacy and numeracy, less too much 'school-ish' focus led to young people being further alienated from learning.

"They have implemented an hour of English and Maths on a Wednesday afternoon. It is interesting that they were so surprised that this went well: "it's been really successful – surprisingly so. In the past we've sort of been scared of subjecting them to English and Maths lessons…we've been really impressed with how much they've stepped up and that they did turn up and took it seriously and put their phones away. So that was good."
(Researcher field notes, Mode B provision)

→ Lack of discussion with young people about learning

While there was concern to find out what young people needed to know and what they could do, there was little conversation about learning per se. We did not see many discussions with young people about how they like to learn, what were their good and negative experiences of learning, what learning difficulties they had and what strategies worked for them. These kinds of meta-learning conversations do occur in good regular schools, where teachers understand that 'learning how to learn' is very important. We suspect that the emphasis on a caring and therapeutic environment sometimes worked against these kinds of learning-oriented conversations.

→ Lack of full entitlement

We have come across, even in our 'best practice' sample, cases where young people were not receiving their full educational entitlement. We have already flagged the particular 'grey' issue of mode B2 where students are enrolled full time but do not have access to all areas of the national curriculum (P.19). To illustrate further – in one Mode B programme the young people attend the centre every day and have 20 hours of a week; around 15 of these are one to one learning time. They study Maths and English and explore post-16 options. On paper, this offer may be criticised. However, these are young people who have had very high levels of truanting and absenteeism. They are now getting 15 hours of one-to-one learning time that they were not accessing before, as well as around five hours of social interaction with peers and staff per week. This type of provision may have a place for certain young people. It may be stage one of a process of reengaging them with learning.

However we came across other cases which were more clear-cut. For example, some pupils appeared to be only getting a part time Mode C1 or C2 provision. In theory, they were supposed to be doing something else for the rest of the time but they were not, for example, because they had been excluded or were persistent truants. As already noted in the case of funding, it is difficult for alternative providers to take this up with schools particularly if they are in contractual situations, rely on good relations in order to stay in business and want to offer a programme to young people.

Where there is a reduced offer/entitlement, it is crucial that the student and their parent/carers are clear about this and satisfied. This did not always seem to be clarified in printed materials.

Finding Twelve:

The curriculum provision in alternative education can sometimes lack challenge, be insufficiently focused on learning and provide marginal qualifications. There is lack of clarity about what constitutes a minimum curriculum entitlement given the particular needs of young people in alternative programmes.

Recommendation Fifteen:

Alternative education providers need to focus strongly on the learning needs of young people and ensure that staff are adequately trained to cater for them. They need to ensure that young people have high challenge and appropriate choice in their learning. The full curriculum offer needs to be made explicit in all prospectus materials.

Recommendation Sixteen:

Commissioners and schools should consider how to involve alternative education providers in their training programmes. Central government should support a partnership between teacher training agencies and alternative education providers to provide a national skills development programme for the alternative education sector.

APPENDIX ONE:
Alternative Provision Across the United Kingdom

Terminology Used	'Alternative Provision' (AP) is used in England and Wales. 'Education other than at School' (EOTAS) is also used in Wales, and is used in Northern Ireland. In Scotland this area is viewed as part of a continuum of specialist provision to support additional learning needs, which includes special schools, inclusion units, residential schools and secure schools.
Definition	AP and EOTAS refer to provision that is part of a young person's regular timetable, but is often away from the school site. This provision is made for pupils who would otherwise not receive a suitable education, either due to exclusion, illness, habitual non-attendance, emotional and behavioural difficulties or other reasons. Sometimes this may be arranged alongside mainstream schooling to support young people to re-engage with learning. Education for young mothers may also be included under this heading. In Northern Ireland this also covers home schooling, hospital schooling, and provision made for students who cannot attend school due to a disability. In Scotland Education is viewed as being on a continuum. The phrase 'alternative provision' is understood, but not systematically used. Instead provision for students with additional support needs is viewed as one aspect of mainstream education provision.
Who provides AP?	In England there is a mixed economy of provision including: The Local Authority; mainstream schools; private providers; charity and third sector providers; community and church providers. This is also the case in Wales, although the Local Authority still plays a key systematic role in providing and overseeing AP. In Northern Ireland there is community and charity provision, but overall the Library Boards maintain a key systematic role in providing and overseeing this area. In Scotland, the Local Authority is the main provider and overseer of additional support services.
How do the young people get there?	In all cases the local authority or library board maintains responsibility for arranging suitable full-time education for permanently excluded pupils, or pupils who receive a fixed-term exclusion that exceeds a certain number of days. In England there is a shift towards schools taking responsibility for commissioning Alternative Provision.
Legal Information for Exclusions	In all cases the Local Authority or school must make suitable, full-time alternative provision for a young person who has received a permanent exclusion, or a fixed-term exclusion that exceeds a certain number of days. In all cases this is expected to be done within a maximum of three weeks.
National Curriculum	Across all four National Curriculums there are core components, and more selective components. English, Mathematics and Science are core components across all nations. ICT, religious education, P.E/Health and wellbeing, sex and relationships feature across all curriculums. In all cases, the remainder of the curriculum is made up of the arts, humanities, technology and modern foreign language. Careers education is present across the nations but is not typically examined. In Northern Ireland, students are expected to take at least one course in each of nine curriculum areas. Some of these courses will be general courses and some will be applied. In Scotland, Curriculum for Excellence applies to all children and young people aged 3-18, regardless of where they learn. It has eight curriculum areas and divides learning into the broad general education phase and the senior phase. In Wales, Welsh is a core requirement.
Qualifications	During key stage 4 most pupils work towards national qualifications. These are typically GCSEs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. In Scotland, students take national awards, Highers and advanced Highers.

APPENDIX TWO:

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→ Bryn-y-Deryn Pupil Referral Unit

→ Commando Joe's and Top Valley Academy, Nottingham

→ Core Assets

→ DV8 Training

→ Everton Free School

→ Hawkswood Therapeutic School, part of The Hawkswood Group

→ Inclusion Support Base

→ Jamie's Farm

→ Kibble Education and Care Centre

→ Nacro

→ Prince's Trust Fairbridge Programme, Southampton Centre

→ South Eastern Education and Library Board EOTAS Provision

→ The Link Centre

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