

**NATIONAL TUTORING PROGRAMME**  
**TUTORIAL PARTNERS: YEAR 1 (2020-21)**  
*Reflections on scaling interventions  
to create system change*



Education  
Endowment  
Foundation

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## About the Education Endowment Foundation

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) is an independent charity supporting teachers and school leaders to use evidence of what works—and what doesn't—to improve educational outcomes, especially for disadvantaged children and young people.



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## About the National Tutoring Programme Tuition Partners: Year 1 (Y1)

The National Tutoring Programme (NTP) was launched in autumn 2020 to make high-quality tuition available to state-maintained primary and secondary schools, providing additional support to help disadvantaged pupils who have missed out the most as a result of school closures.

The NTP in 2020/21 consisted of two pillars:

- **Tuition Partners (TPs):** participating schools were able to access subsidised high-quality tutoring from an approved list of external Tuition Partners. These organisations were given support and funding to reach as many disadvantaged pupils as possible.
- **Academic Mentors:** trained graduates were employed by schools in the most disadvantaged areas to provide intensive catch-up support to their pupils. Teach First recruited, trained and supported Academic Mentors.

Tuition was chosen as a tool to support pupils to 'catch-up' on their learning as there is [extensive evidence](#) from global research literature of the positive impact that one-to-one and small group tutoring can have on student outcomes, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

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*"The Tuition Partners pillar of the National Tutoring Programme enrolled over 250,000 pupils from across England in the 2020/21 academic year."*

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Early on it was clear that the NTP was an opportunity for system level change for how the tutoring sector interacts with English schools. The NTP's three key objectives therefore were:

- **To deliver high-quality tutoring** to pupils identified by teachers as needing additional support to help to mitigate the impact of school closures. This required stimulating demand for tutoring amongst schools and teachers by promoting the evidence base on tutoring and providing subsidies.
- **To reform the unregulated standards of the current tutoring market** by improving the quality, targeting and scale of tutoring available to disadvantaged children and communities. This included setting clear quality criteria for tutoring and encouraging the market to grow in areas where fewer schools and pupils accessed tutoring. This ensured that there was a supply of high-quality tutoring that was accessible across the country.
- **To create a legacy in the system** by changing the role of tutoring and making this targeted intervention available to more schools as a viable option for Pupil Premium<sup>1</sup> spend and as an additional tool for classroom teachers. Schools trying tutoring at a reduced cost would see the positive impact on pupils' academic attainment, meaning demand for tutoring would likely remain even if subsidies were reduced.

1. The Pupil Premium is additional funding for state funded schools provided by the government to help schools improve the attainment of their socio-economically disadvantaged pupils. Per year, they get an additional £1,345 for every primary age pupil and £955 for every secondary age pupil who is in receipt of free school meals (FSM).

## About this report

This report is based solely on learning and insights identified by the central team leading the design and management of the NTP Tuition Partners in the academic year 2020/2021.

The intention of this report is to highlight some of the insights generated through the design and delivery of a large-scale, evidence-informed programme, in order that policymakers and programme leaders (in the UK and abroad) may find this informative and helpful for any future design and delivery of large-scale change.

Our focus within this report is limited to the Tuition Partners strand of the NTP for which the EEF was responsible. It does not cover the Academic Mentors strand of the programme, delivered by Teach First.

These insights do not form part of the [independent evaluation](#) and some of the findings relate to the specific circumstances of delivering a large-scale, new programme during extended periods of Covid-19 disruption.

The EEF was supported by Nesta's [People Powered Results](#) (PPR) team to identify key insights. PPR led a series of interviews, surveys and a workshop with the NTP team. The output from these has been used to structure and inform this report.

Learning has been separated into four key programme areas:

1. [Programme design](#)
2. [Programme delivery](#)
3. [Data and evaluation](#)
4. [School and sector engagement](#)

For the purposes of identifying common challenges and insights across these areas, findings have also been grouped within five of the following themes:

- Pace and timing
- Communication
- Partnerships
- Scale and complexity
- Continuous improvement

- *What did we learn through delivering the National Tutoring Programme during the academic year 2020/2021?*
- *What might this mean for other programmes working with schools, and for policymakers?*

## Pace and timing

### What did we learn?

In response to the pandemic, the NTP was set up very quickly for a national programme. Having longer set-up periods would have enabled us to engage stakeholders further in the design phase, potentially avoiding adaptations down the line (although many of these were to support the changing circumstances in schools).

Having a small and nimble team was a key strength in being able to meet ambitious timelines. The team also benefited from being able to make quick decisions, allowing the programme to be responsive to feedback.

### What might this mean for others?

**It is not always possible to wait for a perfect set of conditions** to begin delivering and testing an intervention. In fact, simultaneously delivering, testing and adapting supports continuous improvement so that a programme ultimately better meets the needs of users.

**Feedback from users and stakeholders** should be prioritised as much as possible throughout—not just during the design phase but during delivery too.

## Communication

### What did we learn?

Schools needed clear and timely communication about the NTP so that they could decide on its suitability for their pupils and plan for how best to use it. This included information about the evidence and rationale for the programme model, so that the decisions behind these were understood.

It was challenging to communicate the adaptations and changes to the programme that were required as circumstances rapidly changed during the pandemic. We found that communicating with partners and schools via multiple channels was helpful.

### What might this mean for others?

**It is important to address any misconceptions rapidly** through a proactive and clear communications approach.

**Schools need as much time as possible to adapt and plan for change.** The NTP had very limited time to ‘warm’ the school sector to a new programme; where possible, time should be allocated for schools to make sure they can incorporate involvement into their budgetary, curriculum and intervention planning.

## Partnerships

### What did we learn?

The NTP relied on a range of partnerships to be successful. It was crucial that there was a simple mission which stakeholders could buy into and understand—in this case, ensuring schools had access to high-quality tutoring to support the pupils that most needed it.

It was also important the programme had a longer-term view and vision of the sustained improvement in access to tutoring that disadvantaged pupils need. This supported strategic decision making.

Time and resource must be invested in building strong partnerships. For example, facilitating relationships with Tuition Partners that were focused on improvement, growth and quality and not just funding, and close partnership working with local leaders to understand barriers to school engagement.

### What might this mean for others?

Ensuring that partners hold a **shared vision**—for example, in supporting disadvantaged pupils with high-quality provision—contributes to successful partnerships and effective delivery.

It is important to avoid making assumptions about **capacity and capability**, and to make time to **support partners** to strengthen their processes and systems.

Time must be invested in **working closely with national and local leaders** to understand specific barriers to participation and to reach schools and pupils that need support.

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*“We built relationships with sector leaders and organisations in key regions.”*

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## Scale and complexity

### What did we learn?

This was the first time a programme with the NTP's model had been delivered. There was therefore no roadmap or benchmark from which to plan, set targets or estimate tutoring supply and school demand. It was important to use all the evidence available, but also to build in flexibility; for instance, when making projections.

In such a large programme with so many actors, it was crucial to have a strong handle on the data. For instance, a complex set of reasons led to 'cold spots' in demand emerging in particular local areas, and it was important that the NTP was aware of this and could take action.

It is challenging to design an impact evaluation when a programme is being developed, let alone when this programme has the scale and complexity of the NTP. In these circumstances, the top priority is almost always to figure out what data needs to be collected, how it will be collected, when and by whom. Special attention should be given to the processing of personal data.

Some schools found the wide variety of provision on offer—from 33 different providers—difficult to navigate. Providing tools and resources (for instance a user-friendly search and filter tool, along with a PDF guide that presented all of the information in one place) was helpful in enabling schools to learn more about their options quickly.

### What might this mean for others?

**Stakeholders' expectations must be carefully managed** when delivering a programme of this scale. In particular, the expectations of what a programme can or cannot achieve in a particular timeframe, and what problems it might solve.

This includes being **realistic about what an evaluation can achieve** given the programme timeline, the nature of the programme and—particularly relevant during periods of extended remote learning for many pupils—the context in which it is delivered.

It is important to remember that **schools are keen to take advantage of new provision** to benefit their pupils, even in the most challenging circumstances.



## Continuous improvement

### What did we learn?

The NTP's design was grounded in the evidence of what works best for pupils, and it was important that this remained at the core of delivery. However, flexibility was required in order to respond to schools' needs and feedback and a rapidly changing environment.

Collecting and analysing appropriate data and feedback is crucial for understanding delivery barriers and planning for improvement; for example, monitoring areas with low take-up and taking action to increase engagement. There must be clarity for all that data requests are critical but may be time intensive: the rationale for data requests, and what the expected actions will be as a result of the data, should be clear before progressing.

Programme delivery is not the end point: there is huge value to be gained from the process of learning and adapting, which, when captured and shared, can be applied to future interventions delivered at scale.

### What might this mean for others?

It is important to acknowledge the **tension between an evidence-based programme design and the flexibility that schools require** in order to deliver an intervention. Being clear about what is critical and what can be adjusted is helpful.

Engage with the stakeholders that will be responsible for data collection and collation when designing the data structure and processes—ensuring it is **feasible and will meet programme needs**.

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*“Tuition Partners showed a lot of resolve and innovation in adapting delivery to online.”*

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## Summary of activity

- The EEF produced a school closures policy briefing in March 2020 which gave an initial estimation of how closure would impact the attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils.
  - The briefing proposed a two-pronged approach to these findings: mitigation and compensation;
  - In the compensation phase one-to-one and small group tuition was noted as a key approach due to the existing evidence base showing positive impact on pupils' academic attainment.
- The EEF, The Sutton Trust, Nesta and Impetus launched an online tuition pilot, on the basis that any large-scale tuition programme delivered as part of a response to the pandemic would need a substantial online element. The evidence base for online tuition is not as developed as for face-to-face in-school delivery; therefore, the pilot provided valuable additional information on the feasibility of online tuition.
- A small project team from the EEF worked on the initial programme design using:
  - existing EEF trials, notably [The Tutor Trust—Affordable Tutoring](#), Perry Beeches [Graduate Coaching Programme](#) and the [National Online Tuition Pilot](#);
  - findings from Nickow et al's (2020) [systematic review on the effects of tutoring](#), and;
  - market analysis supported by external consultants.
- Alongside this the EEF was completing a [rapid evidence assessment on remote learning](#) and used this to highlight the need for a large-scale intervention.

## Pace and timing

### What did we learn?

- A key achievement was designing, setting up and launching the NTP in an extremely short space of time. A clear advantage of the EEF being the lead delivery organisation meant that we were able to use the well-established EEF model of grant funding and delivery partners and tweaked this model for the specifics of the NTP and our partnership with the DfE.
- Our creativity in the pre-launch phase—for example, harnessing existing EEF staff capacity and outsourcing external expertise—was paramount in meeting the tight deadlines.
- It was possible to engage successfully with both the school and the tutoring sector in the short time available: as demonstrated by the fact that we had nearly 400 tutoring organisations apply to the programme, and nearly 1,500 enquiries made by schools on the first day of delivery.
- A key challenge of the fast-paced nature of the programme was that partners were not always completely clear on their role (as Tuition Partners) or the opportunity to access provision (for schools). A key strength in mitigating these challenges was the programme flexibility and the willingness of the team to adapt delivery in response to feedback, alongside the availability to respond to queries that arose.

### What does this mean?

Big change is possible, but you **don't have to wait for a perfect set of conditions to begin testing.**

There was limited time to engage with the sector on programme design, but further engagement wouldn't have eradicated all of these complications.

As long as there is **solid evidence behind the initial product or programme**, it might be beneficial to launch something as soon as a viable product is developed and expect that adaptations will be made along the way.

It is key to have a team of open-minded people that are happy to be flexible about the initial design. This process of **starting with a clear framework and model that can be adapted, then making iterative changes** in response to feedback and data, is more likely to result in something that is an appropriate fit for the market in the long term.

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*“Set-up was challenging and more time may have allowed us to do more to ensure all stakeholders were fully aware of everything that was expected of them.”*

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## Partnerships

### What did we learn?

- The success of the NTP model relied on the effectiveness of a range of multi-level partnerships. This includes partnerships between the founding partners, the Department for Education, Tuition Partners, evaluators and schools.
- It would have been possible for us to have selected far fewer organisations to deliver the programme if our sole focus was the scale of Year 1 delivery. However, building capacity in the system for long-term change was one of the key objectives of the NTP in 2020/21 and therefore supporting a diverse and sustainable market was deemed crucial.
- Selecting a range of Tuition Partners, from big commercial companies to smaller school-based organisations, meant that the programme was able to cater to a variety of school needs. It also meant that Tuition Partners could learn from each other through the peer learning programme, bringing different types of expertise to the work.
- The size of the programme and demand from schools meant that tuition organisations, who may otherwise be competing for business, all had the opportunity to reach as many pupils as possible based on their capacity and delivery model. This provided a positive context for collaboration in the first year, but it will be interesting to see if this can be maintained in the future as organisations expand further.
- It is a challenge to balance the needs and commitments present in this wide range of partnerships. Rallying around a shared vision in a time of crisis was critical. We set expectations and parameters early on and built on existing partnerships to drive the agenda forward at pace.

### What does this mean?

**Engage the sector early and often.** Listen to what partners and system leaders are saying and be clear about what can be expected.

**Most crucial is to ensure a symbiotic relationship is maintained between the intervention providers and the school sector (i.e. supply and demand),** not least because the evidence suggests the cooperation between these two will likely result in the strongest benefit for pupils.

## Scale and complexity

### What did we learn?

- It was a significant achievement to design a programme that was grounded in evidence but was also appropriate for different sections of the tutoring market: indicated by the fact we had nearly 400 applications from tutoring organisations that included charities, for-profit organisations, consortia, Local Authorities, school groups, and universities.
- However, maintaining quality and fidelity to the evidence in scale-up is a common challenge. Some schools and other stakeholders would have preferred more flexibility around certain aspects of programme design (for example, each pupil receiving a sustained 15-hour block in one subject, which the evidence suggests is required).
- Securing buy-in from key stakeholders in the system in the early conception phase was key. The founding partners of the NTP have a strong sector reputation which meant that there was enough trust from the school sector to stimulate demand. In an ideal world, we would have had more time to engage with stakeholders on design decisions as well as raise general awareness of the programme.

### What does this mean?

**Programmes should have a long-term view of the change they are seeking.** Initial delivery is the first step, but there must be at least an emerging theory of how this might lead to sustained positive change.

It is important to start by grounding things in the evidence base, and then implement at scale and with pace **ensuring that adaptations and iterations are made** through feedback and data from the sector.

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*“Setting a clear long-term vision for the work from the outset was important. We wanted this to be about more than one year of delivery, about market reform and improving quality, with the ambition of increasing scale for the longer term.”*

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### Summary of activity

- 33 tutoring organisations from large corporate organisations to small charities were approved as Year 1 Tuition Partners to deliver the programme: each had their own delivery targets and pricing structure for 15-hour blocks of 1:1, 1:2, 1:3 tuition.
- Tuition Partners delivered tutoring in schools, in person or online, or to pupils remotely online at home arranged via their school. Throughout Y1 the NTP team identified which elements of programme design could be adapted and which needed to be retained to have the best bet of a positive impact on pupils' outcomes. Adaptations included extending delivery into holidays and weekends to give schools and pupils more opportunity to arrange tuition.
- As needed, delivery targets were reforecast by Tuition Partners (TPs) in line with uptake from schools and internal capacity: TPs had the opportunity to apply to increase their allocation of pupils and funding could be redistributed centrally to support demand. The NTP programmes team worked closely with Tuition Partners and schools to gain regular feedback to review and improve the offering for schools throughout Y1.
- Tuition Partners took part in a central capacity building programme to support the delivery of high-quality tuition, led by Impetus and Nesta. This included 1:1 diagnostic sessions, peer learning sessions, workshops on online delivery, school engagement and quality assurance.
- More information on lessons learnt about implementing and scaling high-quality tutoring provision from this can be found in the document ['Lessons learnt from National Tuition Programme \(NTP\) Tuition Partners: Year 1 \(Y1\)'](#).

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*“The range of Tuition Partners, from small charities to big organisations and those with more specialist expertise—I think this has given schools a good variety of choice and we've heard it allowed Tuition Partners to learn from each other in a very rich way.”*

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### Pace and timing

#### What did we learn?

- Pace was a challenge for all stakeholders. For Tuition Partners, tutor recruitment and enrolment was challenging in a short timeframe. For schools, there was little time to understand the offer and identify appropriate pupils for the programme (during pandemic-related disruption).
- However, having a small and agile central team allowed quick decisions and changes to programme delivery as needed to support Tuition Partners and schools. For example, frequent reforecasting allowed reallocation of pupils across Tuition Partners to ensure that as much delivery was taking place as possible.

#### What does this mean?

It is possible to **rapidly set up and deliver a complex, evidence-based programme** that involves delivery by different types of organisations. When delivering at pace, however, there will be challenges that will vary by stakeholder. It is crucial to be as **responsive and flexible** as possible.

### Partnerships

#### What did we learn?

- The NTP team built strong partnerships with and between Tuition Partners that were more than simply transactional, which contributed to building a community of practice that supported growth and improvement.
- It was important to navigate complexities and changes to programme delivery by engaging and collaborating with partners at every turn. Due to the rapid timelines of the programme and the changing environment there were many updates which needed to be regularly communicated to Tuition Partners and schools: in an ideal world the frequency of this would have been reduced to ensure that nothing important was missed.
- Building close partnerships also gave valuable insights into sector improvement as a whole: for example, identifying common challenges faced by TPs. Further work in building successful partnerships could have included more time to consider and review the TP and school experience/user journey.

#### What does this mean?

Ensuring that delivery partners hold a **shared vision**— for example, in supporting disadvantaged pupils— contributes to successful delivery.

It is important to avoid making assumptions about **capacity and capability** and make time to **support delivery partners** to strengthen their processes and systems. This includes spending time ensuring partnerships support growth and improvement.



### Scale and complexity

#### What did we learn?

- A necessary tension throughout Y1 was grounding programme design in evidence and intentionally adapting from this as needed to respond to the changing needs of schools.
- Strong collaborative working with schools and partners was important here: for example, identifying the challenges faced by schools in different regions of the country, to support uptake.
- An additional challenge was that Tuition Partners (TPs) needed to estimate their capacity to scale up at the beginning of the programme, before having a sense of the traction with schools in different areas. This meant that some TPs under or overestimated the amount of delivery they could fulfil.
- It was also a challenge to balance the desire to focus on pupils eligible for Pupil Premium funding, with the need to ensure teachers—who know their pupils best—could utilise their professional judgement to select pupils. This was particularly critical this year, with many newly disadvantaged pupils not yet eligible for Pupil Premium funding, and pupils who may have experienced significant personal challenges. This flexibility secured buy-in from schools and ensured support could reach those who needed it most. Despite this flexibility, pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium were still prioritised by schools for tutoring.

#### What does this mean?

Setting pupil eligibility criteria can be helpful to ensure resources reach pupils who most need it. Schools however also need to be given the **autonomy to select the most appropriate pupils for support**.

For programmes being delivered in particularly uncertain or changing circumstances it is important to regularly review **which delivery targets are used as metrics for success**.

### Continuous improvement

#### What did we learn?

- NTP Tuition Partners Y1 intentionally looked to build capacity and foster continuous improvement including the development of a strong peer network between the TPs.
- Flexibility and adaptations were central to this, ensuring that the programme was fit for purpose as the circumstances in schools changed. However, this meant at times quickly changing messaging on what flexibility was permitted.
- With a range of delivery organisations, it was important to closely monitor their delivery and support organisations with any identified improvements that could be made. This included fortnightly data returns, surveys with schools, and auditing session delivery.

#### What does this mean?

Programme delivery itself is not the end point: there is huge **value to be gained from the process of learning and adapting**, which, when captured and shared, can be applied to future interventions delivered at scale.

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*“A strong peer network between the Tuition Partners developed during 20/21, which will hopefully last long-term, supporting continuous improvement of tutoring”*

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### Summary of activity

#### Data

- Receiving high-quality and timely data was of twofold importance in Year 1: monitoring programme delivery (NTP Tuition Partners central team) and for the evaluation.
- Each Tuition Partner submitted fortnightly data, including number of pupils enrolled and reached, session types delivered and information on regional delivery.
- The NTP team used this to monitor the reach of the programme and support the need for any changes in operations or process. It was compiled into a central dashboard which gave averages across Tuition Partners (e.g. % of Pupil Premium pupils reached across the programme) and used for regular reporting to the DfE.
- Tuition Partners were also required to submit participating schools' data fortnightly to NFER and pupil and tutor data termly, to be used for the evaluation described next.

#### Evaluation

- The EEF commissioned an independent evaluation of the Tuition Partners Y1 Programme. The overarching evaluation (led by NFER with Kantar and University of Westminster) had three strands, namely data management; implementation and process evaluation (IPE); and impact evaluation.
- The aim of the overarching evaluation is to estimate the impact of tutoring on pupils' maths and literacy attainment outcomes, using a quasi-experimental design and identify how impact varies by school & pupil characteristics and mode of tutoring.
- The overarching evaluation also explores participant and delivery organisation (Tuition Partners) views and experiences of the programme to investigate Y1 implementation and participation.
- The EEF also commissioned four Research & Engagement (R&E) trials. R&E trials test and evaluate discrete and nimble strategies to reach and engage schools, tutors and pupils: for example, exploring the impact of two distinctive types of recruitment emails on schools' sign-up to the TP programme.
- The EEF and independent evaluators produced an evaluation pack for TPs containing detailed guidance for data collection, privacy notices and other documents such as participant withdrawal forms. They delivered webinars and drop-in information sessions for TPs.
- The overarching evaluation report is due summer 2022; R&E trial results are due in December 2021. More information is available [here](#).

### Partnerships

#### What did we learn?

- Tuition Partners were not expecting data submissions to be as resource intensive as they were. This included the frequency and volume of data requested: smaller organisations in particular experienced challenges with internal capacity and expertise to capture the required data.
- However, data submissions from Tuition Partners were necessary to ensure that programme delivery and any adaptations were data driven. For example, to ensure that tuition was reaching pupils across the country, to identify which Tuition Partners needed further support and to identify where to support schools to help ensure that pupils enrolled went on to receive tuition.
- It was also necessary to collect additional data as part of the independent evaluation, which required further participation from Tuition Partners.

#### What does this mean?

It is important to **manage expectations in advance**, making clear that data submissions for monitoring delivery and for evaluation are a high-priority aspect of the programme, explaining why it is necessary to collect specific variables.

It is also important to spend time **communicating the benefits** of carrying out a rigorous independent evaluation to stakeholders, particularly to research participants (for example, Tuition Partners, tutors, pupils).

The due diligence processes, ahead of funding being awarded, should **support delivery partners to have suitable resources in place**, including advising if additional staffing capacity may be needed.

Wherever possible, **set up central data-sharing systems** which all parties can access to help reduce workload and make it easy to identify and rectify errors.

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*“The data-driven programme and frequency of collection meant we were able to support Tuition Partners quickly with any delivery issues.”*

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### Scale and complexity

#### What did we learn?

- It was challenging to rapidly commission, design and set up an evaluation at the same time as the programme was being designed: this involved (a) making some necessary assumptions about the number of participating TPs, schools (including the number of primary/secondary schools), tutors and pupils (including those eligible for Pupil Premium) and (b) anticipating the evaluators' data needs by setting up a data architecture during the commissioning process.
- Further flexibility was needed to accommodate adaptations made to programme design, and to mitigate the impact of the pandemic. This resulted in (a) the cancellation of SATs and GCSEs and (b) extended periods of remote learning for many pupils leading to the delay of a significant proportion of delivery (particularly that which was planned to be delivered in person) to later in the summer term and over the summer holidays, after attainment data was collected.
- Complex programmes often result in complex evaluations, as was the case for the NTP Tuition Partners programme. To provide formative feedback to stakeholders and understand what components of the programme 'worked' and for whom, a long list of research questions was developed. This may risk making the evaluation report long and difficult to interpret but is necessary to provide transparent and useful knowledge to stakeholders.
- Having 'nimble' randomised controlled trials (RCTs) focusing on reach and retention allowed for some quicker initial findings while the full evaluation is being conducted.

#### What does this mean?

Evaluators of and those commissioning evaluations for complex programmes should consider the following principles:

1. It is much **easier to reduce the scope of an ongoing evaluation than it is to increase**. It can be helpful to start 'big' with a long list of research question and analytical models and then reduce if needed to adjust to circumstances and the quantity/quality of data available.
2. It is good practice to **publish a study plan and to keep it updated if circumstances change**. A good study plan lists research questions, sampling methods, data collection methods, analytical methods, frameworks/theories used to interpret the data. It also provides a timeline of the evaluation.
3. Planning is essential. It is particularly important to **think about how personal data is going to be processed** very early on.
4. **Contingency planning is also important**. Frequent meetings between deliverers and evaluators are essential to prevent or resolve issues and to keep the evaluation on track.

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*“Regular feedback sessions have been very useful, and the evaluation will provide a very useful report for the tutoring sector”*

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### Continuous improvement

#### What did we learn?

- Complex evaluations require problem-solving skills and the capacity to conceptualise and design new processes and mechanisms to capture and learn lessons.
- It is important to clearly communicate to all stakeholders (for example, Tuition Partners, participating schools) why data is being collected for programme delivery and evaluation purposes: not just to monitor what has been delivered but to support continuous improvement.
- The central team strategically considered what information was required to support effective delivery. As the programme adapted, this involved making necessary changes to data templates in order to understand how the programme was being delivered and improved (for example, to track online at-home provision when this flexibility was introduced).

#### What does this mean?

Collecting appropriate data to monitor programme delivery and to rigorously evaluate the programme is crucial for both **ongoing continuous improvement in delivery** and to **help inform similar interventions** in future.

Using regular data submissions to **identify trends across the programme and react to them quickly** is critical.

### Summary of findings

- We completed market warming and engagement activities with tutoring organisations, school and wider sector leaders in the limited time available prior to launch.
- The website launched prior to the programme starting in November 2020 to enable the NTP to build up a ‘registered interest’ database of schools in the tens of thousands, and so that schools could start planning to use tutoring.
- We closely monitored regional take-up to deliver targeted activity to raise school demand in ‘cold spots.’
- We worked closely with the sector and with local and regional school networks to raise awareness of the programme, address misconceptions and listen to feedback: for example, via a series of webinars, including events outlining the NTP Tuition Partners offering for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and in Alternative Provision settings.
- Our school engagement team worked closely with the DfE to ensure their networks and reach was maximised.
- Our communications team delivered a wide variety of activity for schools and the sector to generate positive coverage, including producing ‘School Stories’ on the NTP website to show how different schools were choosing to implement the tutoring and the benefits they were seeing.

### Communication

#### What did we learn?

- Clear and concise information and readily available support is always important when delivering interventions in partnership with schools. This was especially the case for an intervention which was new to many schools and delivered during a pandemic. It was also important to adapt communication and support for schools as changes were made to programme delivery. For example, creating additional guidance for schools to share with families to support tuition when delivery was remote to pupils at home during school closures.
- There were varied expectations about what the programme would be able to offer. We worked hard to address these as quickly and clearly as possible, including through FAQs and giving schools opportunities to ask questions directly.
- Communicating the evidence of tutoring's impact on attainment was very important in supporting schools to sign up to the programme. Schools also wanted flexibility and autonomy to make decisions about how tutoring would work most effectively for their pupils' needs and to select the pupils who they felt would most benefit.

#### What does this mean?

It is vitally important to provide **clear information** to schools as early as possible, as well as easily accessible guidance via multiple channels which is **continuously updated**.

**Explaining the evidence behind a programme**, helping to demonstrate why programmes have been designed in a particular way, is important and helps build trust. However, **it is also important to communicate where there is flexibility** and autonomy for schools in order to make the programme a success for their pupils.

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*“Webinars were an effective engagement tool—often attracting audiences of around 1,000 school leaders, with evidence this led to a good rate of sign ups.”*

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### Partnerships

#### What did we learn?

- To maximise the reach of our communications and engagement, we worked with a wide variety of school and sector bodies and networks. This included working with local and regional networks through the DfE's networks, local authorities, regional teaching school networks and the EEF's Research School network. Local knowledge and relationships were extremely valuable in identifying the best ways to engage schools, particularly in those areas with a historically small tutoring market or that had emerged as an engagement 'cold spot'.
- When it comes to making decisions, school leaders listen to other local, trusted school leaders. It was therefore important to amplify the voices of school leaders who were benefiting from the programme - for instance by inviting them to speak on our information webinars and by creating case studies about how schools have utilised NTP tutoring. Schools also benefited from hearing directly from tutoring providers.

#### What does this mean?

**Building relationships with local school networks is a time intensive but crucial process**, especially when delivering a national programme. These relationships enable programme leaders to build an understanding of **local responses and needs**, and for re-engaging 'cold spot' areas with lower take-up.

**School partners' voices and experiences must be prioritised.** This is not only important for the programme design stage and so feedback can be utilised for programme development, but also to demonstrate to other schools how they can benefit from an intervention. **Teachers listen to other teachers**, and accessible information from other schools can help them to understand how to best implement a new programme.

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*“It is important to amplify the voices of schools that are benefiting from the programme, so that other leaders can see how it might work for them.”*

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### Scale and complexity

#### What did we learn?

- Engagement with schools was affected by the pandemic, reducing many schools' capacity to engage with new interventions.
- Some schools found the variety and choice on offer via the programme challenging. The NTP offered a wide variety of organisations and tutors with slightly differing models, which meant some schools struggled to make a timely decision about which intervention to select.
- It was important that schools spoke directly to providers to understand their offer and suitability, but this also meant that the process varied by provider in length and complexity.

#### What does this mean?

**Onboarding processes should be as seamless as possible for schools**, and where possible should be standardised and consistent. For programmes like the NTP Tuition Partners that consist of many intervention providers, complete standardisation won't always be possible, but a good level of consistency and minimum standards (e.g. response times) should be applied.

Despite the disruption of the pandemic, thousands of schools signed up to and utilised the NTP. **Schools are keen to take advantage of new provision for their pupils** and are often willing to try out new partnerships and interventions, **even in the most challenging circumstances**.

### Continuous improvement

#### What did we learn?

- The NTP exists to support schools and pupils, so it was crucial that we were responsive to questions and feedback from schools. We wanted the sector to see that the NTP was listening and acted, wherever possible, on feedback. Adjustments were made to the programme so that schools were better able to take up the offer, for example introducing the option of ‘online at-home’ tutoring. This had to be balanced against the evidence, which sometimes contradicted feedback from schools (for example, ‘at-home’ tutoring does not have as strong an evidence base as ‘in-school’ tutoring).
- Different regions and local areas took up the offer at very different rates. It was important that we had the ability to track and compare take-up across different areas, so that we could act to increase engagement in ‘cold spot’ areas. We however could have built the onboarding process differently so we could better understand how schools were finding out about the programme, and adjust our marketing strategy accordingly.

#### What does this mean?

**Schools and the wider sector** must not only be closely involved in the design stage, but **consulted with and listened to throughout delivery**, so that feedback can be reviewed and changes made wherever possible.

Data processes and infrastructure should be designed so that **school engagement can be carefully monitored across different regions and local areas**, and action taken where needed. It is also important to build in the ability to track how schools find out about the programme, so effective marketing strategies can be expanded.

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