



REACH

Reducing the Risk of Exclusions

Final Report
2018-2022



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Overview of REACH

REACH existed to help schools meet the complex needs of pupils identified as at risk of exclusion in 29 primary and secondary schools in Blackpool, Doncaster and North Belfast.

Right to Succeed worked with school leads, in consultation with targeted young people and their parents/carers, to develop and implement strategies to meet the needs of pupils.

REACH programme locations



Programme aims

REACH was originally a three-year learning programme that aimed to:

- 01 Deepen understanding of the needs of those most at risk of exclusion
- 02 Develop systemic solutions to address these needs
- 03 Share best practice and learning with a range of stakeholders

A fourth, legacy year was then used to embed tested strategies and disseminate learning to wider audiences.

What we did

We worked with schools and partners to look at what children in each area needed to improve inclusion.

A range of interventions were chosen and implemented per school and per area, according to local needs.

We disseminated learning between schools, between areas, across Right to Succeed, and to wider audiences regionally and nationally.

29
schools worked with

13
partner organisations worked with

713
practitioners trained

Funders

REACH was generously funded by The National Lottery Community Fund, with additional funding from Credit Suisse.





Part 1

Years 1 - 3

In this section, we explain how **REACH** was implemented in each location, what we learned about inclusion and what impact we saw.

REACH: Blackpool

9 schools

7 partner organisations

A key focus of REACH in Blackpool was to encourage schools to recognise the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) on children and young people and as a result, adopt trauma-informed approaches.

How REACH worked in Blackpool

Developing trauma-informed practice in schools

Working in partnership with Better Start, Right to Succeed implemented NurtureUK trauma-informed training across the REACH schools and also worked to promote this approach more widely through the screening of a Resilience film with an audience drawn from a range of local stakeholders.

Better Start is a multi-agency partnership in Blackpool between the NSPCC, Local Authority, Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundations Trust and Blackpool Clinical Commissioning Group looking at improving the outcomes of our children pre birth to three years old.

Providing NurtureUK training in schools

NurtureUK's National Schools Nurturing Programme recognises that children and young people who have a good start in life have significant advantages over those who have experienced missing or distorted early attachments.

Through NurtureUK, Blackpool schools were supported to use their assessment tool, The Boxall Profile, to evaluate children's social, emotional and behavioural development. The Boxall Profile helps education professionals to interpret pupils' behaviour, so they can spot issues sooner, address them and give them the social and emotional skills to reduce their impact on their learning.

Testimonials from school leaders



Stephen Cooke
Headteacher,
Unity Academy,
Blackpool

“

REACH enabled us to look at what's actually going on with children at risk of exclusion and establish what the barriers are.

The biggest change has been a shift in staff mindset from “we need to move this child on” to “what's the underlying need, what's going on and what do we need to do?”.



Roger Farley
Executive
Headteacher,
Westminster
Primary Academy

“

Once we saw the impact of REACH on the selected cohort, we realised the impact it could have if scaled up to the whole school. So we quickly delivered CPD for teachers and teaching assistants and have reduced exclusions by 85%.”



Watch the REACH Blackpool video to hear how schools worked collectively in Blackpool to reduce exclusions

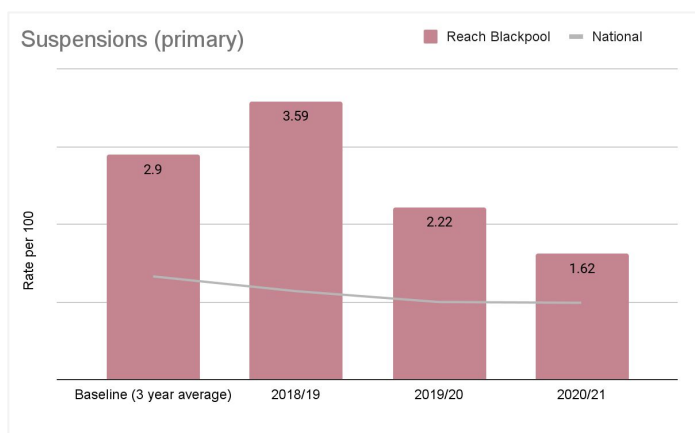
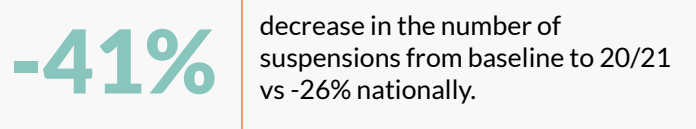
Note on measuring exclusions

Tracking changes in exclusion rates across small cohort sizes is statistically challenging, as permanent exclusions are relatively rare (1 in 10,000 primary pupils and 1 in 1,000 secondary pupils). Suspension from school is more common (approx 1 per 100 primary pupils, and 1 in 12 for secondary) and is a known risk factor for permanent exclusion. As our sample size is small, we have focused on changes in suspension rates rather than permanent exclusion rates, as a more reliable marker of progress.

We have reported changes in whole-school suspension rates, but it should be noted that REACH worked with small groups of pupils. The degree of whole-school changes to practice and culture varied considerably, often depending on the level of involvement of the headteacher in the programme. Predictably, the changes in whole-school suspension rates also varied considerably by school. We have learned a great deal on this subject from the REACH programme, which is already informing future programme design (see page 12).

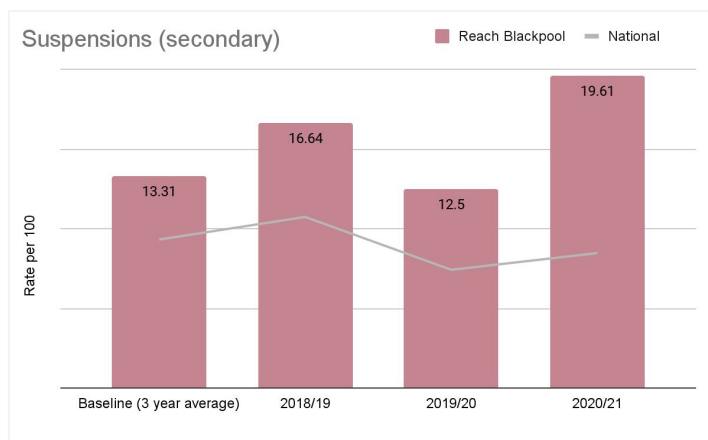
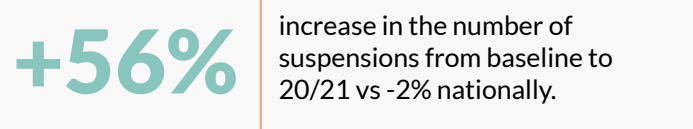
Primary school suspension rates

The number of suspensions at Blackpool Reach primary schools dropped at a greater rate than nationally from baseline to programme end.



Secondary school suspension rates

The number of suspensions at Blackpool Reach secondary schools increased, while nationally there was little change.



Observation: While schools are changing policies and as they commit to keeping children at risk of exclusion within school, they may use suspensions more as a way to manage behaviour during this transition period. It should be noted (please see caveats on sample size, above) that the permanent exclusion rate across Reach Blackpool secondaries declined by 38% over the three years of the programme, a similar decrease to nationally (43%).

N.B All REACH exclusions and suspensions data for years 2 and 3 of the programme were affected by the COVID pandemic, so should be interpreted with caution (see page 12).

REACH: Doncaster

10 schools

4 partner organisations

In Doncaster, schools recognised the need for a change in the way school staff engaged with and supported pupils at risk of exclusion.

How REACH worked in Doncaster

Establishing whole-school therapeutic offers

We worked with Fortis Therapy to deliver a whole-school therapeutic offer to four of our Doncaster schools where diagnostic assessments identified that some pupils needed extra support.

The four schools came together as a community of practice around the approach to school improvement, using leadership coaching, whole-school training and direct therapeutic work with children.

To respond to the high level of need from Doncaster schools, we co-commissioned additional resources to allow the schools to engage a whole-school therapeutic offer.

Developing a conversational framework for staff

Over the second year of the project, the Enable programme was rolled out to Doncaster schools.

Led by Paul Carlile, Enable trains school staff and leaders to take a whole-school approach to working with at-risk pupils, to create long-term, systemic change. This approach is centred on developing a conversational framework to enable the growth and development of pupils.

Enable case study: Spa Academy, Askern

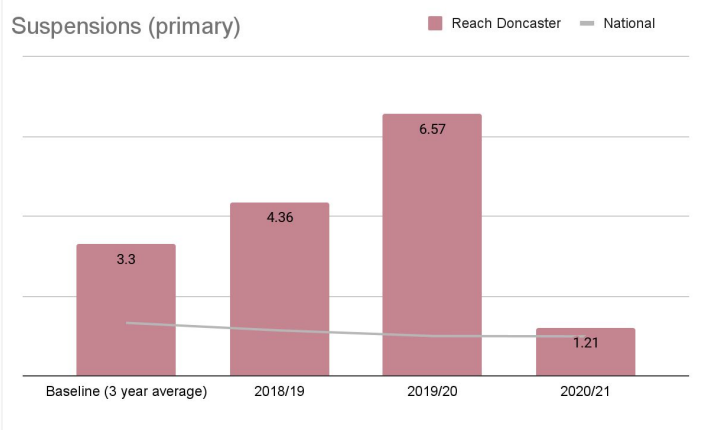
Comparing data from Autumn term 2019 to Autumn term 2020, we saw that, since the implementation of Enable training, behavioural incidents as a whole decreased from 160 to 79.

Breaktime and classroom incidents fell from 100 to 45 and verbal, defiance and physical behaviour incidents declined too, from 138 to 64.

Primary school suspension rates

-67%

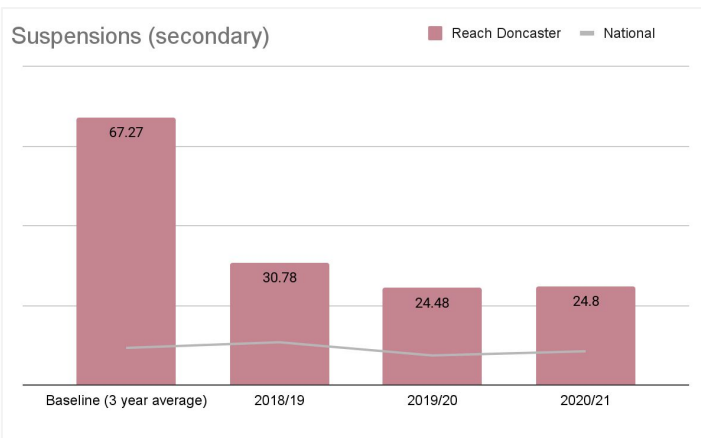
decrease in the number of suspensions from baseline to 20/21 vs -26% nationally.



Secondary school suspension rates

-58%

decrease in the number of suspensions from baseline to 20/21 vs -2% nationally.



Watch the REACH Doncaster video to hear how schools worked collectively in Doncaster to reduce exclusions

REACH: Belfast

10 schools

2 partner organisations

In Belfast, schools looked at the impact of staff behaviour on the school environment and supported staff to explore this through NurtureUK and Pivotal training.

How REACH worked in Belfast

Youth voice participation

Integrating youth voice and youth engagement into the design and delivery of the programme was a high priority.

Following a roundtable event on Youth Participation in September 2020, we designed a partnership project with Queen's University in North Belfast, which aims to highlight and support others to adopt best practice in consulting with young people at risk of exclusion.

Our Belfast programme manager also worked collaboratively with three local youth work organisations to consult with young people at risk of exclusion, in order to feed into programme design.

Pivotal training

All schools completed the Pivotal Whole School Positive Behaviour Training. Pivotal Learning empowers educators, facilitators and trainers with skills that enable a learner-centered learning environment, where the focus is shifted from content to be delivered to learners' needs.



Siobhan McQuaid
Principal, Holy Family Primary School

“
The Pivotal training helped us to strip back our approach to behaviour and implement a simple and clear system which has changed the school environment and made it an easier place to work and learn in.”



Providing NurtureUK training in schools

All schools jointly participated in the three-day theory and practice NurtureUK training, and a number of schools completed an additional module for children with social, emotional, and cognitive developmental needs.

NurtureUK provides effective mental health and wellbeing support for children and young people who have experienced missing or distorted early attachments, giving them the social and emotional skills to do well at school and in life.

“

It is tough and there are lots of challenges but Right to Succeed have supported us on the journey and it's definitely been worth it.

When the child is listened to and understood, that's what starts to change culture. You still need consequences, but we deal with the issues in a different way.”

Cheryl McGranaghan

NurtureUK Lead, Holy Family Primary School



Watch the REACH Belfast video to hear how schools worked collectively in Belfast to improve inclusion

Delivering on Year 1-3 objectives

AIM 1: To co-design effective school policy and practice to improve the staff capacity to respond to and manage the needs of all their learners, based on the existing evidence base.

All students on the Reach programme were assessed and teachers were supported to interpret the results and to select appropriate interventions. Schools engaged in a range of training to support their understanding of pupil needs and to build capacity, which included:

- National Nurturing Programme
- EnableUK
- Fortis Therapy
- Pivotal

AIM 2: To accurately identify learners who would benefit from additional support within school and provide signposting to local services.

All schools continue to use GL Assessments to better understand the needs of their pupils.

In Blackpool and Belfast, schools are continuing to use Boxall Profiles in conjunction with their use of NurtureUK within school to support children identified as at risk of exclusion.

AIM 3: To develop a more collective culture between schools and local services that put the child's needs and voice at the centre of intervention.

Steering groups in Blackpool, Doncaster and North Belfast have supported an increase in collective working between schools.

The whole-town roll-out of trauma-informed practice across Blackpool is an excellent example of a collective, child-centred approach.



Stephen Cooke
Headteacher,
Unity Academy,
Blackpool

“

Through REACH, we've developed much stronger partnerships with other schools on the programme and also other schools in the town. We were able to look at their interventions and what's working and this learning has enabled us to widen our set of interventions and provide better support for our pupils.”



AIM 4A: To support the commissioning of preventative work and demonstrate the potential cost savings as a result of preventing exclusions.

This is particularly evident in Blackpool where trauma-informed approaches continue to be developed across the town.

Blackpool is also developing a NurtureUK Network involving strategic direction from the SEND team and local participation in training to implement a NurtureUK approach across the schools.

Inclusion is one of the three key strands of Blackpool's 10-year education strategy and the learning from REACH is feeding into the implementation of this strategy across all school in the town.



AIM 4B: To develop a robust set of indicators for risk of exclusion.

Identified risk-of-exclusion indicators:

Low literacy levels

When we cross-referenced the reading data with behaviour data, we found that children with high behaviour points consistently had the lowest reading abilities.



Stephen Cooke
Headteacher,
Unity Academy,
Blackpool

“
Through understanding the root cause, we have put a significant emphasis into reading over the last 5 years because to better support these children in their behaviour and improve their access to the curriculum, and we're seeing their behaviour improve as a result.”

Adverse childhood experience (ACEs)

Children who experience ACEs are more likely to be at risk from exclusion, and this risk increases if the child has experienced multiple ACEs.



Charlotte Reddy
REACH School
Lead,
Westminster
Primary Academy,
Blackpool

“
We researched the children in our school at risk of exclusion and looked at family background, homelife, school life and attendance. We found that lots of these pupils had ACEs, and the children we selected to be part of the REACH cohort all had four or more.”

Key challenges and learning

Challenges

Teacher time and capacity

Because schools had different priorities, we found that schools varied in being able to commit the time and resources needed to successfully deliver the programme.

Covid disruption

The Covid pandemic, and the ensuing persistent pupil absences, caused difficulties for some schools to fully implement the interventions, and/or to ensure continuity of the approach after the pandemic.

Data collection

Some schools did not want to track and share exclusion data. Coupled with no formal data collection and sharing agreements, it made it difficult for us to track the effectiveness of the interventions and progress of the schools with regards to exclusions.

The disruption caused by COVID-19 also had an impact on the comparability over time of local and national data.

Demonstrating overall impact of REACH

Each of the three areas operated independently, and began delivery at different stages of readiness, with different histories of local collaboration.

Making comparisons between the areas' different approaches was difficult and it was hard to demonstrate the overall impact of the programme.

Influencing a whole-school approach

Reach worked with very small cohorts, which meant that while individual students could get targeted support, there might not be a whole-school shift in how children were supported in all lessons. In schools where the leaders saw the potential of the small-scale interventions and supported a roll-out across the whole school, this was able to influence whole-school culture.

Key learning for future programme

Paying for school leads' time

We ensure that paying for staff time is built into our programmes to ensure leads can dedicate the time to deliver and schools can backfill the resource gap that staff involvement creates.

Tailored support

Programme managers offered individualised support to schools and we used the legacy year to refresh and embed the new approaches across the areas.

Data collection agreements on all programmes

We now formalise data collection and sharing with all programme partners, including schools, at the start of every programme via formal agreements, and work with partners so that all parties are clear on the expectation around data and how it will be used.

We are cautious with our interpretations of data gathered during 2019-20 and 2020-21.

Discovery period on all programmes

We now use a 12 month Discovery phase at the start of each programme to:

- Identify the need.
- Explore whether the conditions for successful delivery of a collective impact project are in place.
- Agree shared aims and shared measures of success.

Focus on capacity building

Our subsequent programmes have worked with much larger cohorts of children. We ensure that whole-school culture change is built into programme design, and that key decision-makers within the schools and at local authority level are invested in the programme from the start.

Part 2

Legacy year

In this section, we explain how we demonstrated the impact of **REACH**, what benefits are being sustained in each location and how we have shared learning from the programme.

REACH Legacy: Blackpool

In Blackpool, a key focus was to encourage schools to recognise the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on children and young people and, as a result, adopt trauma-informed approaches.

How REACH Legacy worked in Blackpool

Developing trauma-informed practice in schools

We worked with Better Start to co-design a pilot for developing trauma-informed practice in schools to support some of the most vulnerable pupils in the REACH cohort.

The pilot included funding a trauma-informed implementation manager to work across the Blackpool REACH schools. School Centred Initial Teacher Training also played a pivotal role in fast-tracking the roll-out of trauma-informed practice across Blackpool's schools.

Workstreams 1, 2 and 3 of the pilot (see below) were delivered during the legacy year and workstreams 4 and 5 (see page 15) will be delivered as part of Better Start's ongoing work and will contribute to the long-term sustainability of REACH in Blackpool.

Trauma-informed pilot workstreams delivered in Legacy Year

- 01 Training**
More than 395 key stakeholders trained in what trauma-informed practice would look like in each school, what they are doing already and what can be improved.
- 02 Working group**
Parents, young people and school staff have worked together to understand the needs of pupils and to identify key areas for change.
- 03 School policy review**
All six schools participating in the pilot carried out reviews of their current practice and have put in place school improvement plans based on the trauma-informed training they have received.

Changing mindsets in the town

Trauma-informed work in Blackpool is playing a pivotal role in changing attitudes and practice across the town.

We surveyed 236 school staff including technicians, teachers, special support assistants, pastoral staff and leadership teams in relation to the trauma-informed training.

95.5%

of participants think it is important that schools apply a trauma-informed approach.

96.5%

of participants think it is important to recognise the signs and symptoms of trauma in students.



Alison Bellaby,
Programme
Manager,
REACH

“

"The exciting thing about REACH was seeing the schools learn from the small-scale interventions and start to scale these across their whole school.

They were better able to identify need and deliver early interventions to the children coming through their doors."

Long-term sustainability

Embedding trauma-informed practice in schools

In order to have sustainability in schools, trauma-informed practices have been included in School Improvement Plans and in 2022/23 this will include more training that will include parental involvement and restorative practices in school training programmes.

Other personnel have also been trained to deliver the tiered training in 2022/23 to allow more schools to benefit from packages developed this year, and this is being supported by staff from the Virtual School, who are the Local Authority champions for children in care.

In 2022/23 Better Start and the Oxford Brookes Centre for Educational Consultancy and Development will ensure that trauma-informed practice is included as part of the School Centred Initial Teacher Training curriculum for all new trainee teachers who come to work in the town.

Trauma-informed pilot workstreams to be delivered as part of long-term sustainability

04

Data collection

A pre-and-post evaluation survey as well as case study interviews with staff, to explore how they might use the learning in practice, how their confidence has changed or grown and how they feel about practically applying their learning in practice.

05

Good practice guide

Dr Lauren Wolfenden and Jane Leigh are working together to produce a good practice guide containing examples, case studies and recommendations that are both specific to Blackpool and can be applied to and adapted to other contexts. The guide is due to be published December 2022.

Informing Blackpool's 10-year education strategy

We have continued to work with stakeholders to change attitudes and practice across the town by ensuring learning from the REACH programme informs the implementation of the town's 10-year education strategy.

Dr Lauren Wolfenden from the Oxford Brookes Centre for Educational Consultancy and Development, and Jane Leigh, Deputy Head of St Mary's Catholic Academy are part of the Steering Group for the Inclusion strand of the ten-year strategy, enabling them to use the pilot project's learning to inform future approaches to inclusion in Blackpool.



REACH Legacy: Doncaster

In REACH Doncaster's legacy year we worked to improve inclusive practice in schools through upskilling school staff in communication techniques via Paul Carlile's 'Enable' programme.

How REACH Legacy worked in Doncaster

Further Enable training within schools

The programme works by delivering training in three tiers, firstly to the entire school staff team, then to the senior leadership teams of the schools and then to specific staff who have been selected to be Practice Leads and who will then roll out the work in their schools.

This tiered training has the effect of making sure everyone is aware of the initiative and its aims and that the Senior Management teams are aware that this work will be being delivered in their schools and the support the Practice Leads will need to successfully deliver and also provides the Practice Leads with the knowledge and resources needed to deliver the project in their school.

Long-term sustainability

Embedding the Enable programme within schools

We have ensured the sustainability of the work by training a core group of staff as Practice Leads for the Enable programme. A core group of staff now have the capacity to lead on embedding and securing practice, both with existing and newly appointed staff.

Paul Carlile, who has been delivering the Enable training, is also continuing to work with the Senior Leadership Teams of schools who participated in the REACH Doncaster project and plans to support them as needed, including continuing 1:1 coaching and support for schools looking to develop 'Relational Policies' in place of 'Behaviour Policies'.

School self-funding therapist within school

Due to the success of the Fortis Therapy intervention, one school, Balby Central, is continuing to fund and provide a therapist in school to provide support for pupils most in need.



REACH Legacy: Belfast

How REACH Legacy worked in Belfast

Sharing the learning with wider audiences

In the legacy year, we worked closely with school leads in the production of the REACH Belfast video.

Key stakeholders from Holy Family Primary School travelled to our learning event in Rochdale to represent the North Belfast project's work and share learning from their experience on the programme.

Long-term sustainability

Embedding practice into school policy

"Through REACH, we were able to engage with Pivotal to provide staff training on positive discipline practices. These practices proved to be very effective and are now embedded within school policy."

Mrs Montgomery, Principal, Belfast Model Boys School

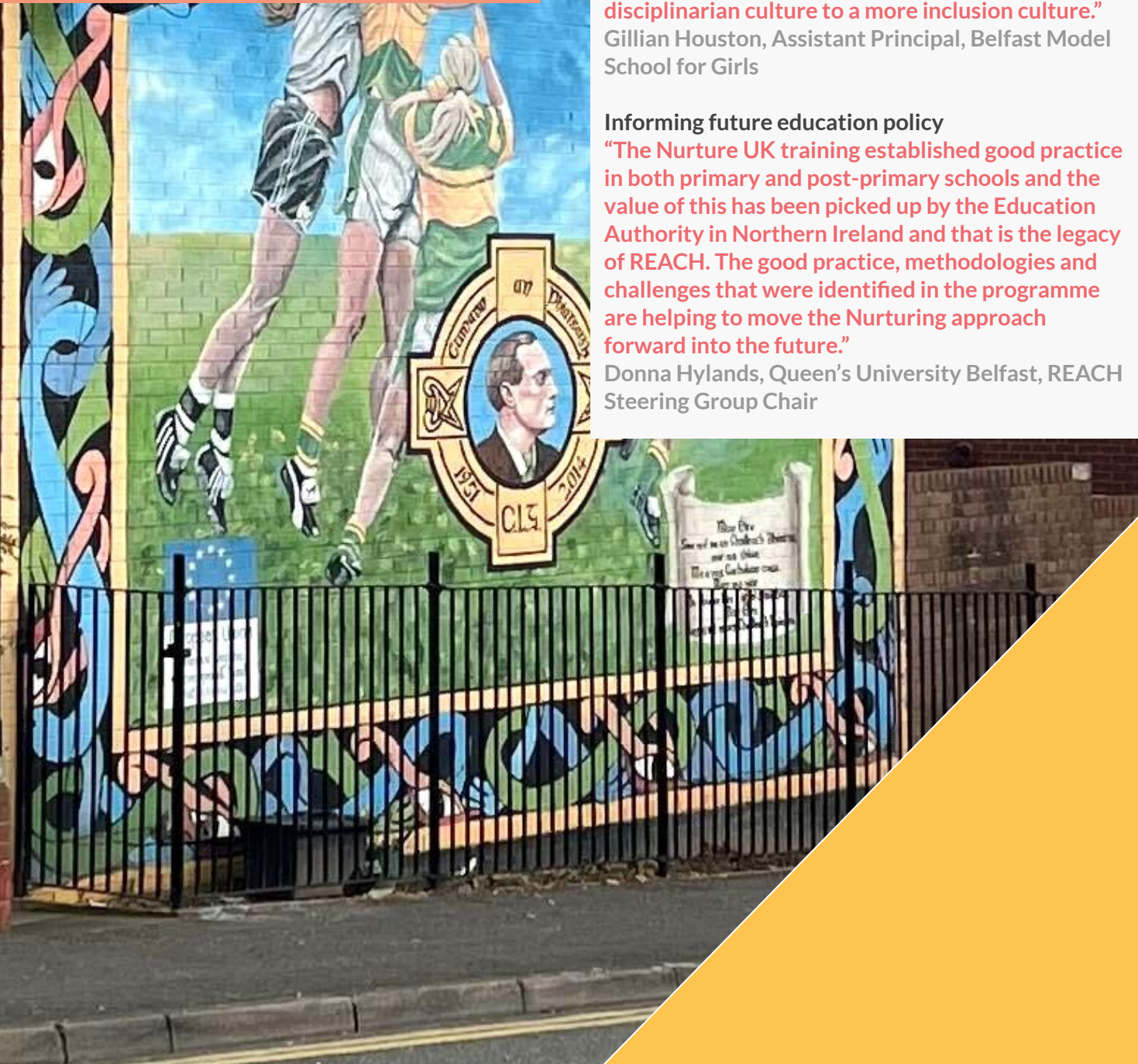
"One of the positive changes we have seen through the REACH programme is moving from a punitive, disciplinarian culture to a more inclusion culture."

Gillian Houston, Assistant Principal, Belfast Model School for Girls

Informing future education policy

"The Nurture UK training established good practice in both primary and post-primary schools and the value of this has been picked up by the Education Authority in Northern Ireland and that is the legacy of REACH. The good practice, methodologies and challenges that were identified in the programme are helping to move the Nurturing approach forward into the future."

Donna Hylands, Queen's University Belfast, REACH Steering Group Chair



Delivering on legacy year objectives

The overall aims of the REACH programme's legacy year were to:

Demonstrate the achievements of the programme

We produced three videos during the legacy year to demonstrate the achievements of REACH in each location.

The videos have been published and shared with other communities to inspire them to take a collective approach to improving inclusion within their schools.



Blackpool



Doncaster



Belfast

Encourage wider uptake of approaches to reduce exclusion and promote inclusion, and encourage future funding for similar work

In September 2022, we started a year-long Discovery process for a new collaborative project to improve inclusion across the borough, working with Rochdale Council and all local secondary schools, special schools and alternative provision.

Attendees from Rochdale have been inspired to start an inclusion programme since learning about the impact REACH and other Right to Succeed programmes have had within Blackpool.



Seeing the impact of the literacy and inclusion progress in Blackpool has been the compelling evidence base to move forward with the inclusion programme in Rochdale, where there is real purpose and a moral imperative shared by senior leaders to do something different and improve outcomes for children and young people."

Gillian Barratt

Former Head of Schools at Rochdale Council and now Head of Primary Improvement at Altus Education Partnership

Share learning within wider audiences

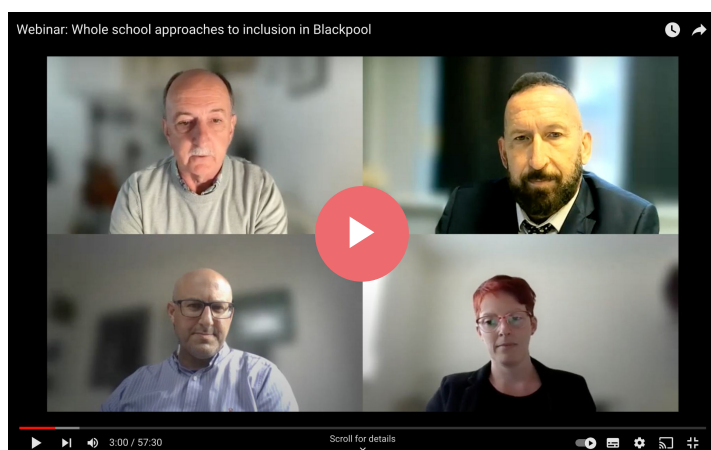
During the legacy year, we hosted two learning events to share learning from REACH.

Blackpool REACH Webinar, April 2022

The webinar was attended by 62 people and the panel explored:

- The biggest challenges facing the PRU and schools in Blackpool with high rates of exclusion.
- How primary and secondary schools worked together to tackle these challenges.
- How interventions have been scaled up to whole-school approaches.
- Blackpool's future plans on inclusion.
- How lessons learned in Blackpool can be applied to other places facing similar challenges.

A recording of the event is available to watch here:



REACH Learning Event, Rochdale, September 2022

The event was attended by representatives of Rochdale Council and all local secondary schools, special schools and alternative provision.

We hosted a range of sessions delivered by key stakeholders involved in REACH, including head teachers from Blackpool and Belfast, and Jane Leigh, Deputy Head of St Mary's Catholic Academy, who is leading on embedding trauma-informed practice in Blackpool.

The aims of the event were to:

- Draw together key learning around inclusion across the work of REACH over the last three years.
- Share the collective impact principles with new audiences, including Rochdale Council who we are working with on a town-wide inclusion programme
- Profile key learning for the educational leads involved in our work.
- Ask those who'd been involved in REACH to deliver keynote speeches and workshops to bring to life the findings and impact of the programme.



Thank you to The National Lottery Community Fund

We would like to offer a huge thank you to the National Lottery Community Fund, who generously funded REACH for four years.

TNLCF have enabled Right to Succeed to explore the theme of inclusion within different communities and learn about what works best.

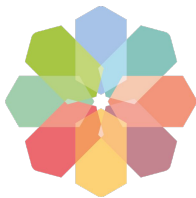
The learning from REACH has improved our approach to programme design and delivery, and is informing future inclusion work. This includes the town-wide inclusion programme in Rochdale and the continuing work in Blackpool in developing and implementing its 10-year education strategy.

We are committed to using the learning from REACH to inform future programme delivery. We have developed a community of practice and supported schools to design and develop their own solutions. We have built on existing strengths and this collective approach has given children and young people a greater opportunity to reach their potential.

This experience and learning have been pivotal in our wider ambitions of delivering place-based change programmes at scale, and thanks to TNLCF, we are now expanding to work in more locations and support more left-behind communities.







RIGHT TO
SUCCEED