

Evidence to Decision Framework

‘Effective Professional Development in 16-19 Settings’

Introduction to this document

The ***Effective Professional Development in 16 – 19 Settings*** guidance offers three recommendations underpinned by the best available robust evidence on how to design and deliver effective professional development (PD) to improve teaching practices and ultimately promote learners’ progress.

What evidence underpins the guidance?

The recommendations in this guidance have been drawn from robust causal research including systematic reviews of the best available English and international evidence; qualitative research to provide contextual insights and an understanding of the PD landscape in the 16-19 education sector; and comprehensive sector engagement and consultation to provide insights to feasibility and acceptability.

Whilst there is more limited robust evidence specific to 16-19 settings, the core of this guidance is underpinned by a systematic review ***‘Effective Professional Development’*** by Sims et al. (2021). This draws on extensive empirical evidence from across the sectors including sports, education, and medicine, and over 100 education specific robust causal studies for PD for practitioners delivering to ages 3-18. Within the systematic review, studies including students from 16-18 were reviewed by EEF’s Evidence Synthesis Team, to verify the assumptions against the wider body of research. The analysis in the systematic review is such that if a mechanism x helps to achieve behaviour change in multiple domains beyond teacher PD and we also observe an association between the presence of x in PD programs and the impact of that PD, then x is likely also a causally active component in teacher PD (analogical abduction).

The guidance further incorporates findings from a systematic review ***‘Effective Implementation’*** by Moore et al. (2024). This draws on a comprehensive realist evidence review summarising the best available international evidence relevant to implementation in education. Realist reviews are a type of iterative research synthesis that focuses on understanding not just if an approach works in achieving desired outcomes, but also how it works, for whom, under what conditions, and why. The review team identified approaches that held true across different studies and contexts – they are derived from multiple studies conducted across different fields. The cumulative evidence from different studies, drawing on different research methods, adds weight collectively to the robustness of the findings.

The approaches to implementation of PD as it relates to Moore et al. (2024), and the principles for effective PD identified in Sims et al. (2021) were also reviewed to ensure feasibility and acceptability. This was determined through comprehensive research on current practice ***‘16–19 sector Continuing Professional Development Practice Review’*** led by a research team specialised in 16-19 education research including a sector survey

of nearly 100 PD leads and over 200 practitioners from FE colleges, Sixth Form colleges, Independent Training Providers and schools with 16-19 provision, as well as in depth interviews and case studies with settings and PD providers, to identify current practice (Boodt et al., 2025). It also includes an assessment of 90 PD programmes currently available in the 16-19 sector against the PD framework outlined in Sims et al. (2021).

An expert guidance panel was formulated to triangulate findings – this was established through a public request for engagement and included the PD leads/representatives from the following settings; Wigan and Leigh College, Oldham Sixth Form College, Riverside College, Richard Huish College, Havant and South Downs College, Middlesbrough College Group, in addition to direct feedback, insights and consultation from Sixth Form Colleges and General FE Colleges, and Sixth Form Schools on the context, content, and framing (two focus groups with five leaders and five practitioners and eight participants in 1:1 interviews), as well as wider consultation through EEF setting consultation systems (including focus groups with four sixth form schools and two colleges) and 1:1 meetings.

This overall approach intends to ensure that the findings and principles of the identified research apply in the 16-19 context, and the ways that those principles can be applied are articulated in contextually relevant terms: identifying their prevalence across current PD programmes specific to the 16-19 sector, the review of practice, and the PD guidance panel.

While the 16–19 PD guidance shares core principles with school-based guidance—reflecting principles of behaviour change and effective implementation mechanisms—its content and application is tailored to the 16–19 context. The EEF is committed to ensuring that its guidance offers actionable recommendations to support the 16-19 settings; to aid this process an evidence to decision framework has been used. An 'Evidence to Decision' (EtD) framework is a structured and systematic approach used in evidence-based decision-making processes, particularly in the fields of healthcare and policy development. Its primary purpose is to guide decision-makers in evaluating and synthesising available evidence to inform their decisions and recommendations. The EtD framework helps ensure that decisions are transparent, consistent, and based on the best available evidence. A full list of references can be found at the end of the report.

The following questions were considered for each recommendation:

	Questions
Priority of the problem	Does the recommendation deal with a setting's/practitioner's priorities?
Certainty of the evidence	What is the overall certainty of the evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it supported by a rigorous methodology (see taxonomy)? • Are there any threats to validity?
Benefits and harms	What is the magnitude of potential benefits of following this guidance in comparison with current practice in settings?
	What is the magnitude of risks/potential harms of following this guidance in comparison with current practice in settings?

Transferability	Is the evidence relevant to the setting in question (16-19 sector)?
Balance	Does the balance between desirable and undesirable effects favour the intervention or the comparison?
Resource use	How large are the resource requirements (costs)?
Equity	What would be the impact on disadvantaged learners?
Acceptability	Is the intervention acceptable to setting leaders, practitioners, learners and other stakeholders (parents/governors/policymakers)?
Feasibility	Is the approach feasible for settings?

This document presents an overview of the individual evidence to decision frameworks for each of the three recommendations included in the *'Effective Professional Development in 16-19 settings'* Guidance. The frameworks illustrate factors that were considered in the decision-making process and our transparency in demonstrating the evidence sources that inform each of the recommendations.

Recommendation 1		Build a culture of continuous professional development. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders should Engage, Unite, and Reflect with practitioners.
Criteria	Questions	
Priority of the problem	Does the recommendation deal with a setting's/practitioner's priorities?	<p>The quality of teaching is one of the strongest drivers of learner attainment (Allen et al., 2018; Burgess, 2016; Coe & Rauch, 2020; Hattie, 2009), and evidence consistently shows that strong professional development (hereafter PD) is a key enabler of effective teaching practice. Evidence and consultation with the 16-19 sector suggests that it continues to be a priority.</p> <p>The Ofsted inspection framework for Further Education and Skills (FES) acknowledges PD as a sector-wide priority. Under 'leadership and management', it stresses the expectations that leaders ensure 'highly effective' PD is made accessible for practitioners (Ofsted, 2024). In a recent review to the framework, a new provisional inspection framework also stresses that leaders develop 'a highly effective professional learning culture in which staff take responsibility for their professional learning and are keen to continually improve their expertise, drawing on the practice of others and on high-quality research evidence' (Ofsted, 2025, p.12). This new framework is still under review with consultation, but together with the current framework suggests the importance for leaders to develop a strong CPD culture.</p>

		<p>Guidance on and development of a more supportive environment for PD have been identified as important factors and priorities, to strengthen teaching quality and effective implementation of PD. Moore et al.'s (2024) review on evidence of implementation stresses culture as a key factor for effective implementation in education. Its presence can support the greater impact of an implemented activity while its absence can greatly hinder bringing about desirable outcomes. They highlight the need for clear guidance on how to define and sustain a culture that supports improvement. Crisp et al. (2023) found that staff's 'disengagement' and 'willingness to update their teaching practice' were notable barriers to the success of PD (p.53), highlighting the importance of building a culture for PD. There is a perceived lack of access to effective CPD in the 16-19 sector, and PD is repeatedly reported as not prioritised enough (Crisp et al., 2023; Flemons et al., 2024; Fletcher et al., 2015; Hanley et al., 2018; Hobson et al., 2025; Loy, 2024). Hobson et al. (2025) additionally call for research-informed guidance on continuous PD for the sector.</p> <p>These barriers are further reflected in alignment of expectations, needs, and practice. The <i>16–19 sector Continuing Professional Development Practice Review</i> (Boodt et al., 2025) suggests a perceived gap between PD leads perceptions of PD provision and practitioners experience of this. Fewer practitioners reported receiving PD support, with many more PD leads reporting that it was provided when surveyed. Approximately 20% of the surveyed practitioners responded that they did not receive any support to implement learning from their recent PD activities. The EEF conducted a further consultation with PD leads with a mix of school-based sixth form and college leads, through established setting consultation systems. This consultation reported that the diversity of professional standards and pathways through teaching in post-16 mean that some 16-19 teachers do not necessarily see the value in improving their practice, particularly when it is not necessarily linked to any clear uniting standards or form of progression. These points collectively highlight the need for a stronger PD culture in which leaders should engage, unite and reflect with practitioners.</p> <p>Lastly, the panel stressed the importance of PD as priority in their settings, and the necessity of cultivating or maintaining a culture which supports buy-in for engagement</p>
--	--	--

		<p>in PD. As such, this recommendation responds to the recognised need and aligns with the national priority in the 16-19 sector.</p>
<p>Benefits and harms</p>	<p>What is the magnitude of potential benefits of following this guidance in comparison with current practice in settings?</p>	<p>The benefits of PD are well documented and understood in education, as Rauch and Coe (2019) argue that teaching quality can be improved through effective PD. Positive effects of PD are reported across the evidence base through studies that have counterfactual or business as usual practice. A systematic review by Sims et al. (2021) found that PD had an average of about one month of additional progress compared to business as usual of not providing PD. This evidence provides the solid ground to recommend a focus on PD to improve teaching quality, and ultimately learner outcomes by building a culture of continuous PD. The review also highlights that the impact on learners was greater in programmes that incorporated more effective PD components, compared to those with fewer key mechanisms. Recommendation 2 explores this in greater detail to strengthen PD practice.</p> <p>A more detailed discussion of the evidence considered by the panel is summarised in the section below on the certainty of evidence. The panel agreed on the importance of and potential benefits of emphasising the need to establish an effective CPD culture, noting that such a culture is not always well-established in 16-19 settings.</p>
	<p>What is the magnitude of risks/potential harms of following this guidance in comparison with current practice in settings?</p>	<p>In the evidence base, there is limited reporting of undesirable effects or negative outcomes. The evidence review on PD does not report any negative impacts of providing PD on learner outcomes (Sims et al., 2021). While there are very few risks associated with this recommendation, the task of establishing a strong PD culture should not be underestimated and may take time and resources. Workload and time pressures can be considerable barriers to establishing a stronger CPD culture and strengthening engagement with PD regardless of the sector’s appetite (Loy, 2024). Some panel members and consulted leaders in the 16-19 sector stressed that building a PD culture can be difficult for settings, especially when resistance from teachers can arise. This recommendation aims to support leaders navigating this to develop a PD culture by outlining tangible steps they can follow under three key steps of ‘engage’, ‘unite’ and ‘reflect’.</p>

<p>Certainty of the evidence</p>	<p>What is the overall certainty of the evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is it supported by a rigorous methodology (see taxonomy)? <p>Are there any threats to validity?</p>	<p>This recommendation is underpinned by a rigorous evidence review on implementation in education (Moore et al., 2024). This review conducted a systematic review of implementation literature including 79 school-based studies and 28 reviews to theorise implementation in schools. The developed implementation theory was further refined based on a realist review of 293 empirical studies and reviews which provided information on key contexts and mechanisms for programme implementation leading to ultimate learner outcomes. This research has identified culture as one of the key enabling structures to drive successful implementation in education. Additionally, it has identified three key mechanisms – engaging, uniting and reflecting with teachers – as behaviours to support implementation. ‘Engaging’ is supported by 64 out of 293 reviewed studies, and 64 for ‘uniting’ and 71 for ‘reflecting’. The review team concludes that they hold high confidence for the enabling structures including culture, ‘uniting’ and ‘reflecting’. For ‘engaging’, they hold moderate confidence due to some challenges with the weaker coherence of this mechanism in the reviewed studies as well as overlap with ‘uniting’. However, the review identified core elements for engaging and includes it among the key implementation mechanisms.</p> <p>This recommendation is further supported by a rigorous systematic review which explored the impacts of PD on learner outcomes and effective PD mechanisms based on 104 studies (Sims et al., 2021). The study concludes that PD had an average of about one month of additional progress compared to business as usual of not providing PD. This evidence provides the solid ground to recommend PD as a means to improve teaching quality, and ultimately learners’ outcomes. The review also shows that the impact on learners was higher in programmes having more effective PD components than those with less key mechanisms, and Recommendation 2 explores this in greater detail to strengthen PD practice.</p>
<p>Transferability</p>	<p>Is the evidence relevant to the setting in question (16-19 sector)?</p>	<p>The implementation evidence review, which stresses the importance of culture, is grounded in existing theoretical literature on implementation and empirical studies (Moore et al., 2024). The review included different work packages, all of which had the inclusion criteria for education settings covering ages 3 – 18 and represented evidence from 16-19 years old or relevant education settings (i.e., senior high schools). To first theorise the framework, the review drew on more than 100 studies, and eight studies explicitly included settings relevant to the 16-19 sector and many other studies covered</p>

		<p>schools and educational institutions generally without a specific-phase focus. The team also reviewed 293 empirical studies from education settings covering ages 3 – 18, strengthening the cross-phase usability of the findings. Additionally, they refined the implementation theory through the sector engagement – surveys and interviews – both of which incorporated practitioners working in the 16-19 settings. All these details of the review support the transferability of its findings to the 16-19 sector. Lastly, some of the panel members shared that they are already using the EEF School’s Guide to Implementation, suggesting its transferability to the 16-19 practitioners.</p>
Balance	<p>Does the balance between desirable and undesirable effects favour the intervention or the comparison?</p>	<p>In the evidence base there is limited reporting of undesirable effects or negative outcomes, and across the evidence reviews the balance of outcomes consistently favoured positive impacts (see boxes above on certainty of evidence and benefits and harms).</p>
Resource use	<p>How large are the resource requirements (costs)?</p>	<p>The resource requirements to develop a culture of CPD are low. This recommendation stresses the importance of establishing a culture of CPD without prescribing the frequency of PD to be engaged. This can be achieved by utilising the current resources (e.g., time and capacity) for PD in the sector. However, with a stronger CPD culture, there may be increased engagement with CPD and/or desire to engage with CPD, which can ultimately lead to increased CPD cost. 16-19 settings may need to carefully balance the resource requirements.</p>
Equity	<p>What would be the impact on disadvantaged learners?</p>	<p>There is limited evidence exploring the significance of culture in leading to positive impacts on disadvantaged learners. However, the evidence shows that the PD had higher impacts in programmes with more disadvantaged learners than those with less deprived groups, suggesting the possible benefits of PD on disadvantaged learners (Sims et al., 2021).</p>
Acceptability	<p>Is the intervention acceptable to setting leaders, practitioners, learners and other stakeholders (parents/governors/policymakers)?</p>	<p>The panel suggested that this recommendation is acceptable to and will be welcomed by both 16-19 leaders and practitioners. A focus group with 16-19 leaders and practitioners explained that they have been working on building a PD culture in their settings and would welcome recommendations in this area. Additionally, some of the panel members shared that they are already using the EEF School’s Guide to Implementation, suggesting their familiarity with the implementation-related recommendations.</p>

Feasibility	Is the approach feasible for settings?	The panel members and other leads in the sector agreed that it is feasible for the 16-19 settings to work on establishing a strong CPD culture, and it has been a priority for many of them.
--------------------	--	--

Recommendation 2		Use the KEEP Framework ¹ to plan, design and deliver professional development.
Criteria	Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge – deliver new knowledge in ways that support understanding • Engagement – engage practitioners so they are motivated to act on new knowledge • Execution – provide opportunities for practitioners to accurately develop techniques • Practice – integrate purposeful and repeated practice to embed delivery.
Priority of the problem	Does the recommendation deal with a setting's/practitioner's priorities?	<p>Guidance on effective PD is highlighted as a priority in multiple reports demonstrating areas where PD could be strengthened; with some challenges around access to effective PD among the 16-19 practitioners (Crisp et al., 2023; Flemons et al., 2024; Hanley et al., 2018; Loy, 2024). This limited access to effective PD may impact improvements in learner outcomes, due to missed opportunities to support development of professional skills (Crisp et al., 2023). This can also negatively affect job satisfaction within the profession (Flemons et al., 2024). The EEF's 16-19 CPD Practice Review revealed that a substantial portion of the surveyed teachers found the CPD activities in the past 18 months 'not very useful' or 'not useful at all' (32.4%) (Boodt et al., 2025). PD mechanisms reported as reasons for this dissatisfaction included a lack of supporting evidence, follow-up support and relevance to their teaching practices. Their analysis of 90 PD programmes in the sector also revealed that there are some under-represented mechanisms.</p> <p>Crisp et al. (2023) indicate a strong desire in the sector for access to high-quality CPD. The panel has affirmed the value of an established, effective PD implementation model to focus efforts. These points collectively underscore that a clear conceptualisation of what constitutes 'good' and 'effective' PD in the sector would be of value. This</p>

¹ Please see Appendix for the link between the KEEP framework and IGTP model proposed by the Sims et al (2021) evidence review.

		<p>recommendation responds to the sector-wide priority by proposing effective PD mechanisms.</p>
<p>Benefits and harms</p>	<p>What is the magnitude of potential benefits of following this guidance in comparison with current practice in settings?</p>	<p>Positive effects of incorporating 14 mechanisms in the KEEP framework are reported in the evidence base through studies that have counterfactual or business as usual practice. A rigorous systematic review on PD by Sims et al. (2021) concludes that PD programmes more closely aligned with the KEEP framework are more likely to be effective than those that are not. This conclusion is based on a range of analyses of 104 included studies, including meta-analysis and qualitative comparative analysis (see the box below on the certainty of evidence for more details). Proposing a well-evidenced effective PD model has the benefit of strengthening the current PD practice, given the areas of PD in the 16-19 identified as having scope for improvement (Crisp et al., 2023; Flemons et al., 2024; Hanley et al., 2018; Loy, 2024).</p>
	<p>What is the magnitude of risks/potential harms of following this guidance in comparison with current practice in settings?</p>	<p>Within the evidence base, there is limited reporting of undesirable effects or negative outcomes associated with incorporating the 14 mechanisms outlined in the KEEP framework. The systematic review by Sims et al. (2021) does not identify any negative impacts of PD programmes incorporating these mechanisms on learner outcomes. On the contrary, the review concludes that the positive impacts are likely to be greater when PD programmes are more closely aligned with the KEEP framework.</p> <p>Some panel members noted a common misconception they have perceived within the school sector, which is that effective PD must include all 14 mechanisms of the KEEP framework. However, embedding all mechanisms is not always feasible due to contextual constraints such as limited time and capacity (Loy, 2024). This challenge can result in unintended consequences such as a superficial, tick-box approach to implementing all mechanisms, or a complete disengagement from the framework. These potential risks are mitigated through the careful wording of the recommendation and accompanying guidance, which clarify that not all mechanisms need to be present in every instance of PD.</p> <p>The current report proposes effective PD as the ‘KEEP’ framework, which is different wording and language compared to EEF recommendations to the school sector. To mitigate potential misunderstandings, the guidance includes clear communication and illustrative examples, emphasising that both approaches are grounded in the same</p>

		<p>underlying mechanisms. Framing these mechanisms as a cohesive framework is considered beneficial, as it offers a clear and accessible reference point that practitioners can more easily engage with and apply in their contexts.</p>
<p>Certainty of the evidence</p>	<p>What is the overall certainty of the evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it supported by a rigorous methodology (see taxonomy)? • Are there any threats to validity? 	<p>There is strong evidence on what constitutes effective professional development as summarised in the systematic review by Sims et al. (2021), which employed a rigorous systematic review methodology drawing on 104 studies. The review identified the above framework and 14 mechanisms from the wide range of empirical evidence, highlighting key principles for ‘how people learn new knowledge and skills and change their practice’ (p.58). They are then adapted to the education context, specifically teacher PD, and meta-analyses were conducted to assess the impact of a balanced PD approach by comparing the effects of balanced and non-balanced PD programmes on student outcomes. The report shows that programmes incorporating almost all components had much greater impacts on learners’ outcomes (ES close to 0.17) compared to those with no effective PD components (ES close to zero). They also compared impacts between balanced PD (incorporating all four categories) vs imbalanced PD (missing one or more categories) and found that the former had three times larger ES (.15 compared to .05). This finding was not statistically significant; however, based on the qualitative comparative analysis, which found that balanced PD designs consistently yielded higher effect sizes across various thresholds, the authors conclude that ‘balanced designs are more likely to be effective’ (p.60). The identified 14 mechanisms, organised under the four broad categories, are thus well-supported by evidence and have been shown to positively influence professional behaviour change and, ultimately, improve learner outcomes.</p> <p>EEF conducted an internal analysis of the programmes reviewed by Sims et al. (2021) that were relevant to the 16-19 sector. These studies were either delivered in secondary schools or their international equivalent, therefore judged with some relevance to the 16-19 sector, and/or included learners aged 16 and above. Our analysis corroborated that all four principles were present and that the majority of approaches were included in the reviewed studies. Where approaches were absent, these were cross-corroborated with the Review of 16-19 PD Practice by Boodt et al. (2025), which conducted an analysis of 16-19 programme provision to ensure that they were</p>

		represented and practical for delivery in the sector (see more details for the transferability box below).
Transferability	Is the evidence relevant to the setting in question (16-19 sector)?	The KEEP model and its 14 mechanisms are considered relevant to the 16-19 sector for several reasons. Firstly, the KEEP model and mechanisms identified by Sims et al. (2021) draw on the existing literature beyond the school sector, specifically considering ‘theoretical accounts of behaviour change’ (p.18). The review team then adapted the mechanisms to better suit the education sector. An internal review of the included studies further supports this relevance. Ten studies included students aged 16 and above, and 15 other studies were programmes for secondary school teachers (or their international equivalent), whose contexts and practices have relevance to the 16–19 sector. Analysis of these 25 studies confirmed that most of the mechanisms were evident, reinforcing framework’s relevance. Moreover, Boodt et al. (2025) conducted a practice review of 16-19 PD and found that all mechanisms are featured in the current CPD practices to varying degrees, providing additional support for the model’s applicability. Sector panel members also affirmed the relevance of the mechanisms to their CPD planning, even if not all are prioritised or explicitly considered in every setting. Lastly, this framework has also been successfully adapted for the Early Years sector through similar evidence translation work (EEF, 2023). Its positive reception in that context further reinforces the model’s relevance and potential for application beyond school phase.
Balance	Does the balance between desirable and undesirable effects favour the intervention or the comparison?	In the evidence base there is limited reporting of undesirable effects or negative outcomes of embedding effective PD mechanisms. Across the evidence reviews the balance of outcomes consistently favoured positive impacts (see boxes above on certainty of evidence and benefits and harms).
Resource use	How large are the resource requirements (costs)?	The resource requirements to implement the effective PD framework and mechanisms are low. The recommendations drawing on this model do not focus on increasing the ‘volume’ of the PD but rather its ‘quality’, which can be achieved by a better use of the time and resources already being used for PD in the sector.
Equity	What would be the impact on disadvantaged learners?	This framework, when implemented with balance, is effective for all learners, and the impact is reported to be more significant for disadvantaged learners than on non-disadvantaged peers. The evidence review by Sims et al. (2021) conducted a subgroup analysis comparing the impacts of PD in studies with high deprivation learners and

		those with low deprivation learners. They found that the effect sizes were higher for the high deprivation group, which supports the significant impact of effective PD on disadvantaged learners.
Acceptability	Is the intervention acceptable to setting leaders, practitioners, learners and other stakeholders (parents/governors/policymakers)?	The effective PD mechanisms and framework appear to be acceptable to all stakeholders. The PD practice review in 16-19 (Boodt et al., 2025) reports that all the mechanisms are present in the current practice. The panel members similarly suggested that the framework is acceptable to the sectors although the acceptability can vary depending on the types of PD in the 16-19 sector and the mechanisms.
Feasibility	Is the approach feasible for settings?	The panel members stressed that the KEEP framework is not always feasible despite the leaders' efforts to plan CPD based on the key mechanisms due to various contextual factors. For instance, they shared it is not always easy to manage cognitive load or ensure sequencing of PD sessions because many staff have different responsibilities and distinct roles with various working hours and patterns. However, they generally agreed that it is feasible to embed KEEP framework in the planning and design stage with some flexibility during the delivery phase.

Recommendation 3		Carefully consider evidence-informed content
Criteria	Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start with proven impact • Consider transferability • Make a balanced decision
Priority of the problem	Does the recommendation deal with a setting's/practitioner's priorities?	The use of research evidence in decision-making has become a pro-social norm in the English education system, particularly within schools (EEF, 2024). Engagement with research and an understanding of effective pedagogies are also recognised as core components of professional knowledge in the 16-19 sector, as outlined in various sector standards and frameworks. For instance, the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) (2022a) clearly includes 'knowledge of effective contemporary educational pedagogy' and 'research-informed practice' in the key professional knowledge and understanding for leaders. Similar expectations apply to teachers and trainers, whose standards also call for engagement with research and the development of 'evidence-informed practice' (ETF, 2022b). Several other standards also stress the importance of evidence-informed teaching such as Advanced Teacher Status (ATS) (SET, 2025a) and Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills status (QTLS) (SET, 2025b). Ofsted's draft

		<p>inspection toolkit for the Further Education and Skills (FES) providers also sets out expectations that leaders develop PD culture while drawing on ‘high-quality research evidence’ (Ofsted, 2025, p.12). Lastly, the Diploma in Teaching (FES) qualification framework similarly includes ‘role and currency of research and evidence’ in the suggested core learning content (DfE, 2025a). These references suggest a shared expectation to engage with research evidence.</p> <p>Mirroring this expectation, there is some evidence of this trend in the 16-19 sector. Boodt et al. (2025) report that many CPD leads in the sector draw on multiple sources of evidence to select and design CPD. However, research evidence is not typically the primary input. Instead, decisions are often informed by a variety of local data sources such as learning walks, classroom observations, student outcomes, staff feedback, and changes in wider policy (ibid). Similarly, the Learning and Work Institute (2020) reports on evidence use in the adult and skills learning sector, including further education, and concludes that surveyed practitioners reported limited confidence and capacity in evaluating and using research evidence. The panel members also noted that they have perceived CPD choices and design in the 16-19 sector as not always being guided by a systematic or evidence-informed process. College visits and consultations with practitioners further revealed that the terms ‘evidence’ and ‘research evidence’ are interpreted in varied and sometimes ambiguous ways. Taken together, these findings suggest that while the engagement with research evidence in informing PD content is growing, it remains an emerging rather than an embedded practice in the 16–19 sector. This recommendation then responds to this reality by outlining ways to further strengthen the sector’s engagement with evidence, particularly in the design and delivery of CPD.</p>
Benefits and harms	What is the magnitude of potential benefits of following this guidance in comparison with current practice in settings?	<p>The potential benefits of using evidence to design and deliver PD are evidenced indirectly by several research reports. The systematic review on PD reports that the use of credible sources is among the key components to strengthen the desirable impacts on learner outcomes (Sims et al., 2021).</p> <p>PD can have a positive impact on learning outcomes, but that impact can vary (Sims et al., 2021). Directing practitioners to identify research evidence of programmes and approaches which have evidence of positive impact may reduce time, effort, and</p>

		<p>resources spent on PD shown to have a negative or null impact. This recommendation encourages a focus on PD demonstrated to have a positive impact – potentially increasing the likely impact of PD. Given the workload pressures and time constraints associated with engaging in CPD in the 16-19 education sector (Loy, 2024), grounding PD decisions on evidence and proven impact has the potential to maximise the use of existing resources and lead to positive impacts on learner outcomes.</p> <p>Boodt et al. (2025) report that where practitioners indicated they did not value recent PD, some attributed their dissatisfaction to a lack of evidence and reference to trusted sources. By recommending an evidence-informed approach to PD content considerations, this recommendation may mitigate dissatisfaction by supporting PD leads to more explicitly consider the sources of PD content. In addition, access to high quality PD has been identified as a key factor influencing one’s job satisfaction in teaching (Flemons et al., 2024). Encouraging PD leads to carefully consider evidence-informed PD content, where relevant evidence is available, can better ensure access to high-quality PD and therefore job satisfaction.</p> <p>Lastly, by providing guidance which aims to better support PD leads in evaluating and using research evidence, the guidance may support PD leads to make more informed judgements on available research and the extent that it can be relied upon to inform PD.</p>
	<p>What is the magnitude of risks/potential harms of following this guidance in comparison with current practice in settings?</p>	<p>In the evidence base, there is limited reporting of undesirable effects or negative outcomes of using research evidence to inform decision-making. While there are very few risks with this recommendation, it is worth noting that the evidence base for the 16-19 sector is limited (Crisp et al., 2023; Social Mobility Commission, 2020). As a result, practitioners may find it difficult to access high-quality and relevant evidence to assess the proven impact of PD content. To address this foreseeable challenge, the recommendation includes suggested starting points for evidence-based tools and resources for the 16-19 practitioners. It also outlines key behaviours for engaging with evidence, which are applicable whenever they engage with research evidence. Lastly, it is not prescriptive and instead advises practitioners to consider transferability even when the evidence shows impacts.</p>
<p>Certainty of the evidence</p>	<p>What is the overall certainty of the evidence:</p>	<p>There is indirect evidence supporting this recommendation. First and foremost, a strong body of research demonstrates clear links between certain pedagogical approaches</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it supported by a rigorous methodology (see taxonomy)? • Are there any threats to validity? 	<p>and improved learner outcomes. While more sector-specific evidence is to be generated in the near future, several pedagogical approaches appear both transferable and relevant to the 16-19 context. EEF conducted an internal review of studies within the EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit and identified several potentially relevant approaches for the 16-19 sector. Of the studies reviewed, 173 studies included students aged 17 and/or 18, with 132 delivered exclusively in upper secondary education settings (or equivalent internationally) – contexts that are comparative to 16-19 settings in England. Approaches found to be particularly relevant include collaborative learning, metacognition and self-regulation approaches, homework, extending school time, peer tutoring and mentoring. While these findings do not directly confirm the effectiveness of these approaches in the 16-19 sector, they suggest potential relevance. The Department for Education’s (2025b) project on Powerful Pedagogy also summarises insights about teachers’ practices from 16 colleges in England. The identified pedagogies overlap with those supported by robust evidence in the school sector, such as feedback and metacognition and self-regulation. Taken together, these emerging indications suggest that certain pedagogical approaches may be relevant for supporting decision-making among sector leaders. It is therefore deemed appropriate to recommend that they try to inform PD content using proven impacts where available, alongside their professional judgement to assess the transferability of an approach to their practice.</p> <p>Additionally, there is some evidence to suggest that the use of ‘credible sources’ is a key mechanism in designing effective PD, as supported by the rigorous evidence review (Sims et al., 2021). The review conceptualises that credible sources offering ‘evidence/statements in favour of/against specified behaviour’ supported by statistical and factual evidence is found to be more persuasive to encourage behaviour change than giving anecdotal justifications (ibid, p.178). Additionally, some surveyed 16-19 practitioners reported that PD not being evidence-based or supported by research as a reason for finding their past CPD ‘not useful’ (Boodt et al., 2025). On the contrary, the reference to evidence and trusted sources were among the key reasons for finding their recent CPD ‘useful’. These findings denote the perceived importance of considering research evidence in PD and serve as evidence base to support the use of evidence to inform PD content.</p>
--	---	--

Transferability	Is the evidence relevant to the setting in question (16-19 sector)?	The evidence supporting this recommendation is relevant to the 16-19 sector, as the review by Sims et al. (2021) draws on broader literature identifying key mechanisms for driving behaviour changes. Additionally, some panel members – as well as other leaders and practitioners EEF has engaged with – have indicated that they use the EEF Toolkit and Guidance Reports to inform their practice, particularly around transferable approaches and themes. This existing engagement with the EEF school-facing resources suggest that 16-19 practitioners can draw on robust school-sector findings alongside their own professional judgement in the absence of sector-specific evidence.
Balance	Does the balance between desirable and undesirable effects favour the intervention or the comparison?	In the evidence base there is limited reporting of undesirable effects or negative outcomes of using research evidence to consider PD design. The balance of outcomes consistently favoured positive impacts (see boxes above on certainty of evidence and benefits and harms).
Resource use	How large are the resource requirements (costs)?	The resource requirements for this recommendation are very low. However, engaging with research evidence is not a quick process and can take time. To help minimise this demand, this recommendation provides clear, tangible actions that practitioners can readily integrate into their PD practice.
Equity	What would be the impact on disadvantaged learners?	Engaging with credible sources that provide evidence to support desirable behaviours is one of the key mechanisms for designing effective PD (Sims et al. 2021). Although there is limited direct evidence on the impact of evidence use on specifically for disadvantaged learners, the review concludes that PD incorporating a balanced set of effective mechanisms are more effective than those covering three or fewer mechanisms. Additionally, the average impact of PD has been shown to be greater for disadvantaged learners than non-disadvantaged peers, highlighting the potential impact of well-designed PD on disadvantaged learners.
Acceptability	Is the intervention acceptable to setting leaders, practitioners, learners and other stakeholders (parents/governors/policymakers)?	The panel agreed that this accommodation is acceptable to 16-19 practitioners. The majority of college leads in the user testing interview also generally agreed that this recommendation can encourage thoughtful selection of PD opportunities while noting the scarcity of 16-19 specific research. A minority noted that evidence availability may cause some challenges with applicability, especially for vocational staff or diverse curriculum areas. This potential challenge is minimised by the supporting text with caveats about contextual differences in evidence, which was positively received by the interviewed college leads.

Feasibility	Is the approach feasible for settings?	<p>The panel noted that it is not always feasible to incorporate evidence when designing PD, due to practical constraints and the limited availability of relevant research. However, this recommendation addresses these concerns by signposting credible starting points and outlining practical, adaptable actions to help practitioners integrate evidence into PD. Furthermore, a recent practice review of PD in the 16–19 sector found that over 60% of surveyed PD leads already engage with research evidence when selecting CPD activities (Boodt et al., 2025). Taken together, these factors demonstrate that this recommendation is both feasible for the 16-19 settings.</p>
--------------------	--	--

References:

Allen, R., Burgess, S., and Mayo, J. (2018). The teacher labour market, teacher turnover and disadvantaged schools: new evidence for England. *Education Economics*, 26(1), pp.4-23.

Burgess, S. (2016) *Human Capital and Education: The State of the Art in the Economics of Education*. IZA Discussion Paper No. 9885 SSRN-id2769193. Available at: <https://docs.iza.org/dp9885.pdf>

Coe, R., Rauch, C. J., Kime, S., and Singleton, D. (2020). Great Teaching Toolkit: Evidence Review. Evidence Based Education. Available at: [584543-great-teaching-toolkit-evidence-review.pdf](https://www.evidencebasededucation.org.uk/great-teaching-toolkit-evidence-review.pdf)

Boodt, S., Clark, L., Senior, L., and Pullen, C. (2025). *16–19 sector Continuing Professional Development Practice Review*. Education Endowment Foundation. Available at: https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/production/documents/16-19-cpd-guide/review_of_practice_-_pd_in_the_16-19_sector_v.1.0.0.pdf

Crisp, J., Hallgarten, J., Morris, R., Perry, T. and Wardle, L. (2023). *16-19 GCSE Resit Practice Review*. Education Endowment Foundation. Available at: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/evidence-reviews/post-16-practice-review>

Department for Education (DfE). (2025a). *Diploma in Teaching (Further Education and Skills) qualification framework*. Department for Education. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-initial-teacher-education/diploma-in-teaching-further-education-and-skills-qualification-framework#the-qualification-framework>

Department for Education. (2021). *Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth*. London: Department for Education. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/601980f2e90e07128a353aa3/Skills_for_jobs_lifelong_learning_for_opportunity_and_growth_web_version_.pdf

Department for Education. (2025b). *Powerful Pedagogy: Effective Practice – Insights from the sector*. Department for Education. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67d2d3da2348f8d0cc51cbb5/Powerful_Pedagogy_-_Effective_Practice_-_March_2025.pdf

Education & Training Foundation. (2022a). *Professional Standards for Leaders in the Further Education and Training Sector*. ETF. Available at: https://www.et-foundation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/ETF_Professional_Standards_Leadership_A2.pdf

Education & Training Foundation. (2022b). *Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers*. ETF. Available at: <https://www.et-foundation.co.uk/professional-standards/teachers/>

Education Endowment Foundation [H. Madgwick, K. Mulholland, R. Emmett, R. Brink, A. Quigley, Y. Kubo, & F. Tennant]. (2024). *Engaging with Evidence: A Survey of Teachers and Leaders*. EEF. Available at:

https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/production/documents/pages/engaging_with_evidence_-_a_survey_of_teachers_and_leaders.pdf?v=1754405211

Education Endowment Foundation. (2021). *Effective Professional Development Guidance Report*. EEF. Available at: [EEF-Effective-Professional-Development-Guidance-Report.pdf](#)

Education Endowment Foundation. (2023). *Guide to Effective Professional Development in the Early Years*. EEF. Available at: [Guide-to-Effective-Professional-Development-in-the-Early-Years.pdf](#)

Flemons, L., McLean, D., Straw, S., and Keightley, G. (2024). Building a stronger FE college workforce: How improving pay and working conditions can help support FE college teacher supply. *NFER*. Available at: <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/building-a-stronger-fe-college-workforce-how-improving-pay-and-working-conditions-can-help-support-fe-college-teacher-supply/>

Fletcher, M., Lucas, N., Crowther, N., and Taubman, D. (2015). The further education workforce. In: Hodgson, A. (ed.) *The Coming of Age for FE? Reflections on the past and future role of further education colleges in the UK*. London: Institute of Education Press, pp.89-111.

Hanley, P., Hepworth, J., Orr, K. and Thompson, R. (2018). *Literature Review of Subject-Specialist Pedagogy*. Gatsby. Available at: <https://www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/literature-review-of-subject-specialist-pedagogy.pdf>

Hattie, J. (2009) *Visible Learning: A synthesis of over 900 meta-analyses relating to achievement* Routledge: London. Available at: [Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement](#);

Hobson, A., Maxwell, B., Káplár-Kodácsy, K., Roffey-Barnsten, J. and Orr, K. (2025). *The Experience of Becoming a Teacher in the English Further Education Sector: A Systematic Review of Evidence*. Gatsby. Available at: <https://www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/reports/2025-07-25-the-experience-of-becoming-a-teacher-in-the-english-fe-sector.pdf>

Learning and Work Institute. (2020) *Understanding evidence use in adult learning and skills*. Learning and Work Institute. Available at <https://learningandwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Understanding-evidence-use-in-adult-learning-and-skills.pdf>

Loy, L. (2024). Redefining teachers' continuing professional development in further education providers in England. *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, **29**(3), pp.520-540.

Moore, D., Proctor, R., Benham-Clarke, S., Gains, J., Melendez-Torres, G. J., Axford, N., Rogers, M., Anderson, R., Hall, D., Hawkins, J., Berry, V., Forbes, C., and Lloyd, J. (2024). *Review of Evidence on Implementation in Education: Evidence Review*. Education Endowment Foundation. Available at: https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/production/documents/pages/eef_implementation_in_education_evidence_review_-_april_2024.pdf?v=1743948163

Ofsted. (2024). *Further education and skills inspection handbook*. Gov.uk. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-and-skills-inspection-handbook-eif/further-education-and-skills-handbook-for-september-2023#personal-development>

Ofsted. (2025). *Improving the way Ofsted inspects education: Further education and skills inspection toolkit*. Gov.uk. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6792803d9091065484572d6a/ITE_inspection_toolkit_draft_for_consultation.pdf

Raunch, C. J. and Coe, R. (2019). Evaluating and measuring teaching quality. In: Scutt, C., Harrison, S. and Chartered College of Teaching (eds.) *Teacher CPD: International trends, opportunities and challenges*. London: Chartered College of Teaching, pp.10-14. Available at: <https://my.chartered.college/teacher-cpd-international-trends-opportunities-and-challenges/>

Sims, S., Fletcher-Wood, H., O'Mara-Eves, A., Cottingham, S., Stansfield, C., Van Herwegen, J., and Anders, J. (2021). *What are the Characteristics of Effective Professional Development? A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis*. EEF. Available at: <https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/production/documents/pages/Teacher-professional-development.pdf?v=1753200464>

Social Mobility Commission. (2020) *Improving attainment among disadvantaged students in the FE and adult learning sector: An evidence review*. Social Mobility Commission. Available: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/859088/SMC_FE_evidence_review.pdf

Society for Education & Training. (2025a). *Advanced Teacher Status (ATS)*. SET. Available at: <https://set.et-foundation.co.uk/your-career/advanced-teacher-status>

Society for Education & Training. (2025b). *QTLS – Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills status*. SET. Available at: <https://set.et-foundation.co.uk/your-career/qtls>

Appendix

The KEEP framework is based on the effective PD model, first introduced as the IGTP model by Sims et al. (2021). This model was then introduced in the EEF Effective Professional Development Guidance in a slightly tweaked language to tailor to the school sector – Build knowledge, Motivate staff, Develop teaching techniques, and Embed practice. This 16-19 Guidance introduces this model as the KEEP framework and adjusts the language of 14 mechanisms to suit the 16-19 sector:

	Effective PD evidence review (Sims et al., 2021)	Effective PD Guidance Report (EEF, 2021)	Effective PD Guidance in 16-19 settings (EEF, 2025)
14 effective professional development mechanisms	I – Instil insights 1. Manage cognitive load 2. Revisit prior learning	Build knowledge 1. Managing cognitive load 2. Revising prior learning	Knowledge – deliver new knowledge in ways that support understanding 1. Introduce new material in a manageable volume 2. Sequence PD so it builds on existing knowledge and skills
	G – motivate goals 3. Goal setting 4. Credible source 5. Praise/reinforce	Motivate staff 3. Setting and agreeing on goals 4. Presenting information from a credible source 5. Providing affirmation and reinforcement after progress	Engagement – engage practitioners so they are motivated to act on new knowledge 3. Use credible sources when developing PD 4. Plan to agree and set meaningful goals 5. Acknowledge and reinforce progress
	T – teach techniques 6. Instruction 7. Practical social support 8. Modelling 9. Feedback 10. Rehearsal	Develop teaching techniques 6. Instruction 7. Social support 8. Modelling 9. Monitoring and feedback 10. Rehearsal	Execution – provide opportunities for practitioners to accurately develop techniques 6. Instruction 7. Modelling 8. Rehearsal 9. Feedback 10. Social support
	P – embed practice 11. Prompts/cues 12. Action planning 13. Self-monitoring 14. Context-specific repetition	Embed practice 11. Providing prompts and cues 12. Prompting action planning 13. Encouraging monitoring 14. Prompting context specific repetition	Practice – integrate purposeful and repeated practice to embed delivery. 11. Prompts and cues 12. Repetition 13. Planning implementation 14. Self-monitoring