Research into Practice - Evidence-informed CPD in Rochdale

Key Conclusions

1. There were some positive changes in teachers’ attitudes towards research during the course of the pilot.
2. There was no evidence that teachers were more likely to use research to inform their teaching practice after being involved in the pilot.
3. The project was very well received by teachers suggesting that this model may be a promising way of engaging teachers in evidence-based practice.
4. Finding time for working collaboratively on implementing research evidence in practice was considered a challenge, but overall the requirements of the programme were feasible.
5. Before a trial is considered, further thought should be given as to which elements of the project are essential for its efficacy, and whether a trial should test the project structure as a model for research dissemination or both the structure and content of the project as piloted.

What is the impact?

There were some positive changes in teachers’ attitudes to research during the course of the pilot as measured using a survey developed specifically for the EEF’s Research Use grants. These included an increase in the proportion of teachers positively disposed to academic research informing teaching practice, and a decline in teachers’ perceptions that academic research is not useful to teaching. Although these changes cannot be attributed confidently to the intervention without a comparison group, there was some indication that teachers with direct involvement in the programme may have experienced greater positive changes. This provides some evidence that the changes observed were related to the intervention.

Findings from qualitative interviews suggested that the intervention’s structure provided scope to embed the use of research evidence in practice because it overcomes barriers related to time and practical implementation. They also suggest that this structure will need to remain in place after the pilot ends if teachers are to continue to engage with research evidence in the long term.

The programme largely ran as intended and was perceived very positively by participating staff. There was substantial buy-in from schools’ senior leadership teams facilitated by the project team’s effective engagement with senior leaders, helped by the fact that the schools were members of a pre-existing network of schools. For the programme to be successful without such an existing network, careful thinking will be needed about how to replicate the level of school engagement achieved in the pilot. Finding time for working collaboratively on implementing research evidence was also perceived to be a challenge in the pilot, but overall the requirements of the programme were feasible.

We believe that the intervention is not yet ready to be evaluated in a trial. Further thought should be given to which elements of the project are essential for its efficacy and whether a trial should test the project structure as a model for research dissemination or both the structure and content of the project as piloted. Feasibility in schools without a pre-existing network would also need to be considered, alongside further clarification of the treatment group, outcome measures, and trial length.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>Comment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Is there evidence of promise?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>There were improvements in teachers’ attitudes towards research between baseline and follow-up</td>
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<tr>
<td>Was the approach feasible?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>The programme ran as intended and was perceived positively by participating teachers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the approach ready to be evaluated in a trial?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>The programme needs to be developed further before being evaluated in a full trial</td>
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How secure is the finding?

The pilot study included elements of formative evaluation, process evaluation, and quantitative data collection and analysis. Findings were shared with the delivery team as they became available in order to enable collaborative working and facilitate ongoing development of the intervention.

A model describing how the intervention would work in practice was drafted by NatCen researchers in consultation with the CPD consultant following a workshop to identify the resources, activities, outputs, and intended outcomes of the programme. This was shared with participating teachers during training events. Teachers at participating schools were surveyed at the beginning and end of the academic year, and quantitative data from this survey was analysed to identify any changes. The process evaluation was based on depth interviews, observations of training events, case studies, and survey data. Interviews and observations took place throughout the academic year in order to capture experiences of participants as the intervention was being implemented. All schools took part in some process evaluation activities.

How much does it cost?

The cost of the intervention was estimated at £74,759 per year, or at £267 per pupil. This is based on 280 pupils being affected by the intervention activities across the ten participating schools. We estimate that as the number of pupils benefiting from the intervention increases in the programme’s subsequent years, the cost per pupil in its third year would reduce to an estimated £172.