Guidance on Recruitment and Retention

Last update August 2019

The purpose of this document is to provide the delivery and evaluation teams with 1) detailed information about the recruitment process; 2) identify key risks in recruitment and retention and; 3) the strategies for mitigating these risks. We hope that this guide can help support our delivery and evaluation teams to undertake a successful trial. Teams are expected to use their best judgement on how best to apply this guidance when carrying out their work.

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1. Recruitment steps

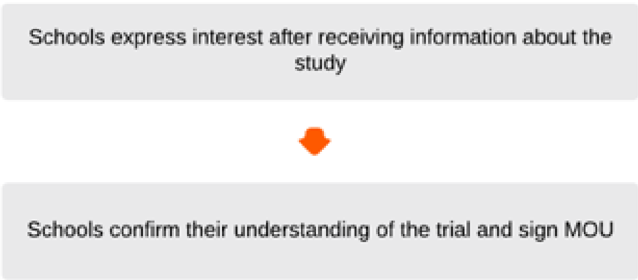
The process

In EEF trials, recruitment usually begins shortly after the set-up meetings and upon approval of the project by EEF's Grants Committee. Before final approval, delivery teams can carry out informal recruitment activities, for example, gauging interest among local authorities, or informally highlighting the opportunity among their existing networks of schools.

Before schools are recruited, a number of documents need to be finalised: see Section 3 for a list of documents to be created jointly between the delivery and evaluation teams.

The recruitment of schools is usually broken down into two stages (Figure 1): the first is an expression of interest from the school (EOI), and the second is a formal commitment to sign up to the trial, which is marked by the school signing a memorandum of understanding (MOU).

Figure 1: the recruitment process



Once the MOU has been signed by the school and returned to the delivery team, the school is considered recruited for the purpose of the agreed recruitment target. However, a **school would not be considered fully recruited until all baseline data has been supplied and the school has been randomised**[1]. For example, sometimes schools that have signed an MOU do not provide baseline data or complete the pre-test in time for randomisation and cannot be included in the trial.

2. Recruitment advice for delivery teams

Creating a recruitment strategy

Recruiting to trials is time intensive and is often one of the biggest risks for a trial. If insufficient schools are recruited onto the study, a low sample size would reduce its sensitivity to detect an effect, and the trial may not be able to go ahead. The EEF is likely to cancel a trial that is not sufficiently close to its recruitment target.

Recruitment can be influenced by a number of different factors including the type of project and the relationship between the recruiter and the school. Therefore, the guidelines and ideas highlighted here may not be appropriate for every project. The delivery team should create an **outline of their**

[1] There may be a variety of evaluation activities that need to be conducted prior to randomisation, including collection of pupil data, administration of a pre-test, surveys by teachers. These are lead by the evaluation team but the delivery team should support this process. Section 4 provides more detail on these activities.

recruitment strategy, and this should be shared with the EEF before recruitment begins. See the appendices for a template for the recruitment strategy. Some key questions to consider when beginning to plan the recruitment strategy are:

What are the timelines for recruitment?

Delivery teams have told us that it takes longer to recruit schools to an evaluation than to their normal programme. It can be difficult to predict at the beginning whether it will be easy or hard to recruit schools or participants into the study. Many delivery teams felt that if they had to recruit to an evaluation again, they would start much earlier. Teams should aim to start formal recruitment as soon as possible after the grant is awarded. Be aware of busy times of years for schools, for example it is particularly difficult to recruit schools in the weeks preceding and including the SATs and GCSEs. Also be mindful of when schools are able to make decisions, for example for a project that requires a lot of staff time or big changes to standard practice, schools may be less able to make such a commitment late in the academic year.

For most projects that start delivery in schools in September, EEF would usually expect recruitment to begin in the prior January.

In the recruitment strategy it is appropriate to set targets at regular time periods so that the team can monitor closely the progress towards the overall target and adapt strategies when appropriate.

How many staff do the team have dedicated to the recruitment phase of the project and in what capacity?

Careful consideration should be given to what staff are available in the recruitment phase, how much time they can dedicate and what role they will have in the recruitment process. Projects often report that administrative support is essential to support the contacting of schools and monitoring of recruitment. However, staff that are experienced in managing and delivering the project may be more suited to running recruitment events, or hosting webinars explaining the programme. Credibility with school leaders is important in conveying the potential benefits of the project.

How many schools will be targeted?

It is not unusual for projects to need to contact dozens of schools for every school they eventually recruit. Doing some initial research on the number of eligible schools will support the recruitment strategy. For example, some trials have eligibility criteria such as requiring two form entry schools, which reduces the pool of potential schools. Recruiting secondary schools can be more difficult than recruiting primary schools for various reasons, including that there are fewer of them to start with. Initial research on the number of eligible schools in the target areas and gathering contact details for these schools should begin as early as possible.

There is likely to be a trade-off between the number of schools approached and the depth/quality of interaction that delivery teams can have with each school.

Who in school will be targeted?

Projects should consider who in the school is most likely to be able to make a decision about participation in this particular trial. Once projects know who to target, teams can consider how to adapt messaging to this audience, how can they reach this person, and what information is likely to be important for them. It is important to try to consider the priorities of this audience, and how this offer fits into those priorities. This should include considering what the essential information is that they need to know about the offer. For example, a Head of Department considering a targeted maths intervention will need to know how many students will take part, and how much student and staff time it will take.

Why is this offer worthwhile?

There are generic benefits of being part of an EEF trial:

- If allocated to the intervention group, the school receives a promising approach to increasing attainment, usually at a subsidised cost
- By taking part in research, the school is adding to the evidence base and knowledge on what works in education in England
- Potential financial incentives for participating (if this is part of the plan agreed at set up meetings)
- There could be additional benefits for example receiving results of post-tests (if this is part of the plan agreed at set up meetings)

OFSTED also recently supported schools taking part in EEF trials:

"... we don't want innovators to see the new framework as a brake. For example, if you are trying out new models as part of Education Endowment Foundation studies, or are working on new approaches to curriculum or teaching or assessment, that will be recognised." Amanda Spielman, HM Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills.

Schools may wish to include this quote in information letters to schools, or in informal communications, if OFSTED are perceived to be a barrier to schools taking part in an EEF trial.

In terms of your specific trial, schools have lots of offers coming their way, and the team will need to get across why this particular trial is worth their while. To do this, it will be useful to spend time as a team considering the messaging. Can the team succinctly articulate what the project is intending to achieve? Are the team confident in describing the key things the school needs to know about this project? Can the team summarise the offer concisely?

Whilst it is important to explain the programme fully, be aware that schools are signing up to the trial as a whole, rather than to receive the intervention. It is imperative schools understand they are signing up to the evaluation and may be allocated to the intervention or control group, and are committing to take part in the evaluation regardless. When outlining the benefits of taking part, ensure you are also focusing on the benefits of taking part in a trial.

What FAQs might schools have?

Spending some time considering common questions the team may receive from schools will be useful, as the team may be able to pre-empt potential concerns and questions, and try to address these in the information provided to schools. You may want to consider including some FAQs on the school information sheet (see Section 3). Common FAQs are often around GDPR compliance (see Section 3), how much time the intervention takes and how much it will cost. Specific FAQs will depend on the nature of the trial. It may be useful to speak with some teachers in advance of recruitment to get some insight into what these specific FAQs may be.

Recruitment resources

Two essential documents for recruitment are the **school information sheet** and **memorandum of understanding (MOU)** (see Section 3). However, project teams may produce a range of other resources to support the recruitment process, for example:

- Project page on organisation's website (or a dedicated website for the project) that contains key information, documents and how to take part
- Video explaining the trial
- Blog or promotional article
- Social media accounts for the trial, or content for promoting the trial on your organisation's social media

When producing such resources, it is useful to consider branding. This could include, for example, creating a project logo. It may be useful to also give consideration to the project name, as it can help recruitment if the project name is clear and indicates what the trial is about. However, the EEF does not expect projects to spend a lot of time or money on branding; the focus should be on simple, clear communication with schools.

Methods of approaching schools

No single approach is likely to be successful on its own and projects will need to be flexible and use a range of approaches to successfully recruit schools. These include:

- **Using key advocates and networks to promote the trial and recruitment events.** E.g. academy chains, local authorities, teaching school alliances, or the Research Schools Network, or well-respected leaders in local areas. Other organisations to consider contacting are subject specific networks such as local maths hubs or STEM networks.
- **Writing letters and emails, and phoning schools.** Many teachers and senior leaders still prefer not to use email regularly and it can be difficult to get the right person's email address at a school, so it is often useful to contact a school first by letter. Contacting schools in this way requires persistence and multiple follow ups are usually necessary. With email, finding the most relevant email address possible will be helpful (rather than a generic email address) and ensuring the opening email is clear and well presented. For calls, ensure you are specific about who you are calling (you will often get through to reception first) and it may be more fruitful to call at times where teachers are most likely to be available, for example at the end of the school day.
- **Promoting the project at events.** Recruitment teams can attempt to secure slots at conferences organised by other organisations, where they can promote the project. Regional meetings of headteachers are often a good opportunity for reaching a key audience.
- **Hosting recruitment events.** Recruitment teams could host a series of events where they can introduce the trial to schools. It could be that schools who have expressed an interest are invited to a recruitment event to find out more about the trial. It is important to follow up any interest generated from these events. It is also important to make attending these events easy for schools: having multiple options available and having an easy sign up system, for example an online sign up, could be considered. Some projects have successfully run recruitment webinars which may be more convenient for some schools.
- **Online expression of interest forms.** Increasingly online expression of interest forms have been used successfully to allow school to express initial interest in a project. This can be linked to on social media such as Facebook and Twitter.
- **Social media.** Using the organisation's social media account to promote the project, or creating a new social media account specifically for the project has been successful in the past. Twitter has a big education community who may be able to promote your trial.

- **Press.** Some projects have managed to get trials mentioned in the press. While this may be a useful strategy, it is unlikely to be as powerful as using trusted contacts/networks, holding recruitment events, and contacting schools directly.

Previous trials have reported that identifying key advocates and networks who can help promote the opportunity in their area, using existing networks, recruitment events, and contacting schools directly are the most effective strategies, and this is where most of the recruitment effort should be invested.

Support from the EEF

The EEF will promote the trial through our social media, newsletters, speaking and networks. We also have a network of 'Regional Leads' who support the work of the EEF across England and engage with our Research Schools. Depending on the area you are recruiting in, the EEF may be able to put you in touch with the relevant Regional Lead(s) who may be able to support you in their specific area. Research Schools will also promote locally recruiting trials to schools, for example in their newsletter.

It is the responsibility of the delivery team to ensure that a school is not already recruited to another EEF project <u>with a similar outcome and age group</u>. Some degree of overlap is acceptable (for example sometimes different year groups within the same school can do different interventions), but a decision will be made with the EEF to decide whether multiple projects could interact and should be avoided. Sometimes schools may have to choose between taking part in one project or another.

Process from EOI to MOU

Careful consideration should be given to the process between a school expressing an interest and signing the MOU to confirm their involvement in the trial. Teams should be confident that the school understands essential information and are fully committed to the trial. If not, this can cause problems later with drop out, impacting the security of the trial (see Section 5). Delivery teams should ensure they have spoken to the school in advance of signing the MOU to ensure understanding and commitment. Some trials will do this with individual calls, whereas others will host recruitment events or have online webinars where schools can find out more. There is a balance here between making the process as simple as possible for schools (not adding any unnecessary steps) and ensuring full understanding and commitment.

Ideally there would be a fairly short time frame between a school expressing an interest and formally committing, as a long delay can mean a school loses interest. Setting a deadline for MOUs to be returned to you can be an effective method to support this.

Keeping a recruitment log

It is important that delivery teams keep a recruitment log throughout the recruitment period up to randomisation and provide the EEF with a weekly update on numbers recruited using the recruitment updates sheet[2]. We would expect that the teams would have a more detailed live document for tracking interactions with individual schools, and do so in a way that the data is sharable but secure.

The log kept by the team(s) recruiting schools will be used by evaluators to determine which schools are eligible for randomisation. This log will be used to create a participant flow diagram which will become part of the final report. Please keep a record of all schools contacted and reasons for non-participation.

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[2] Recruitment update template for grantees
https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/our-work/grantee-guide-policies

Case studies

It is worth emphasising that no single approach will suit every trial. The case studies below are designed to give some real examples from trials who have recruited well in the past and provide some ideas, rather than provide a recipe on what works.

FLASH Marking

FLASH (Fast Logical Aspirational Student Help) marking is a school-developed feedback approach in which teachers give skills-based comments rather than grades in Key Stage 4 English. The approach has been devised by staff at Meols Cop High School in Southport. The delivery team were teachers and had no experience of recruiting schools to a programme or trial before. They had a target of recruiting 100 schools.

The team thought about branding carefully. They came up with the acronym 'FLASH' marking, as it was simple and indicated the essence of the approach, quick marking. They created an eye-catching logo and set up a dedicated FLASH marking Twitter account @FLASHmarking and website www.flashmarking.com, which they now use in the delivery phase for intervention allocated schools. The developer approached the TES and offered to write a feature article on their approach, which was published.

They pulled together an email database and sent emails to secondary subject leaders and headteachers, ensuring personalisation and links to an FAQ document, which they found resulted in fewer simple questions being asked, saving them time. Later on they sent personalised letters and information packs to both subject leaders and headteachers, which were effective. A few teachers posted on Twitter about the letter they received and this created a conversation on Twitter. They held a series of recruitment events across the country in the 6 areas they were targeting, branding this the 'FLASH marking roadshow'. This was promoted heavily via Twitter and got good traction. They also proactively searched for education conferences relevant to assessment and feedback, approaching organisers about their approach to secure further promotional opportunities.

It wasn't always easy; the team highlighted that the process was time intensive and there were times they worried about reaching targeted recruitment numbers. They reported having to continuously evaluate their approach and try new things. To support this, the team came together weekly to evaluate the recruitment strategy and progress. They also highlighted that much of the success was down to having the right make up of roles in the team. They recruited a full-time administrative position for the project and ensured that during the interview process they focused on assessing skills to support the recruitment aspect of the project, in order to secure someone for this role who could accelerate these efforts. The developers could therefore focus on activities such as presenting at the roadshow information events.

The team started recruiting in September and by Easter, had 100 schools signed up and 200 on the reserve list. The developer also believed that having high expectations of schools was important. Schools were given a date to submit the MOU and not given an option to miss it, and the developer had to be sure that the school were dedicated to the trial to be allocated a space. This, they believe, will support retention during the project.

Learning Language and Loving It

Learning Language and Loving It

Learning Language and Loving It—The Hanen Program® for Early Childhood Educators (LLLI) is a training programme for Early Years practitioners to promote language and early literacy. Communicate SLT CIC, a Blackpool-based speech, language and communication service organisation, delivered the programme for this trial. Their recruitment target was 140 nurseries in the North West and into West Yorkshire. The team started recruiting in January and had surpassed the recruitment target by May.

They approached all relevant Local Authorities in the North West and West Yorkshire about the trial, thinking carefully about who in the Local Authority would be the best person to contact, for example the Early Years school improvement team. Recruitment was most successful in the areas where the local authority supported the promotion of the trial to local settings. Communication SLT CIC also approached settings by email themselves. They believe the dual approach of settings hearing about the trial directly and through the Local Authority supported interest. Within target areas, settings were also phoned to ensure the email about the trial was received by the most appropriate person.

A priority for the team was ensuring that settings had a full understanding of the trial before they signed up. They made it a condition of taking part that settings had to either attend a face to face recruitment event or take part in an online webinar, to learn about the trial and have the chance to ask any questions. To ensure maximum efficiency of this process, they created an online booking form (Google form) for settings to use to sign up to an event. They hosted 17 face to face and 3 zoom webinars in order to give settings plenty of choice. This online booking system reduced administrative burden on the team and ensured settings could book onto events immediately, with automatic email confirmation. They handed out MOUs and information packs at these events and set clear deadlines for the MOUs to be handed in. In all communications, they ensured a clear 'call to action', for example to book a place on an information session, or complete the MOU.

They also capitalised on 'early adopter' settings, encouraging such settings to promote the trial to other local settings. This was of benefit as the delivery was in a cluster model, so more local settings being involved would benefit the settings already signed up, by making it less likely they would need to travel far for training sessions. This was an effective approach in gaining more expressions of interest.

3. Documents to have in place before recruitment begins

Documents

Although the delivery team is usually responsible for recruiting schools to the study, both the evaluation and delivery teams are expected to work together to produce a set of documents that are necessary to have in place before recruitment begins. It is important to note that these documents will have to be cleared as part of ethical approval (see ethical approval section below), therefore **should be produced as quickly as possible after the set-up meetings**, so not to delay the recruitment for a project. Below is a brief description of the purpose and the process of finalising the documents for EEF studies. A checklist of what to include in each document can be found in the appendices. Details about data protection regarding EEF evaluations can be found on our website[3].

a) **School information sheet** – this is typically a short document (around 2 pages) summarising the purpose and content of the trial, a high-level overview of the evaluation design and data protection procedures, who will be involved, and the expected timeframe. The purpose is for school leaders or teachers to understand the key elements of the intervention and that it is being evaluated.

   It is important to write this document with your audience in mind. This document contains the key information schools will consider to decide if they are interested in the trial. Focus on the *benefits* of taking part and the *key practical information teachers need to know*. Think carefully about the design, as it is helpful if this document has a simple structure and is well presented. This document is first drafted by the delivery team and shared with the evaluation team who may add more specific details about the evaluation and data protection. The EEF should see this document when finalised. This information sheet can be given to schools at the expression of interest phase.

b) **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** – eligible schools that have received the school information sheet and expressed interest are asked to sign the MOU to confirm that they agree to the terms of the study. It is a more detailed document than the school information sheet, setting out the expectations and responsibilities for schools, the evaluation and delivery teams. The purpose is for all parties to have an agreed understanding of what the project involves, who is responsible for what, how the data will be collected and processed, and when. Upon signing, this confirms a school's participation in the trial. The evaluation team usually drafts and shares the MOU with the delivery team, before reviewing and finalising with the EEF.

c) **Parent information sheet and withdrawal form[4]** – the purpose of this is to inform parents about their child's involvement in the study. Opt-out consent is not a valid legal basis under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (please see article 6 (1) for personal data and article 9 (1) for special categories of personal data)[5]. However, under GDPR, all data subjects have the right to object to the processing of their personal data (article 21, GDPR). Thus, parents or legal guardians – and/ or, where appropriate, pupils – should always be given the opportunity to withdraw their child's (or, if applicable, their own) data from processing. Typically, schools send these out to parents at the start of the autumn term or at the end of the summer term, depending on the timeline of the project. Parents/ participants should be given at least 2 weeks to withdraw, but they could also withdraw at any point of the study.

[3] Data Protection statement regarding EEF evaluation (2019) - https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Evaluation/Data_protection/Data_protection_statement_EEF_evaluations.pdf

[4] Please avoid calling this document 'consent form' or 'opt-out form', as these can confuse participants who may assume the legal basis for processing is consent, but also know that only opt-in consent is acceptable.

[5] No legal basis is inherently better than the others, and not all legal bases will be applicable to EEF evaluation projects. On the rare occasions where consent may be necessary, this will need to be informed, active, opt-in consent. Data controllers will need to establish their legal basis for processing taking into account the nature of their organisation and project feasibility. Given the recruitment and retention implications, opt-in consent should not be collected 'just in case' when it is unnecessary and other legal bases may be more appropriate.

For participants who are 13 years or older, they themselves, rather than their parents, should be given the right to object to data processing. Typically, the evaluation team draft this document and share with the delivery team and EEF. The information about the trial and data processing procedure can be drawn directly from the school information sheet and the MOU, to ensure that parents are clear about how their children's data will be used in the evaluation. This could also include a link to the Privacy Notice, if this is published online.

d) **Privacy Notice –** this document is critical to demonstrating compliance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. Typically, the evaluation team draft this document when decisions on what type of data are to be collected have been made. This is then finalised with the delivery team and the EEF. The privacy notice can either be shared as a separate document with schools before signing the MOU, or put online and referenced in the school and parent information sheets and MOU.

e) **Data sharing Agreement** – this document details the data that will be shared between teams, which may include personal (e.g. parent/ teacher contact details) and non-personal information (e.g. class and school name). Data can only be shared between delivery and evaluation teams when this agreement has been signed. This is usually drafted by the evaluation team and shared with the delivery team. Once both teams have agreed on a final version this is then signed by each organisation. The EEF is not usually part of data sharing agreements (as it has its own separate agreements with the evaluation and delivery teams), although some organisations' procedures require that the EEF is included as well.

Ethical approval

The school information sheet and MOUs should only be shared with schools when the project has obtained ethical approval. Usually this sits with the evaluation teams but some delivery organisations (e.g. universities) also have a separate ethical procedure in place. The ethics review process usually takes 3-6 weeks but varies between organisations. We recommend evaluators find out what information is required for ethical approval, application deadlines and research ethics committee meeting dates, and begin this process as early as possible to prevent any delays to recruitment. It is likely that the documents listed above need to be approved as part of the ethics process, so work on these documents should begin as soon as possible.

Establishing roles and study timeline

The delivery and evaluation team should establish roles, milestones and dates at the beginning of the project. Deadlines for completing the recruitment documents should be agreed at the set-up meeting.

As EEF evaluations involve multiple organisations, schools may find it difficult to know who to contact and may choose not to take part if contacting the right team proves too onerous. Therefore, providing clear contact information at the start is crucial. Teams should be clear about which organisation is leading on contacting schools at different points in the project and for what purpose. Clear communication that comes from both the delivery and evaluation team will avoid overloading schools with multiple letters and emails. At the Intervention Delivery and Evaluation Analysis (IDEA) workshop, teams should agree on a **communication plan** (see appendix 7 for an example). Some projects have also developed a dedicated website about the project that includes information directing schools to the correct team.

4. Pre-delivery activities

Once schools have been recruited, the evaluation team will need to conduct a variety of activities before randomisation occurs and delivery can commence in intervention schools. The below are all the responsibility of the evaluation team, however it is important that the delivery team understand what is being collected and expected from schools before the delivery period begins, and support the evaluation team where necessary. Who contacts schools about each activity should be decided in the communication plan.

Collection of pupil data

Pupil data are collected for all EEF studies to enable matching to the National Pupil Database and potentially tracking the long-term impact of the project. The evaluation and delivery teams should agree during the set-up meetings on the pupil data that should be collected. Following the signing of the MOUs and prior to randomisation, a data collection template should be sent to schools by the evaluator, for schools to populate the pupil data.

Usually, five data points are required for linking e.g. first name, last name, date of birth, FSM status and UPN. Delivery teams have found it helpful to mention that all of this information can be found on a school's School Information Management System (SIMS). The UPN is needed to link to the NPD where data on statutory tests as well as background school and pupil information can be accessed. If sensitive information about pupils is going to be accessed such as information on ethnicity, English as an additional language (EAL) status or special educational needs (SEN) then this needs to be made clear in the information letters to parents, and the appropriate legal basis should be established. These data can be requested from the NPD or from schools directly, although some schools may be resistant to this and the quality of the data may be poor so we recommend getting this data from the NPD where possible.

Teams should decide in their communication plan if this data request should be sent by the evaluation or delivery teams, to streamline communication and minimise confusion to schools.

Pre-testing

In most trials the evaluator does not undertake any pre-testing in schools. This is because they are able to use data on prior attainment from the NPD (e.g. KS2 SATs). If necessary, most pre-tests are conducted by schools to keep costs low. However, these may also be done by evaluators, an external data collection agency subcontracted by the evaluator, or by the delivery teams.

Pre-testing should be completed **before** randomisation takes place. If schools are randomised, allocated to the control group, and then asked to complete testing, they might refuse to take part, or the data may be biased once schools/pupils are aware of their allocation. Schools should not be revealed their allocation until after they have completed the relevant pre-tests.

Pre-intervention survey to establish usual practice

An important part of the implementation and process evaluation for the project is to establish exactly what the intervention is being compared to (i.e. what does 'business as usual' look like). Especially for targeted interventions, pupils in control schools are often given additional support or training of a different kind. We ask evaluation teams to collect information from all schools at the start of a trial on what that school is planning on doing that upcoming year in the area of the proposed intervention. For example, you would ask a school what they are planning on doing in their maths classes in the upcoming year for an intervention focused on whole class maths such as Maths in context. For an example of a usual practice survey and more information on the implementation and process evaluation, please see the [IPE handbook](#) (p.48).

5. Risks and strategies for mitigating problems with retention

Retention

In the context of EEF evaluations, retention means obtaining the relevant data from participants for the analysis. The validity of the findings from a trial is illustrated by the padlock rating[6] which is heavily influenced by outcome attrition (i.e., did the school provide post-test data or not). If schools or pupils decline to take part in data collection or withdraw from outcome data collection during the study (known as "outcome attrition"), this will reduce the sample size and can introduce biases. It is a high priority in EEF studies that all teams make every effort to minimise attrition. See Table 1 below for risks at different stages of the intervention and strategies for teams to use.

Some schools may not want to continue with the intervention, which could be due to various reasons like low engagement or problems with implementation fidelity (also known as "non-compliance"). This is the school's choice, however delivery and evaluation teams should still encourage the school to continue to take part in the evaluation activities (i.e. complete the post testing). Schools can be reminded of the commitments to the evaluation signed in the MOU, and explain that by continuing to complete evaluation activities they are ensuring the study is robust and can serve to inform other schools. Likewise, schools should be reminded of any incentives to be paid upon completion of the post-test.

It can be more difficult to retain control schools in the post-test, as they have had little contact with the delivery team and will not have engaged very much with the project since recruitment. It is therefore important that the teams consider how they will ensure the control schools remain engaged. This could be through, for example, a newsletter or reminder at a few points throughout the project. EEF trials may also use incentives to support the retention of control schools (for example a small payment upon completion of post testing). This will be discussed at set up meetings.

Schools can also decline to participate in other evaluation activities aside from the primary outcome testing, like interviews and surveys. This is undesirable and should be minimised, however missing these other evaluation activities pose smaller risks to the validity of the results of the study than outcome attrition.

When delivery teams become aware of a school becoming disengaged or wanting to drop out of the intervention or testing, it is **important to let the evaluator and EEF know right away**. Delivery and evaluation teams should keep track of how many schools dropped out of the trial before the post- test and their reasons for dropping out.

Below are different examples and how this impacts on the security of the findings:

[6] https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/about-the-toolkits/evidence-strength/

Scenario 1- A school signs the MOU but drops out before pre-test or randomisation[7]. No pupil data from these schools will be obtained, or any data collected should be deleted. These schools should be reflected in the participant flow diagram as dropping out before randomisation. These schools will not be counted towards the 'outcome attrition' figure. This does not introduce bias to the study because drop out is not affected by the treatment assignment (random allocation to intervention or control). However, this reduces the size of the sample available for the study unless the delivery team can find additional schools (e.g. from a waiting list) to replace them before randomisation.

Scenario 2 – A intervention school requests to withdraw from the intervention (non-compliance) after completing the pre-test (if applicable) and randomisation. However, the school is willing to contribute to all evaluation activities. Both pre- and post- test data from this school will be used for the main analysis, Intention to Treat (ITT) analysis, but the school will be considered as non-compliant for the compliance analysis. The qualitative data collection from the Implementation Process Evaluation (IPE) around why a school drops out of the programme would be particularly valuable in this case. This might dilute the effect of the intervention but is unlikely to affect the security of the impact evaluation[8]. Therefore, schools should ensure that outcome data is collected.

Scenario 3 – A intervention school requests to withdraw from the intervention (non-compliance) after completing the pre-test and randomisation. The school agrees to contribute to the post-test only, but not other evaluation activities (e.g. case studies or surveys). Both pre- and post-test data from this school will be used for the Intention to Treat (ITT) analysis but will be considered as non-compliant schools for the compliance analysis. This might dilute the effect of the intervention and may limit the conclusions made by the process evaluation but is unlikely to affect the security of the impact evaluation. Schools should ensure that outcome data is collected.

Scenario 4 – A school withdraws from the study after randomisation and withdraws from primary outcome data collection (outcome attrition). Post-test data from all pupils in this school will be considered missing and this reduces the security of the impact evaluation. Evaluators and developers should work together to minimise these cases as they affect the robustness of the study. Retaining schools in the control group may be more difficult because these schools have less contact with the project teams. Therefore, extra efforts to keep in touch (e.g. regular newsletter or reminders) and careful thought on incentives are needed.

[7] The same applies if a school drops out after randomisation but before they are told their treatment allocation.
[8] However, moderate to low compliance or poor implementation fidelity in a study may lead to dropping in padlock.

Table 1. Risks and strategies for mitigating problems with retention

Stage of evaluation	Risks	Strategies
Pre-testing and sharing pupil information (e.g. UPNs)	Some schools may find testing burdensome or become worried about sharing pupil data, or they may want to discontinue due to constraints in time and resources.	Evaluators should always consider the feasibility and burden of testing at the design stage. Explaining clearly what data are collected and why as they sign the MOU also helps. Delivery teams should also have a clear understanding of evaluation activities and try to persuade schools to remain in the study. Both teams should be comfortable with the data protection implications of the study and should be in a position to reassure schools on this regard.
Shortly after randomisation	Some schools may want to drop out from the study as they are unhappy with the assigned randomisation allocation (e.g. they feel demoralised about not getting the intervention). Others may perceive the intervention to be too burdensome.	Ensure that schools are very clear about how allocation takes places, what randomisation means and what resources are required to deliver the intervention. Remind schools of the 'contract' (MoU) that they have agreed to and remind them of the broader benefits of participating in the study to inform what other schools do in the future (i.e. lever pro-social motivations). Testing incentives should be considered especially for the control group to encourage data return.
During the intervention delivery	Some schools may be dissatisfied with the intervention and request to discontinue their participation.	Recruitment documents should clarify the distinction between *dropping out of the intervention (non-compliance)* and *dropping out of the evaluation (outcome attrition)*. Delivery team should record any non-compliance or risks when schools initially express concerns and notify the evaluation team. If they decide to discontinue, schools should still be encouraged to provide data for the evaluation (i.e. post-test and process evaluation data collection).
Post-testing (where primary outcome is not NPD data)	Some schools (especially control schools) can be unresponsive, which can make post-testing difficult to arrange.	Evaluators should begin to notify schools of the post-testing dates well in advance so that they can plan staffing and resources. Reminding them of the incentives and the agreement in the MOU also helps. As a last resort, the EEF can help get in touch with the Head Teachers.

Keeping an implementation log

It may be useful for delivery teams to keep an implementation log, which can be shared with the evaluation team as a live document. This can help track whether some schools are disengaged with the intervention and whether they have communicated that they want to: 1) discontinue the intervention; 2) decline participating in evaluation activities other than post-test; of 3) decline participating in all evaluation activities including the post-test. Any accompanying information and reasons for these decisions would also be helpful for understanding the degree of non-compliance.

Project Partner Schools

We want schools to appreciate the benefits of research, and know that their participation in the research project is appreciated. All schools involved in our evaluations will be designated EEF Project Partner Schools. The EEF will write to all schools at the end of the project thanking them for their contribution to building the evidence base and narrowing the attainment gap. After the project has recruited, the EEF will send the schools a certificate showing that the school is an EEF Project Partner School.

Appendix 1: Recruitment Strategy Template

This is a basic template to help grantees provide some key information about their recruitment strategy. Feel free to add sections and extra information. Please ensure this is sent to and discussed with the EEF before recruitment begins.

- **Target number of settings** to be recruited (as agreed in set up meetings)
- **Selected recruitment areas**
- **How many eligible settings are there** in these areas (what is your target pool?)
- **Are there any other EEF trials recruiting** similar settings during the same time frame (ask your Programme Manager if you are not sure)
- **Key activities and methods.** Please detail here key recruitment activities, for example recruitment events, any system leaders you will contact, methods for approaching schools and promoting the project
- **What is the timeline** for recruitment? Will you set targets throughout the time period?
- **How many staff do the team have dedicated to the recruitment phase** of the project and in what capacity? How will you ensure everyone is trained up to support recruitment?
- **Who in school will be targeted**?
- **What is the process from a school expressing an interest to signing the MOU?** How will you monitor this internally? Will you set deadlines for schools to return the MOU?
- **How will you ensure settings have a full understanding** of what is involved?

Appendix 2: School Information Sheet Checklist

This is intended as a framework for school information sheets. Ideally, these should be 2-3 pages long, and are the precursor to the more detailed information in the MOU:

- **Logos for the EEF, evaluation and delivery teams**
- **One/two sentences to summarise the programme and evaluation**
- **Who can take part?**
  Any school/teacher/student eligibility criteria, including geography and number of schools being recruited
- **What is it?**
  A few sentences summarising the approach, including any existing evidence, and what the programme would require from schools/teachers.
- **What are the potential benefits for my school?**

Benefits of being in intervention group/taking part in evaluation, including any payments or reduced fees for intervention schools, incentives for control schools, contributing to evidence base, etc.

- **What does the programme involve?**
  More detail on intervention elements, including an idea of in-kind contributions for cover time. Also cover how much time the intervention will take to implement, requirements of schools (e.g. how much data schools will need to provide etc).
- **What does taking part in an evaluation involve?**
  Explain randomisation (unless a pilot), including what the intervention and control groups will do, and introduce the independent evaluator. Briefly explain the evaluation activities with focus on any testing that might be necessary. Include data protection, the data required and how it will be collected by/shared with the evaluator. Include a link to the privacy notice.
- **Does it cost anything?**
  Any costs to intervention schools, or incentives received by control schools.
- **Timetable**
- **Organisations involved**
- **Contact (who should they contact to sign up) and deadline for doing so**

Appendix 3: Memorandum of Understanding Checklist

This document is intended as a framework for MOU's, to ensure that all the necessary data is included for each project we set up:

Project overview

- **What is the programme we're testing?**
  What are we trying to find out? (e.g., the impact of x on x)
- **Project team description (e.g. who are the grantee)**
- **Aims of the evaluation**
  Top level aims of the evaluation
- **Eligibility criteria**
- **How does my school benefit?**
  Include incentives (for control and/or intervention schools as applicable) and costs where applicable
- **Why a randomised controlled trial?**
  Remove for pilots
- **The research team and independent evaluation**
  Details of the evaluation team and details of the evaluation (how many schools involved, what measures we are collecting)
- **Logos for the evaluation and delivery organisation and the EEF**
- **Project timetable**
  Include key dates for both intervention and control schools (e.g. control schools still need to do data collection, testing etc).

Data protection

- **Summary of data protection policy and GDPR compliance**
  With specific reference to the project (i.e., not generic statements).
- **Link to privacy notice relevant to the project**
  And/ or privacy notice attached (not generic policy)
- **Legal basis for processing personal data under GDPR/ DPA 2018**

If ‘legitimate interest’, specify what actual interest the evaluator has in processing data for the evaluation, and refer to the legitimate interest assessment conducted

- **Legal basis for processing special categories of personal data (if any used) under GDPR/ DPA 2018**
- **Data processing roles (e.g., evaluator – most likely data controller, developer – joint data controller or data processor)**
- **Data processing purposes**
- **Parties with access to data** (all the parties the data will be shared with, and the purpose of sharing)
- **Retention periods**
  How long different types of data are retained for, and why.

Responsibilities

- **Responsibilities of the grantee**
  Recruitment, financial, e.g. incentives, comms, delivery
- **Responsibilities of the independent evaluator**
  Data protection and ethics, data collection and analysis, randomisation, comms, fieldwork, reporting etc.
- **Responsibilities of all schools recruited to the trial**
  Sharing pupil/school data, facilitating testing (add/ adapt depending on project)
- **Responsibilities of intervention schools**
  Pupil testing, data collection and monitoring, participation in the programme.
- **Responsibilities of control schools**
  Pupil testing, data collection and monitoring, and any restrictions (e.g. not using the intervention programme).

Agreement

- Name of school, named contact at the school
- Named contact details for delivery and evaluation teams
- Agreement to participate and withdrawal of participation
- Signing box (to be signed by the named school contact and potentially also the Headteacher, and the delivery and evaluation teams)
- Who to send signed copies to

Appendix 4: Parent Information Sheet and Withdrawal Form Checklist

- Brief description of the project
- What is involved in the evaluation (randomisation design, what their child will be expected to do and when)
- How the data will be processed and stored
- Explain that they do not need to act if they are happy for their child to participate
- Opportunity to withdraw (Signature, Name, Date)
- Link or attachment to privacy notice
- Contact details

Appendix 5: Privacy Notice Checklist

- What the privacy notice aims to do
- What data will be collected and for what purposes
- What is the lawful basis for processing personal data and, separately, any special data (if used)

- Explicit reference to data subjects' legal rights according to GDPR, and how their individual rights are being protected
- All parties with access to this information, and for what purposes
- Data retention: how the data will be stored, for how long and for what purposes
- International transfer: whether any personal information will be transferred outside of EEA
- Who to contact with a query or complaint (ICO and contact information of each teams)

Appendix 6: Data Sharing Agreement Checklist

- Who is sharing what data
- What data is being shared, for what purpose?
- What is the lawful basis of the recipient processing the data
- By what means will the data be transferred? (e.g. secure network)
- How will the data be stored and for how long?
- Who will have access to and control of the data?
- When and how will the data be deleted?
- A link to the privacy notice that outlines how the data will be processed and stored
- Contact details

Appendix 7: Example of an activity flow chart and communication plan

It may be helpful for the evaluation and delivery team to work together to produce a project communication plan outlining milestones, key dates, method of communication, and who is responsible for different tasks. This can help avoid any duplication in communication to schools and ensure that all key milestones are met on time. The figure below is an example of how this may look.