

Effective Practice Evidence Framework - Our ratings explained

Introduction

For each case study, we have provided a visual summary of two things:

- **The strength of the evidence of good practice** – this is based on the methodology for evaluating the project, how long the project has been running and the timing of the evaluation, and whether the project has been sustained over a period of time (which would give us confidence in the strength of evidence).
- **The breadth of impact** – this is based on the number of different areas in which the project has shown evidence of impact – put simply, the more areas where a project has achieved impact, the stronger the rating we award the case study.

Both the strength of evidence and the breadth of impact are rated using a four-point scale, from "emerging", to "promising", "good" and "robust", with each level presented visually as an indicator of "signal strength".

Evidence standards: What we define as effective practice

We recognise that some evidence stores and repositories of effective practice in other fields of work require case studies to have evidence from randomised controlled trials and to have been published in peer-reviewed journals. Within the What Works in SEND programme, there is a separate strand of work to gather evidence of what works from published research. We recognise, however, that there will be gaps about what works in SEND within evidence drawn solely from research. The aim of the Effective Practice Evidence Framework is to capture emerging evidence of what works that is drawn from practice within local SEND systems. We have designed the evidence standards of the Effective Practice Evidence Framework to reflect the fact that we are seeking to capture evidence drawn from local practice.

For consideration of inclusion within the Effective Practice Evidence Framework, therefore, case studies are required to meet the following three standards of evidence.

1. **Aim** – we are looking for projects that have a clear aim(s) of improving a specific aspect(s) of experience and support for young people with SEND and their families within the local SEND system. Case studies should have quantifiable pre-project baseline or benchmark and post-project goals through which success in achieving the aims of the project can be measured.





2. **Impact** – we are looking for projects that can show quantifiable evidence of positive impact in achieving project goals compared to pre-project benchmarks. Projects should have a clear plan for evaluating and sharing evidence of impact.
3. **Sustainability** – we are looking for projects that have been sustained and continued in the area they were developed, or where there is a clear plan in place to do so, and where the learning is potentially relevant to other local areas that may be looking to do a similar project.

Strength of evidence

The “signal strength” awarded for the strength of evidence is based on two things. First, we look at the evaluation methodology. Specifically, we look at how the project was evaluated and how much time has elapsed since the project started that an evaluation could consider. We look whether the project was evaluated internally (e.g., by partners within the local SEND system – given the aim of the Framework is to capture emerging evidence from local practice that may not yet be at the stage where it could be included in an academic research study, we think it is important to include self-evaluated projects as the “emerging” stage), whether it was commissioned from an independent organisation, or whether it was evaluated as part of an independent study (e.g., a national research project or policy evaluation).

Second, we look at whether the project has been sustained and over what period of time – at the “emerging” and “promising” stages, we look at projects where there is a plan to sustain them (a good indicator that partners think that there is sufficient evidence to justify the continuation of the project) or where the project has been sustained after operating for at least 12 months.

A summary of the criteria we used to award the “signal strength” of the strength of evidence is set out below.

Strength of evidence			
		Strength of evaluation	Sustainability / replicability
	Emerging	Internal (partnership) evaluation of “early” findings (within 12 months).	Plan to sustain project in local SEND system; potential for roll-out to other localities / areas.
	Promising	Commissioned independent evaluation of “early” findings (within 12 months).	Project sustained initially (after 12 months) and/or plan for roll-out within local SEND system.
	Good	Commissioned independent evaluation of medium-term impact (1 year+).	Project sustained in medium-term (1 year+) and/or replication within local SEND system or beyond.
	Robust	External evaluation (academic or national study, or equivalent) of medium- / long-term impact (1-2 years+).	Project sustained in long-term (2 years+) and/or replication in other local SEND systems.

Breadth of impact

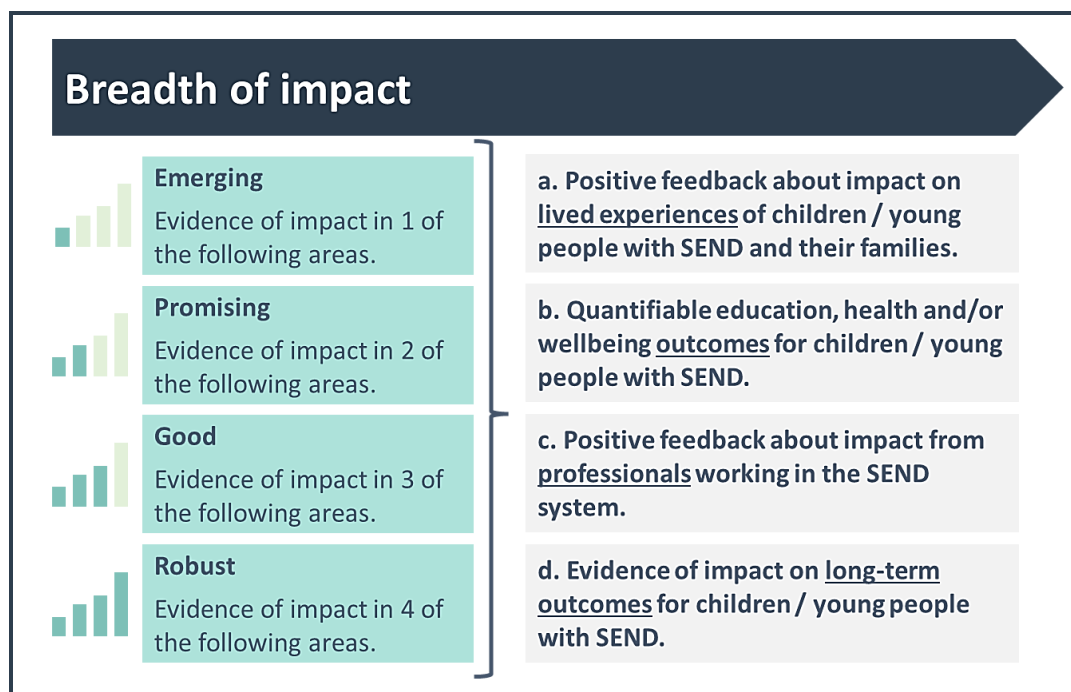
The "signal strength" awarded for the breadth of impact is based on whether a project has achieved impact in one or more areas –

- a. positive feedback about the impact on lived experiences of children / young people with SEND and their families;
- b. quantifiable impact on education, health and/or wellbeing outcomes for children / young people with SEND;
- c. positive feedback about impact from professionals working in the local SEND system; and
- d. evidence of impact on long-term outcomes for children / young people with SEND.

There is no hierarchy, order of importance, or additional weighting given to each of these areas. The "signal strength" indicator is based on whether, cumulatively, a case study can show impact in one, two, three or all four of these areas.

- For example, a case study with evidence of positive feedback from professionals would be rated as "emerging" for the breadth of evidence.
- A case study with evidence of positive feedback from professionals and positive feedback on lived experiences of young people would be rated as "promising".
- A case study with evidence of positive feedback from young people, positive feedback from professionals, and quantifiable improvement in outcomes for young people would be rated as "good".
- To achieve the "robust" rating, a case study would need to show evidence of positive feedback from professionals, positive feedback on lived experiences of young people, quantifiable impact on outcomes for young people with SEND directly related to the project goals, as well as impact on long-term outcomes for young people with SEND. (By "long-term outcomes", we mean impact not only in the short-term but in preparing the young people for adulthood. For example, a project aiming to improve inclusion of neurodiverse young people may be able to show impact on outcomes such as school and college attendance, but may in the long-term show improvements in progression to further and higher education, independence and employment.)

A summary of the criteria we used to award the "signal strength" of the breadth of impact is set out below.



How judgements about which case studies are included on the Effective Practice Evidence Framework and of the "signal strength" indicator awarded to each case study are reached

We recognise that any attempt to rate a case study of effective practice will involve a degree of interpretation and personal judgement. We seek to ensure that the process by which decisions about which case studies to include on the Framework and the "signal strength" indicators awarded to each case study is open and transparent. For example –

- we publish the Framework's evidence standards and criteria for the "signal strength" judgements;
- each case study submission is reviewed by two independent reviewers against the evidence standards and "signal strength" criteria, and moderated to ensure consistency; and
- we provide feedback on each case study, including the reasons behind decisions, to help to inform practice and, in some cases, to use additional evidence to reflect on our judgements.