

# The Difference



Impact Report  
2019-20

# The Difference

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# The Difference: Our purpose and work



Improving the life outcomes  
of the most vulnerable  
children, by raising the  
status and expertise of  
those who educate them

# Overview

## Our problem

The country's most vulnerable children have overwhelmingly poor educational and life-outcomes, with disastrous consequences for themselves and society. Many of these children are excluded from school.

## Our purpose

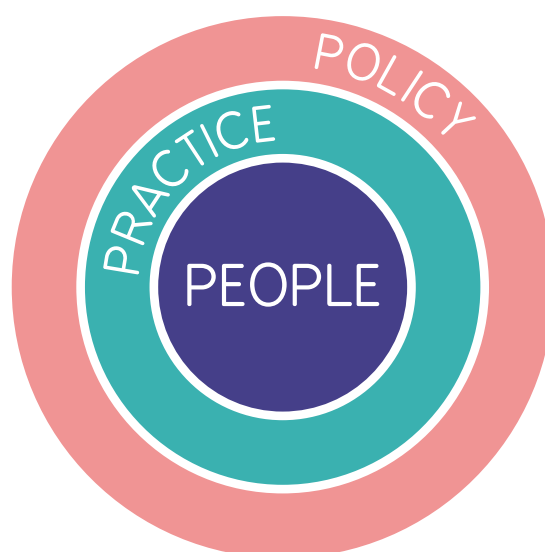
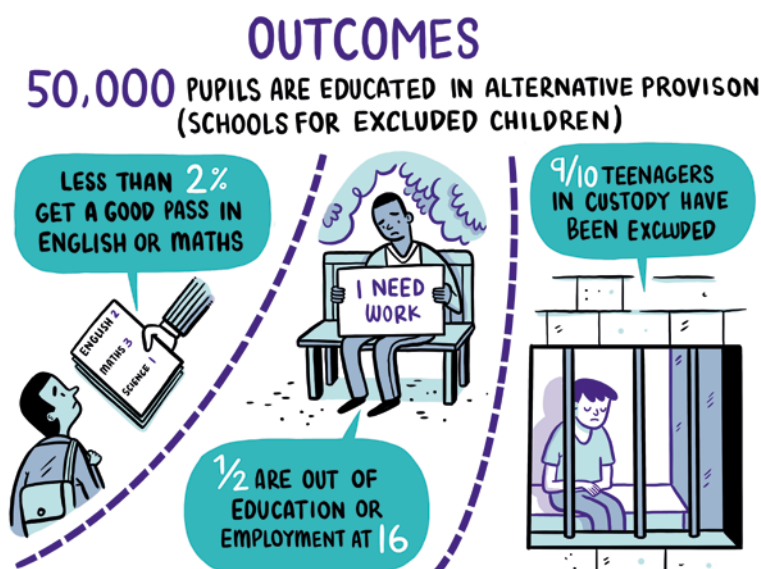
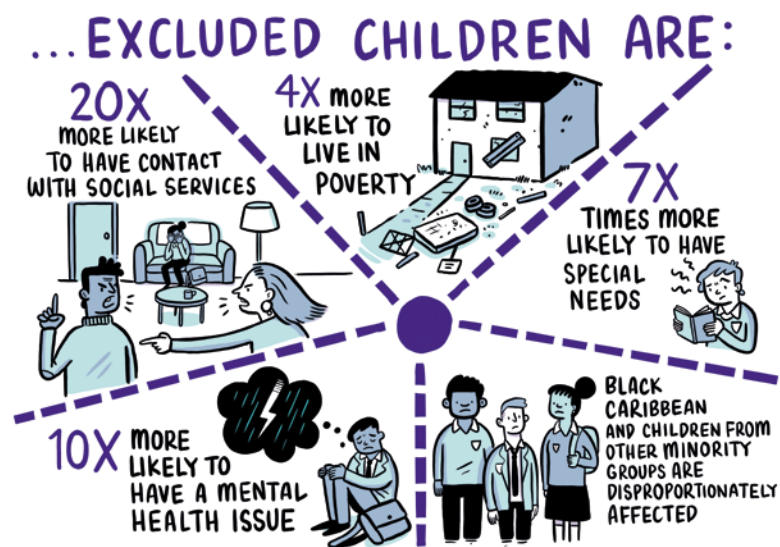
The **Difference** exists to improve the life-outcomes of the most vulnerable children, by raising the status and expertise of those who educate them.

## Our work

The Difference is finding and growing the **People** who will become tomorrow's inclusive school leaders. Our two-year **Difference Leaders Programme** develops teachers with the will and skill to lead improved outcomes for vulnerable children.

Through our school partnerships, The Difference identifies inclusive **Practice** which improves outcomes for vulnerable children, and shares this across the sector.

We find patterns across schools in the **Policies** which help and hinder improved outcomes for vulnerable learners, and share these with sector influencers and policymakers.



# Our Viability Pilot

In 2017-18, Difference Founder Kiran Gill spent a year understanding exclusions in England and publishing her ground-breaking research with think-tank IPPR.

In 2018-19 a new charity was born: The Difference. Across the following four years, The Difference sets out to create a new story on school exclusion by piloting its brand new career route for teachers, and sharing the learning from this across the sector.

Though a small start-up charity, The Difference achieves scale towards its charitable aims in three ways: **People**, **Practice** and **Policy**.

## People



*A new school leadership programme creating **Difference Leaders** who can improve life-outcomes for vulnerable learners*

The viability pilot tests:

- Can we raise the status of teaching excluded learners, so that high-quality teachers and high-potential leaders want to join the two-year Difference Leaders Programme?
- Can we develop expertise in our leaders, so that their headteachers in Alternative Provision\* see improved leadership and impact on students, staff and school systems?
- Can we boost careers of Difference Leaders, so that after the programme they take up leadership posts in mainstream schools, improving systems and practice across a school and – ultimately – reducing school exclusion?

\***Alternative Provision (AP)** is a blanket term for schools that serve excluded pupils. When The Difference uses this term, we are referring to Pupil Referral Units and Alternative Provision Academies/Free Schools.



2017-18

IPPR research published

2018-19

Charity launched

Pioneer 2019 Cohort of Difference Leaders recruited



## Practice



*New research with partner schools into practice which improves outcomes for vulnerable learners is shared across mainstream and alternative provision teachers*

The viability pilot tests:

- Can The Difference launch a new brand of teacher development with status and expertise that can reach teachers across the country?
- Can we break down barriers between Alternative Provision\* and mainstream school leaders, so that they learn from one another?
- Can The Difference draw on effective practice across the country to produce training of such quality that schools will pay for it, paving the way for a sustainable charity post-pilot?

## Policy



*Frontline experience with our partner schools influences researchers, journalists and policymakers*

The viability pilot tests:

- Can The Difference charity keep the problem of rising school exclusion on England's policy agenda, alongside our delivery work?
- Can we use our unique network of Alternative Provision schools, and mainstream schools driving towards reduced exclusion, to gain new policy insights into what helps and hinders vulnerable children's life-outcomes?
- Can The Difference influence choices of policy-makers nationally, locally or across groups of schools to improve resourcing and accountability for life-outcomes of vulnerable children?



**2019-20**  
First year of delivery  
2019 Cohort Year 1 in AP

We are here

**2020-21**  
Second year of delivery  
2019 Cohort Year 2 in AP  
2020 Cohort Year 1 in AP  
Growth beyond London

**2021-22**  
**2022-23**  
Viability Pilot continues  
2019s and 2020s return to mainstream  
2021s complete training and AP placement

# Our Activities

Our 2018-2023 strategy focuses on scalable impact on the life-outcomes of vulnerable children via People, Practice and Policy. In academic year 2019-2020 this has included the following activities:

**People:** Delivering our school leadership programme

**Practice:** Delivering teacher development courses and events and carrying out new research

**Policy:** Collaborating with journalists, carrying out research with our schools and sharing via policy research and events

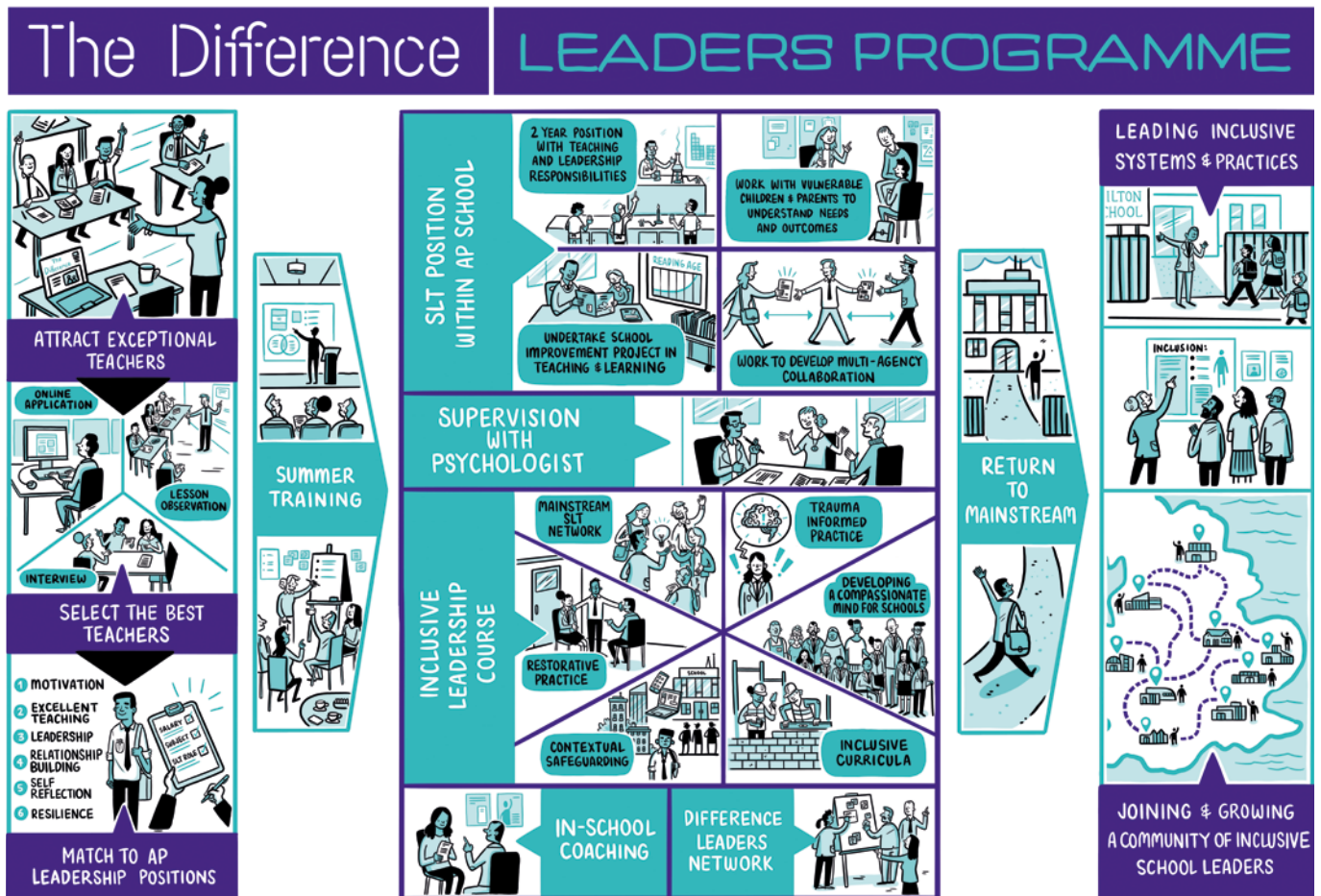
## People: Difference Leaders Programme

### Teacher Recruitment

The Difference raises the status of working with excluded pupils, via our attraction campaign. We run a rigorous selection process to select the very best teachers to join our elite Difference Leaders Programme.

### Leadership Development and Specialist Teacher Training

The Difference delivers an intensive teacher development offer, alongside a placement in a leadership post in a school for excluded pupils. We have developed an innovative, specialist curriculum, accredited with a National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership.



## Practice: School Leadership Development and New Practice Research

### Mainstream partnership in the Inclusive Leadership Course

The Difference delivers the Inclusive Leadership Course – a year-long professional development offer for mainstream Headteachers, Deputy Heads and Assistant Heads keen to improve inclusion in their schools. The Inclusive Leadership Course brings together colleagues from mainstream and AP, to share best practice across the settings.

### New Practice Research

The Difference’s partnerships and wider practice research enables us to identify the practice and systems improving outcomes for vulnerable children, across AP and mainstream schools.

## Policy: Media, Policy Events and New Policy Research

### Media

The Difference keeps exclusions in the spotlight, supporting journalists to ensure national coverage of school exclusion.

### New Policy Research

We conduct original research on patterns across our partner schools.

### Informing Policymakers

We organise roundtables, present research to politicians and contribute to research projects with think-tanks and academics, sharing frontline realities of policies affecting vulnerable pupils.

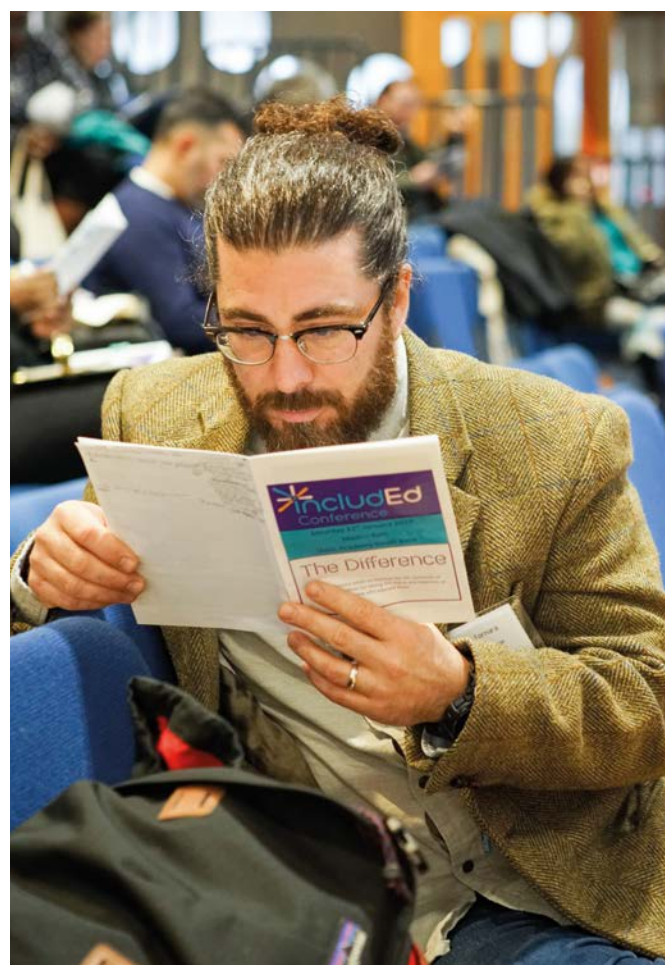
This learning is shared in our publications, research collaborations, as well as informing our programmes.

### IncludED Teachers’ Conference

The Difference runs an annual Teachers’ Conference, bringing together researchers, policymakers, and teachers to share the school practice and systems which improve vulnerable children’s life-outcomes.

### Community-building cross-sector

To disseminate our research, The Difference presents at teacher conferences, delivers online training, speaks on podcasts, and publishes in sector media, to reach thousands of teachers.



# Our Reach: An overview

## 26 Difference Leaders

2019 cohort:  
10 Difference Leaders

2020 cohort:  
16 Difference Leaders

Spanning:  
20 local authorities

## Inclusive Leaders

2019 cohort:  
12 mainstream leaders

2020 cohort:  
41 mainstream leaders  
4 Alternative Provision leaders

Spanning:  
42 local authorities;  
10 multi-academy trusts

Approximately 44,350 pupils

## Sector Reach

430 IncludED conference delegates

3880 bulletin readers

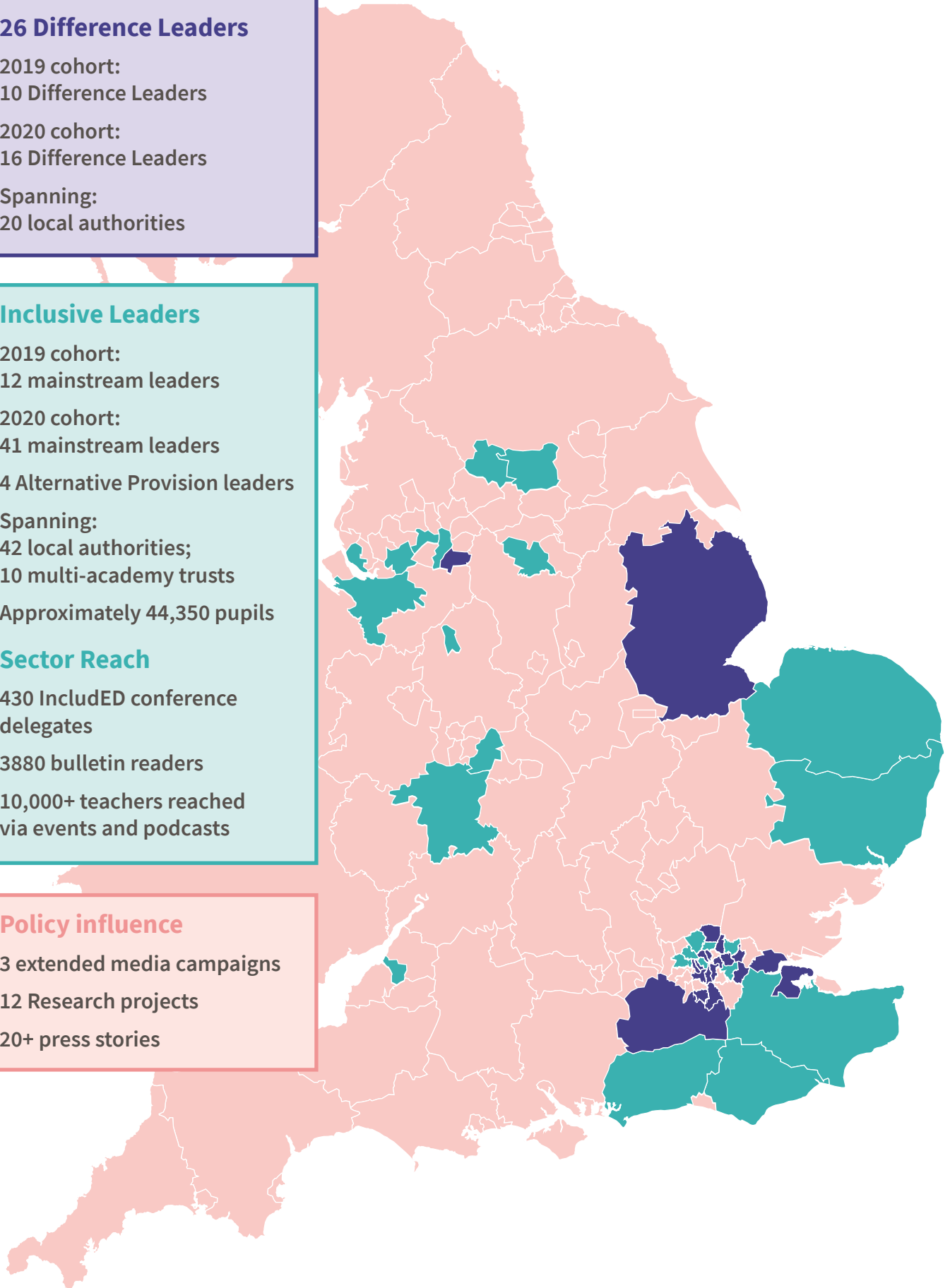
10,000+ teachers reached via events and podcasts

## Policy influence

3 extended media campaigns

12 Research projects

20+ press stories



# People



The core of The Difference's work is **developing people.**

We are growing a generation of inclusive leaders who can improve outcomes for vulnerable learners through our **Difference Leaders Programme.**

## Teacher recruitment

IPPR research found teachers weren't considering working in schools for excluded pupils because:

- Low exposure – they'd never considered it
- Low status – it was considered "career suicide"



# Teacher Recruitment

## Attraction campaign

The Difference Leaders Programme is unapologetically elite. We recruit small numbers of teachers each year, with exceptional skills and leadership capacity, who will go on to become system-changing leaders.

However, our attraction campaign is shaping the careers and choices of hundreds of teachers who are not on our programmes.

**In The Difference's viability pilot phase, our headline indicators of viability were:**

- 300+ registrations
- 120+ full applications
- 15 Difference Leaders placed nationally

### Ailish's Story

In 2018, three years into her teaching career, Ailish first heard about The Difference Leaders Programme. The calling to teach children who most needed her resonated with why Ailish had become a teacher through Teach First.

Still early in her career, Ailish was unsuccessful in getting through the competitive selection process. But she decided to make the jump anyway, and work in a school for excluded pupils, a PRU.

*"Before The Difference, I don't know that I would have known as much about PRUs; I didn't know anyone who worked in one."*

Having spent a year bringing her English skills to that PRU in a supply role, and learning herself along the way, in 2019, Ailish tried again for the Difference Leaders Programme. This time she was successful.

### Louise's Story

In 2019, Louise had been teaching for seven years and was feeling "disenchanted" with her school and its use of exclusion.

She applied to the Difference Leaders Programme and contacted her local Alternative Provision academy to get more understanding of schools for excluded pupils. Though Louise wasn't successful through the Difference's recruitment process last year, she stayed in touch with the AP academy.

*"I've been helping them out with the Science curriculum. If we can raise attainment and perception of Science, when pupils are reintegrated to mainstream they're not going to feel out of their depth."*

Louise has found a mainstream school she is happy with for the time-being, but she may apply again for the Difference Leaders Programme. In the meantime, she's a valuable colleague to her local AP. Louise hopes next year she may become a Governor at the academy.

## The Difference Attraction Campaign

The Difference is re-branding teaching excluded pupils as "the brain surgery of teaching". This year we inspired more than 350 teachers to consider teaching in Alternative Provision.

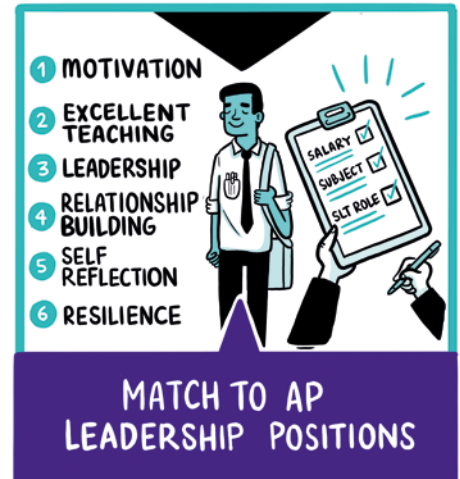
# THE PROBLEM

IPPR research found recruitment challenges in schools for excluded pupils:

- Senior leadership vacancies high and rising
- “few candidates... often failed teachers” – AP leader



## Selection process



	2018 /19	2019-20
Registrations	192	356
Written applications	88	170
Telephone interviews	-	99
Selection Centres attendees	42	49
Matched Difference Leaders	10	16

## The Difference selection process

The Difference is making working in schools for excluded pupils a competitive career choice. This year there was an 11:1 ratio of applicant to success.

# THE SOLUTION

# Covid-19 impact on Teacher Recruitment

## Teacher Placement Risk

In March 2020, following school closures in England, the teacher job market saw unprecedented change, with dramatically reduced vacancies, especially in leadership posts.

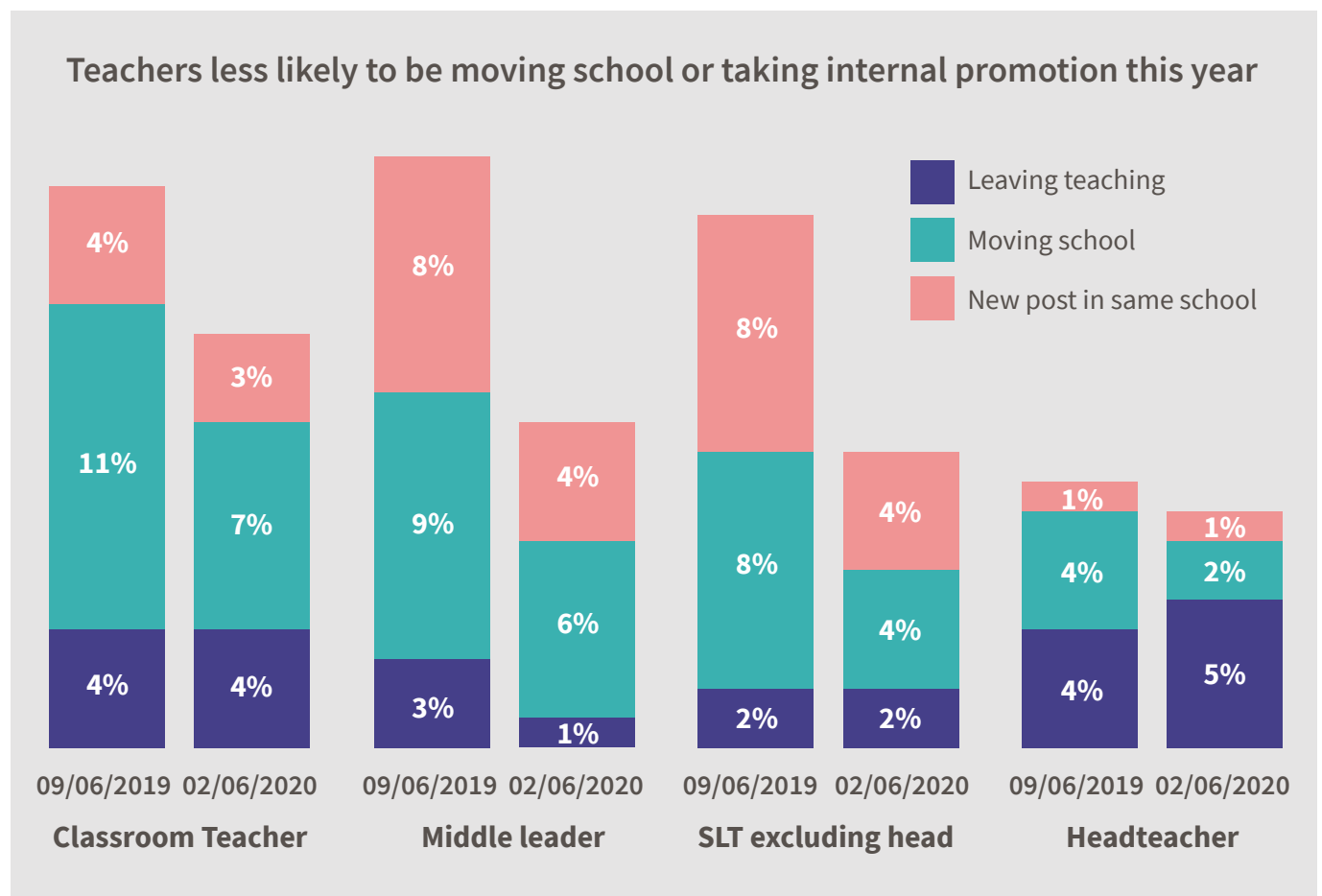
During April 2020, there was significant risk that The Difference would not be able to place a substantially bigger second cohort, with placements in the North of England. However, thanks to support from Porticus Trust and Esmée Fairbairn, placements were secured.

By April 2021, we hope that the Pandemic is under control and the jobs market has returned to normal. However, if this is not the case, The Difference will face a second year of challenge in

placing Difference Leaders. This may particularly be a challenge in Northern local authorities where AP schools' funding settlement can be lower than in Southern LAs, reducing their ability to extend competitive salaries to quality teachers like those on The Difference Leaders Programme (who are promised matched salaries).

## Alumni Progression Risk

Across the academic year 2019-20, The 2019 Difference Leaders will be preparing to finish the Difference Leaders Programme and career route, finding vacancies in mainstream senior leadership to progress to. However, if the impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on the Teacher Job Market persists, there could be fewer vacancies, reducing the chance for Difference Leaders to find the right roles in mainstream schools, and potentially delaying their return to mainstream.



Allen, R., Hannay, T. and McInerney, L. (2020) *Musical Chairs: Understanding and tackling COVID-19 disruption to the teacher recruitment market*, London: Education Intelligence Ltd.

# Who are the Difference Leaders?

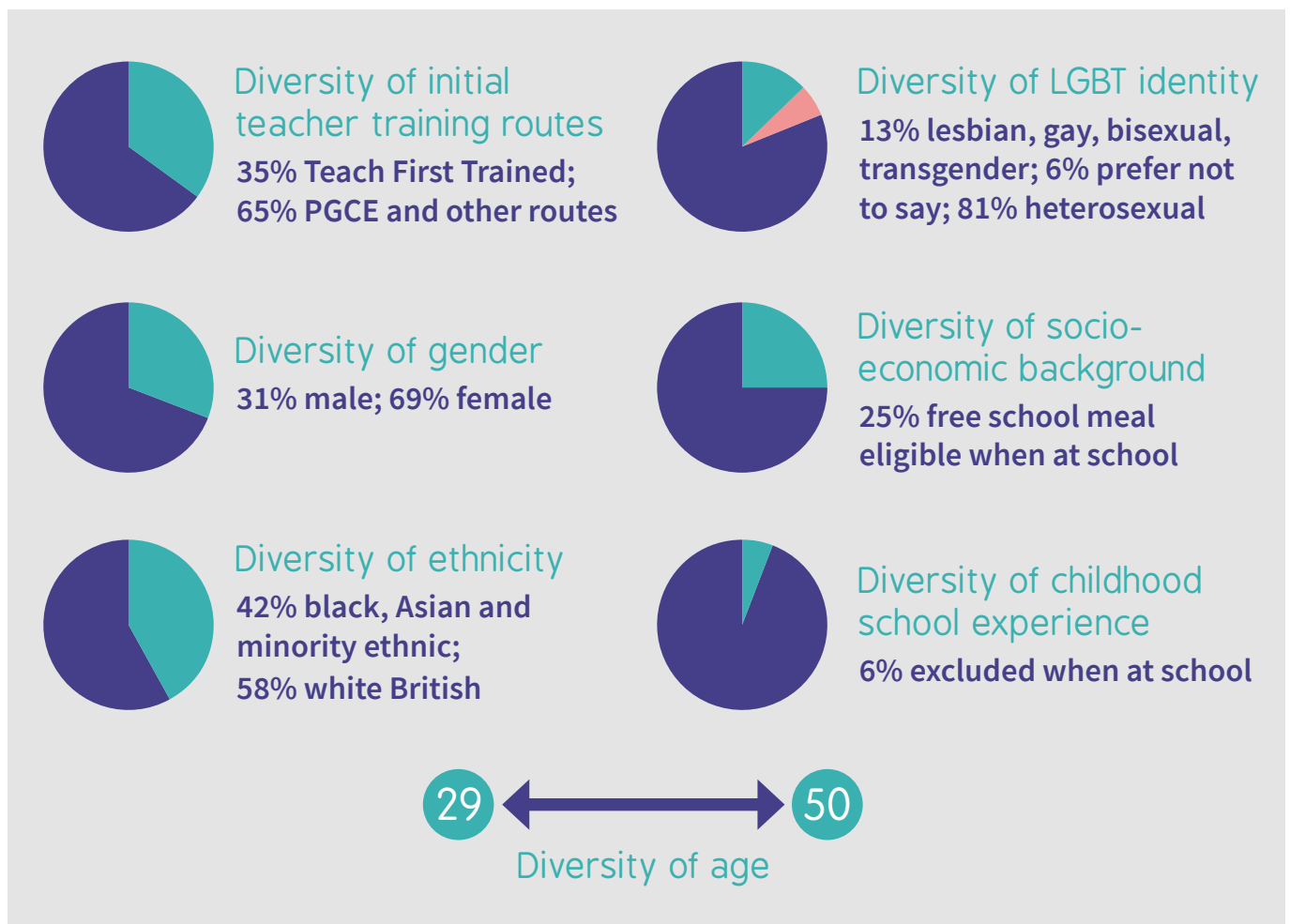
Difference Leaders are elite, but our recruitment is not elitist.

This year our recruitment process delivered sector-leading diversity, again.

The Difference selects the best teachers to change outcomes for vulnerable learners.

We select solely on how well candidates evidence our competencies. We attract diverse candidates by making sure our adverts reach teachers from diverse backgrounds and don't alienate. Meanwhile, our selection process, assessor recruitment and training seeks to avoid biased or stereotypical conceptions of leadership quality beyond evidence of our competencies.

We are proud that this process has led to a rich diversity amongst our successful Difference Leaders.



## THE PROBLEM

### Teacher diversity and over-excluded groups

Nationally, 33% of children in England are black, Asian and minority ethnic. But only 10% of senior leaders in schools are BAME. 1% are black.

Certain ethnicities are over-represented in excluded populations:

Black Caribbean: 4 times    White and Black Caribbean: 3 times  
Roma Gypsy: 3 times    Irish Traveller: 17 times



### Representative School Leadership

The Difference is growing headteachers of tomorrow, **more representative of communities** they serve. **58%** of London pupils identify as BAME, **42%** Difference Leaders identify as BAME.

**19%** of London pupils identify as black, **27%** of Difference Leaders identify as black.

## THE SOLUTION



## CASE STUDY

### Meet Marie, 2020 Difference Leader

Marie decided to apply for The Difference after hearing Difference founder Kiran speak at BAMEED 2019, the Black and Minority Ethnic Educators national conference.

“I was jet-lagged that day – I’d forgotten about the conference and my friend had dragged me along – but when I heard Kiran speak I just felt like I was meant to be in that room.”

After 12 years teaching across primary and secondary and developing trainee teachers, Marie was ready for a new challenge. Marie’s career had already been dedicated to social justice – having been a youth worker, a career coach and worked in social services before she even became a teacher – and the Difference Leaders Programme “spoke to the reasons I went into education in the first place.”

Marie had a track record of Outstanding teaching practice, and raising young people’s self-esteem alongside academic outcomes. But she is also driven to reduce exclusion and poor outcomes for excluded pupils by her own life experiences.

“I was excluded at school myself because nobody – not even I – realised at the time the struggles I was facing with childhood trauma. But to struggle like that in childhood shouldn’t mean your path is set.”

In her new post, Marie will be leading across a pupil referral unit. But it doesn’t stop there. In two years, The Difference will be supporting her to return to mainstream and hopes one day Marie will become the headteacher she needed as a child.

“I turned my life around and didn’t become an exclusions statistic. I want to give others the same opportunities.”

“To struggle like that in childhood shouldn’t mean your path is set.”

## AP leadership

IPPR research found:

80% Ofsted reports name leadership of teaching and learning and “teachers’ expectations” as points for improvement in schools for excluded children.



# The Difference Leaders Programme

## Headline Indicators

This year, our pioneering 2019 Cohort of Difference Leaders spent their first year leading and learning in schools for excluded pupils. They have grown their skills through our intensive training programme and begun building capacity within their schools.

The Difference surveys Difference Leaders and their Headteachers at the beginning of each academic year to understand their satisfaction.



Retention



DL satisfaction



HT satisfaction



HTs would recommend The Difference to another PRU

“His presence in the school has been immediately felt. Other teachers seeing him teach has raised the bar about what can be achieved.”

Headteacher of a Difference Leader

In The Difference’s viability pilot phase, our headline indicators of success were:

- Retention of our Difference Leaders;
- Satisfaction of our Difference Leaders; and
- Satisfaction of our Headteachers

“It is totally clichéd but I have really enjoyed the feeling of making a difference in my school and for the children that I work with. I have felt very inspired by the collective vision of The Difference and empowered by the training to find the best ways to make an impact in my school. Seeing students happy and enthused by the educational experiences I’ve brought to the school have been highlights for me.”

Difference Leader

## The Difference Leaders Career Route

Despite expected drop-out rate of 20% in this tough route, the 2019 Difference Leader cohort has seen a 100% retention rate with 90% improving teaching and learning in their first year.

Every placement headteacher would recommend partnering with The Difference.

# Inclusive Leadership Standards

The Difference's brand new career pathway has involved design of a new curriculum, to promote the development of our Difference Leaders according to The Difference's standards of Inclusive Leadership.

The Inclusive Leadership Standards are split into four strands of practice: **Leadership**, and supporting pupils' **Learning, Wellbeing** and **Safeguarding**. Under each Strand, there are 3 competencies, which are assessed across 4 levels.

Difference Leaders are scored each School Term – by themselves, by their headteacher and by their Difference Tutor – to triangulate and track their progress across the two-year programme.

1. No experience / not confident in my practice with students
2. Confident in my practice with **students**
3. Confident leading the practice of other **staff**
4. Confident developing whole-school **systems** to reinforce this practice.

As Difference Leaders are only half-way through the course, summaries of their competency development will appear in next year's Impact Report, alongside outcomes of their National Professional Qualifications in Senior Leadership (or, in one case, in Headship). However, surveys of Difference Leaders and their Headteachers shed light on their perceptions of their impact on students, staff and school systems, and their growth as Inclusive Leaders.

## Difference Leader Inclusive Practice

<b>A. Learning</b> Know and practise what works in the classroom and across schools for learners with the most significant and co-occurring needs.	<b>B. Wellbeing</b> Teach and lead in a way that establishes a culture of compassion supporting student wellbeing.
<b>A1</b> Identify student learning needs behind challenging classroom behaviour <b>so that some disengaged students can become more engaged in their learning</b>	<b>B1</b> Develop and model trauma-informed approach to recognising and responding to challenging student behaviours <b>so that I can de-escalate behaviour more effectively</b>
<b>A2</b> Teach classes of students with complex and co-occurring needs <b>so that students make progress and – where possible – gain qualifications</b>	<b>B2</b> Develop and promote a compassionate coaching model with staff, students and parents to support understanding of difficult emotions <b>so that they can de-escalate more effectively</b>
<b>A3</b> Identify, plan and deliver curricula and interventions <b>so that the biggest barriers to student progress and qualifications are being overcome</b>	<b>B3</b> Understand student and staff mental health needs and coordinate effective support <b>so that engagement improves and conflict lessens</b>
<b>C. Safeguarding</b> Implement approaches that keep children safe; reducing the risk of harmful behaviours and responding effectively to their impacts.	<b>D. Leadership</b> Lead teams and whole-school improvement projects which promote an inclusive agenda.
<b>C1</b> Model and promote practice which recognises that all unexplained and unexpected behaviour is a cause for concern <b>so that more concerns are identified</b>	<b>D1</b> Identify and gain SLT and staff buy-in for areas of school improvement
<b>C2</b> Develop and promote restorative approaches in response to harmful and abusive behaviour <b>so that staff and students are able to recognise and repair harm and abuse</b>	<b>D2</b> Lead teams (including running meetings and line managing staff) to see improved outcomes
<b>C3</b> Integrate the support and services of external agencies <b>so that there is reduced risk and more timely or effective response to harmful experiences</b>	<b>D3</b> Deliver and evaluate training which supports evidenced school improvement

## Student impact

Difference Leaders learn to teach in the radically different environment of Alternative Provision schools, adapting their skills in teaching and learning to change outcomes for the excluded young people they teach. Alternative Provision schools have different curricula and age groups, so the type of impact Difference Leaders have is varied.



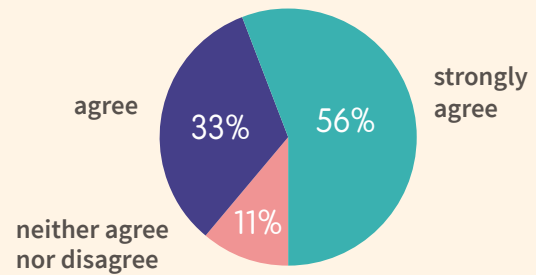
2019 Difference Leader Ada

Ada is a maths teacher placed in a school specialising in performing arts, where many of the staff have had successful careers in creative professions but are not qualified teachers. Nationally, 67% of children gain a “good” maths GCSE pass (Grade 4+) by Year 11, but for excluded pupils, only 9% do. The results in Ada’s school were historically in line with national averages: last year **15%** achieved a ‘good’ pass in maths GCSE, and the year before only 10%.

This year, Ada has taught maths and developed teaching and learning across the school staff. At the end of Ada’s first year in post, the proportion of students achieving a ‘good’ pass more than doubled, rising to **34%** this year.

Many pupils have missed a lot of learning before they arrive at the school, while others are there for only a few months. Ada has improved the numbers studying the shorter foundation course of Level 1 Functional Skills. In 2018, only **13%** of pupils in the school were passing this qualification. This year, **83%** passed.

### My leader is improving outcomes for the students they teach



2019 Difference Leader Alicia

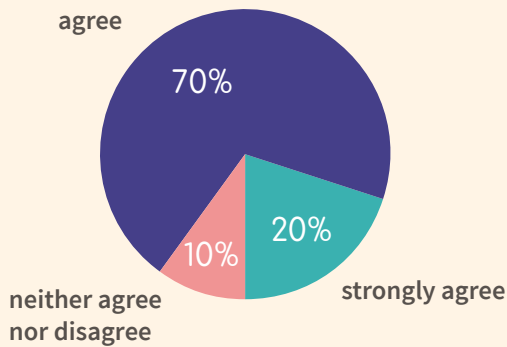
Alicia is an English teacher by training, but in her Alternative Provision school she’s been asked to turn her hand to a range of qualifications. Alicia has redesigned the school’s Key Stage 4 vocational offer, creating meaningful curriculum engagement and pathways to employment for students aged 13 to 16. Alongside re-writing the curriculum, Alicia has upskilled herself and other staff across the school to teach them.

Nationally only 15% of students in Alternative Provision are entered for a vocational qualification and, having struggled to engage with school previously, attendance can be low (35% absence, compared with only 5% in mainstream). When Alicia joined, 30% of pupils were enrolled in vocational qualifications, now 100% are enrolled. Achievement of Level 1 or above in these qualifications rose from 36% of pupils entered to 76%. Alicia also noticed that attendance changed for some pupils, now re-engaged by the curriculum, with some persistent absentees improving attendance to gain qualifications which felt more purposeful and tangible.

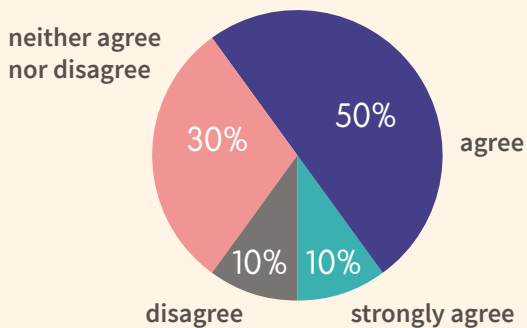
## Staff impact

Each placed in a senior leadership position, Difference Leaders build capacity in their placement school by developing the practice of the staff they work with. Again, leadership positions are varied, drawing on the background and skills of each Difference Leader.

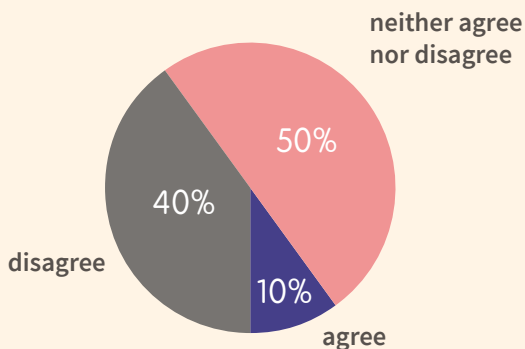
### This year I have improved colleagues' practice in supporting learning



### This year I have improved colleagues' practice in supporting wellbeing



### This year I have improved colleagues' practice in supporting safeguarding





## 2019 Difference Leader Elizabeth

Difference Leader Elizabeth is an English teacher, with experience of working in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Elizabeth has used this insight and expertise to improve staff's ability to support pupils' mental health.

Nationally, 1 in 4 children in crisis struggle to access the CAMHS services to support them. Elizabeth became aware early into her placement that a higher proportion of students had mental ill-health than were receiving NHS support; and that struggles with mental health were also leading to staff sometimes carrying out physical intervention – distressing for adults and children.

Elizabeth led a 'Behaviour as Communication' teacher training curriculum, which includes fortnightly reflective groups, focusing on individual students. This reflection, along with bite-sized theoretical training, helps staff decode student behaviour to recognise student mental health needs and adapt their responses. These responses are then captured for the student's file, and regularly reviewed, to help future teachers use successful strategies.

Elizabeth also introduced a Clinical Supervisor, who is available to staff for individual and small group sessions, supporting the self-awareness that underpins de-escalation of challenging situations, and the staff wellbeing necessary for positive relationships between teachers and pupils.



## 2019 Difference Leader Terry

Difference Leader Terry is a drama teacher and experienced faculty leader. As Assistant Head for curriculum, assessment and progress in his placement schools, Terry line-manages the English and maths departments.

Through Terry's collaboration with the pastoral leads, the schools' use of data on learning, behaviour and attendance is now used more effectively and informs teachers in their approach to address engagement and mental health of pupils. Together with colleagues across SLT, Terry has put in place changes to the timetable and approach used when pupils are struggling, to keep them on track. In line-management, Terry has supported, challenged and worked collaboratively to help staff problem-solve; and carried out teaching and learning observations with other senior leaders to improve trauma-informed approaches underpinning engagement.

Nationally, 76% and 70% of children pass English and maths GCSEs respectively, with a good pass (Grade 4+). Amongst excluded pupils, only 11% pass English and 9% pass maths.

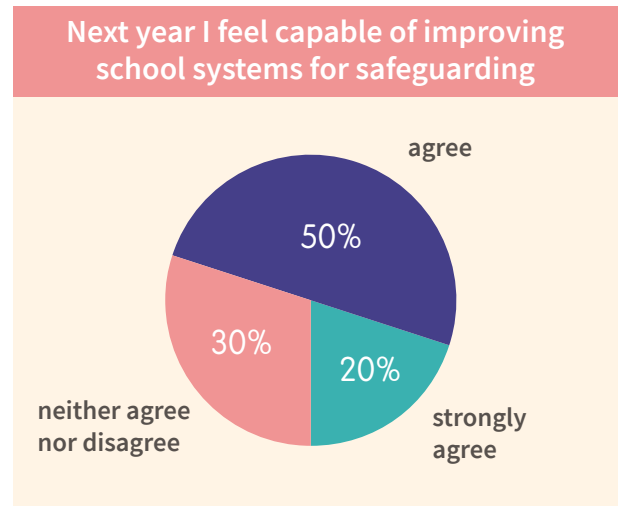
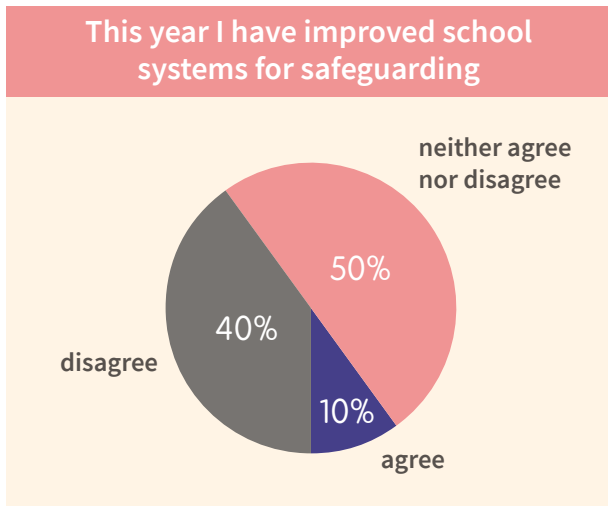
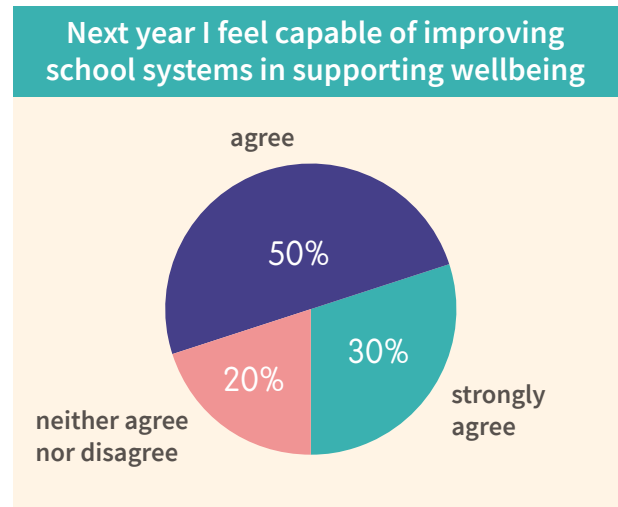
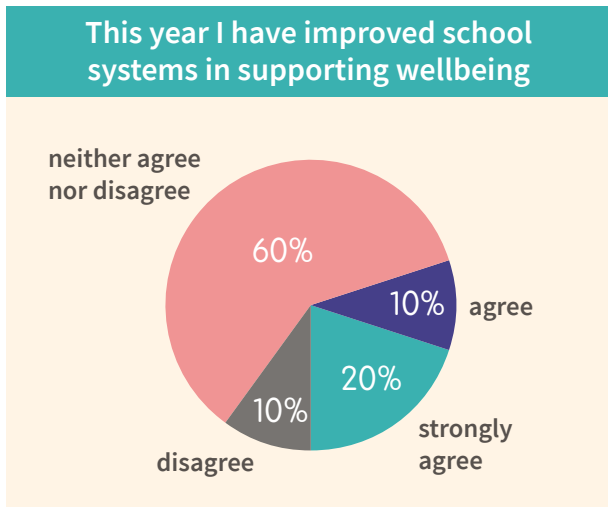
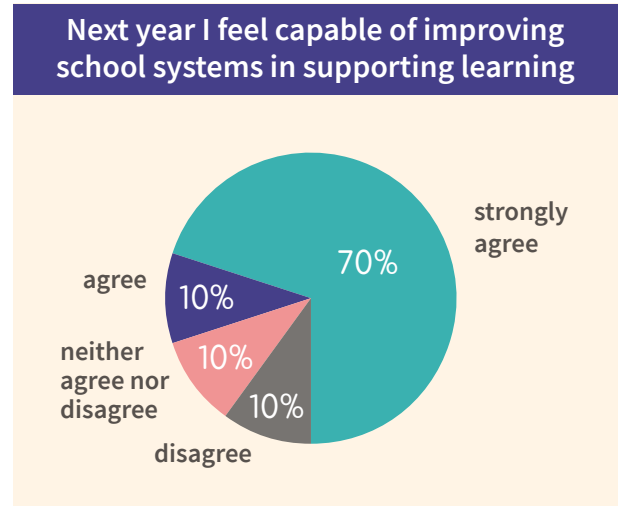
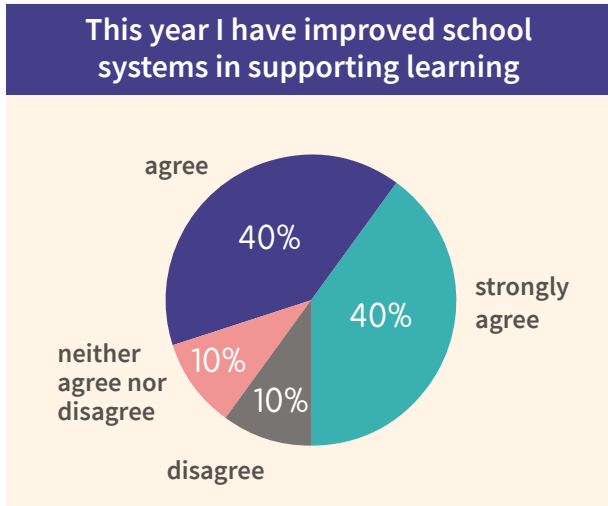
When Terry arrived at his school, historical outcomes were higher than the national average: 39% in English and 29% in Maths. Last year, these figures increased further: **63%** pupils passing English and **38%** passing maths.

## School systems impact

To build strategic and long-term change in schools, Difference Leaders develop their practice beyond working with individual students and staff, to develop *school systems*. These systems reinforce the staff practice which is successful with students and create “feedback loops” which help leaders and staff understand

where their training and strategies are working, and where they need to be adjusted.

Most Difference Leaders begin the course with experience in systems to improve teaching and learning, but others have been branching out, applying this systems-thinking to supporting pupils’ wellbeing. In their second year, they will give more thought to student safeguarding.





### 2019 Difference Leader Vicky

Vicky is a primary practitioner, experienced school leader and Advanced Skills teacher. Vicky was placed as Deputy Headteacher in her primary school, which is one of 8 schools for excluded pupils within one multi-academy trust.

Permanently excluded pupils educated in AP schools can still experience fixed-term exclusions, where they are sent home for periods of time. Nationally, 63% of excluded pupils had one or more fixed-term exclusions last academic year.

As part of a Difference Leaders assignment into missed learning, Vicky identified that the same students were getting “Time Outs” and fixed-term excluded in her school, and that the situation could often get worse rather than better after these interventions. After discussions with the CEO of the group of schools, Vicky was asked to re-write the behaviour policy across the trust to be more trauma-informed, and to train staff in its implementation. This new policy and staff training has reached 250 staff and 600 pupils, and Vicky hopes it will lead to less missed learning due to exclusion in 2020-21.



### 2019 Difference Leader Irene

Irene is a modern foreign languages teacher, and experienced subject leader. As Assistant Principal in her placement school, Irene has been able to change school systems including student induction.

Schools for excluded children receive new pupils throughout the year, and often don't have much information on their previous education, support and experiences. Induction processes are a vital part of succeeding as an AP school, and form an assignment and twilight in Year 1 of the Difference Leaders Programme. Irene identified this as an area of improvement in her school and set out to change the way students joined the school, how information about them was gathered, and the way this was understood and acted on by staff.

The new induction system has made a difference to pupils like K, who had a previously undiagnosed hearing impairment, which was picked up in Irene's rigorous new induction and assessment process. This had not been identified at his previous school and yet had been at the heart of lots of the difficulties he experienced in class. Now K's needs are recognised for the first time, he feels supported and happier. He has adjustments in class which make sure he can hear and engage, has better relationships with peers and staff, and will receive access arrangements for his exams to allow him to perform to his full potential next year.

## Assignments, Twilights and Tutoring

Difference Leaders learned more about the effective practice within their own schools, and areas they could contribute to school improvement, through a series of Assignments and Twilight training sessions designed to expose them to best practice across schools for excluded pupils.

Difference Leaders strengthened their leadership skills through coaching from specialist tutors. This intensified through the turbulent time of the Covid-19 pandemic, during which time most schools for excluded pupils remained open. New challenges of developing remote learning capacity for those self-isolating, and responding to exacerbated home situations for some children under lockdown, meant that many Difference Leaders took on expanded roles within their schools as a result of Covid-19.

Two Difference Leaders were promoted mid-programme, by their AP Headteacher, into a more senior post.

### Difference Leaders at the end of Year One



### *What have you found most supportive of your development as an Inclusive Leader in Year 1 of the DLP?*

“The ILC and Twilight content were the most beneficial for me. It gave me the tools and space to be forensic about my school and identify areas that needed to improve. The sessions also gave me a language and a framework to hang my school-improvement ideas on and this contributed to a take-up of them at leadership. Having the space with my tutor to discuss issues was always helpful – I came away feeling more positive but also with a range of next steps which helped me to be resilient in the face of challenge.”

### *What have you found most challenging about Year 1 of the DLP?*

“The first and second half terms in the autumn were really challenging for me. It took a lot of work to adapt my teaching style to my AP setting. It was also difficult at the beginning to establish myself as a leader within the school.”

# Meet our new team member: MARIE GENTLES Difference Tutor

Marie Gentles joins The Difference team after a 17-year career in schools, culminating in her transformational Headship of Hawkswood Primary Pupil Referral Unit.

First as Deputy and then as Headteacher, Marie took the school on a journey from “almost a glorified youth club” to an Outstanding school, successfully supporting primary pupils to improve their self-perception, emotional regulation, literacy and numeracy skills.

Thanks to the local school partnerships developed by Marie, Hawkswood successfully supported many vulnerable pupils to reintegrate back into mainstream schools before Year 6. When she began working at the school, 20% of her primary children were unable to get back into mainstream schools after their exclusion to the PRU, and a further 20% of those who were reintegrated found themselves excluded again later in their school careers and returning back to the pupil referral unit. By the time Marie left, only 4% of children were unable to successfully reintegrate to mainstream primaries, and with the academic progress they'd made and the emotional resilience tools they'd learned, the proportions of children getting excluded again also dropped to below 5%.

Marie has been recognised for her sector-leading expertise, becoming a Department for Education behaviour adviser in 2019 and being awarded an OBE for services to education in the October 2020 honours.

Marie began tutoring Difference Leaders in September 2020. In this role, she visits Difference Leaders once every six weeks, coaching them to achieve their leadership goals in their placement schools.



# Covid-19 impact on Difference Leaders Programme

## Difference Leaders' Work

In March 2020, the British Government announced a lockdown to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic. The Government shut schools, with the exception of vulnerable pupils – meaning most schools for excluded pupils remained open, including over holidays.

Difference Leaders:

- Carried on going to work, staffing schools so they could remain open for the vulnerable
- Designed remote learning offers, and helped staff become more IT-confident
- Supported staff wellbeing, to deal with increasing disclosures
- Delivered food and activities to pupils at home



Gwen Webb  
@WebbGwenyth

Well done to this young man who enjoyed making cheese straws from his enrichment pack this week @TheRowansAP. Well done they look fab #homeschooling



11:57 AM · May 6, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

**Difference Leader David** leads the pathways programme at the school, building relationships with local colleges to significantly reduce NEET figures – work which became even more vital during Covid-19, when Year 11s were unable to sit exams or do their normal college preparation.

**Difference Leader Jack** was the senior staff member running the school site 3 days a week in lockdown; and carried out home visits to pupils and families. He also developed the school's staff wellbeing system during lockdown – integrating elements of the Compassionate Leadership Coaching he has experienced as a Difference Leader to support teachers to deal with challenging disclosures from pupils.

**Difference Leader Ellie** led the 'remote learning' work of the school, supporting other staff to deliver lessons online during lockdown. Ellie also stepped up to take responsibility for the Year 11s likely to not gain GCSEs and at risk of becoming NEET (not in employment, education or training) – building a post-16 strategy to secure college places for each of the 80 students.

**Difference Leader Cleo** developed a "recovery curriculum" to support the wellbeing of children once they returned from months away from school. Using a new wellbeing assessment in the school, Boxall assessments, Cleo helped staff to understand what had gone on for young people during lockdown and how to support their mental health on return.

## Difference Leaders in Lockdown

While other schools shut in lockdown, schools for excluded children stayed open – staffed by Difference Leaders.

As exams were cancelled, Difference Leaders worked hard to get pupils qualifications, access to college and employment and to support mental health.

## The Difference support

While Difference Leaders' roles often carried on as normal, the support they received from The Difference changed during the early part of the pandemic:

- Face to face training was replaced with Zoom sessions
- Six-weekly 1-2-1 tutor visits became fortnightly Difference Tutor calls
- Six-weekly cohort Twilights were replaced with weekly group check-ins and practice-sharing



## Summer Training and cohort-building disruption

Key to The Difference's theory of change is that the peer relationships built between our Difference Leaders will allow them to have an impact greater than the sum of their parts.

In our end of year survey, the Summer Training Residential was cited as a key reason that 2019

Difference Leaders felt part of a close cohort, supporting one another professionally and psychologically with the challenges of the work.

Yet the pandemic meant Summer Training Residential 2020 and scheduled cohort social events had to be replaced with online events and training. We will need to observe closely the impact of this change on 2019 and 2020 Difference Leaders.



The 2019 Cohort became a close team at a residential in Jamie's Farm

## THE PROBLEM

# Teachers and mental health



IPPR research found:

- 1 in 2 senior leaders felt their staff couldn't recognise behaviour linked to mental health needs

Teacher retention is a challenge in England's schools:

- 1 in 4 teachers say they want to leave in next 2 years
- 1 in 2 say stress is too high

## Supervision model – Compassionate Leadership Coaching

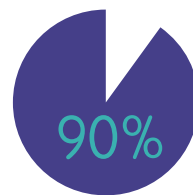
Difference Leaders developed their ability to address challenging behaviour with compassion and to recognise and put aside personal emotional responses and biases, through The Difference's unique supervision model.

Programme Director Shaun Brown and clinical psychologist Dr Charlie Heriot-Maitland have developed a bespoke coaching model for The Difference, drawing on the tools of compassion-focused therapy and effective implementation with family social workers.

Once a fortnight, Difference Leaders meet online in groups of 3 or 4, with Dr Charlie Heriot-Maitland, through 2019-20 for Compassionate Leadership Coaching (CLC). A qualitative evaluation of its impact was carried out by Dr Jo Taylor which identified the positive role this had played in:

- Supporting individual Difference Leaders' mental wellbeing, the sustainability of their approach to work and their retention on this challenging leadership route

- Developing close independent relationships between Difference Leaders, used for support outside of Supervision sessions – for instance during the challenges of the 2020 pandemic lockdown
- Growing Difference Leaders' ability to be compassionate towards themselves, their students and staff.



90% of DLs cite supervision as having 'significant' or 'very significant' benefit to them



100% of DLs report applying Compassionate Leadership Coaching principles with students, colleagues and parents

## The Difference Leaders: Wellbeing & Retention

100% of Difference Leaders retained on the programme

90% reporting significant or very significant impact of supervision

## THE SOLUTION

## CASE STUDY

# Supervision and anti-racism: Irene & Jack

The Difference Summer Training includes a session on Structural Racism. For some teachers, this is one of the first times they have considered structural racism, how it affects their students, and the roles which teachers can play.

Supervision can build on this work, helping Difference Leaders become aware of their emotional responses, biases and reactions. It was during one of these sessions and in the wake of the tragic death of George Floyd that Irene and Jack began to collaborate, discussing the different attitudes to racism in their very different settings.


“Listening to the perspective of Irene, a black woman, I was confronted with my blind spots”

Jack described his follow up conversations with Irene as humbling. ‘My life experience is one that has not overtly been racialised, and listening to the perspective of Irene, a black woman, I was confronted with my blind spots.’

Jack told Irene he felt empowered as a teacher and senior leader to act, by doing sustained work within his school, starting with staff CPD on unconscious bias, race, and racism. He was keen to take action to show allyship, but speaking to Irene enabled him to consider his strategy first.

Irene challenged Jack constructively, helping him bring other racial experiences and voices into the conversation to shape the direction and the outcomes of the work. ‘Irene highlighted to me that if you want to bring everyone with you on a journey that will likely be uncomfortable for many, everyone’s voice must be heard and must be listened to,’ Jack explains.

Jack’s own senior leadership team is all-white, and the pupil population is overwhelmingly white British, yet black children are over-represented compared to the local population. Within the



The image is a screenshot of a BBC News article. The top navigation bar includes the BBC logo, a bell icon, and links for Home, News, Sport, Weather, and iPlayer. Below this is a red banner with the word 'NEWS' in white. Underneath the banner is a secondary navigation bar with links for Home, Coronavirus, UK, World, Business, Politics, Tech, Science, Health, Family & Education, and Entertainment. The article title is 'Black pupils face trebled exclusion rate in some areas of England'. The byline is 'By Hannah Richardson, Education and social affairs reporter', dated '30 July'. A short summary states: 'Kiran Gill, who runs a charity called The Difference - which recruits and trains leaders for schools for excluded pupils, says it is not that teachers are racist, but more that a pupil's experience of racism generally can intersect with circumstances that are already tough.' Below the text is a photograph of Irene Ogunseitan and Jack Weston sitting on a park bench. Irene is wearing a black top and a yellow patterned skirt, and Jack is wearing a white polo shirt and grey trousers. A caption below the photo reads: 'Irene Ogunseitan and Jack Weston have worked together to understand how cultural differences can play out in schools'. A further caption below the photo reads: 'Irene Ogunseitan, assistant principal at Harris Aspire, Croydon, south London and a Difference Leader, says the issue is often down to a lack of thought about how school policies can affect certain groups.'

context of his school, described by Jack as ‘having white privilege yet not feeling privileged in many other ways’, Jack has now carefully opened a sustained dialogue on prejudice and racism with staff and is embarking on a piece of work to ensure the authentic representation of people of Black, Asian, and minority ethnic heritage across the curriculum to disrupt racist prejudices. This work has been enhanced by collaboration with Irene.

Acknowledging that structural racism isn’t the cause of exclusions, Irene nevertheless describes how a lack of representation in leadership can lead to culturally uninformed policies that aggravate issues for some children. Opening the conversation in her own school, Irene has been led by the data – helping staff be curious about the patterns and how to disrupt them.

Irene and Jack are embarking on journeys to make their schools more anti-racist. And in building a diverse cohort across the Difference Leaders, The Difference is changing how these leaders learn from each other, and think of their work as leaders in their schools, and their local communities.

# Inclusive Leadership Course

Difference Leaders learned about the key principles and applications of strategic school inclusion in The Difference's Inclusive Leadership Course, studying and planning school improvement alongside school leaders from mainstream schools.

In Summer 2019, The Difference decided to widen access to our training, to mainstream Headteachers, Deputy Headteachers and Assistant Headteachers, already leading on whole-school Inclusion. Each school pays for their place on the course, creating a revenue stream which will – in time – improve The Difference's sustainability, reducing our reliance on philanthropic investment. More details on the impact on these schools can be seen in the Practice section of our report.

## CONTENT OF THE ILC

**ILC#1: Systems Theory**  
**The Difference Inclusion Framework**  
Apply the Framework to your school inclusion offer

**ILC#2: Understanding Trauma**  
**Trauma informed Practice in the classroom**  
Trauma informed Practice – Reflective Journal

**ILC#3: Bias Aware Practice**  
**Delivering Inclusion with Support Staff**  
Recognising bias in my school

**ILC#4: Restorative Practice**  
**Contextual Safeguarding Practice**  
Mapping Harmful and Abusive Behaviour

**ILC#5: Neurobiology and Compassionate Leadership**  
**Developing a Compassionate Mind in Schools**  
Parental Engagement Review

**ILC#6: Looking Back – Looking Forward**  
**Implementing Inclusive Change**  
Leading Inclusive Change – Development Framework



# Practice



The second wave of impact for The Difference is **developing practice.**

We use our programme to identify inclusive practice which improves outcomes for vulnerable learners, and share this with **teachers across the sector.**

## THE PROBLEM

# Inclusive School Leadership:

IPPR found:

- No specialist professional development for school leaders in Inclusion
- A siloed system with little communication between AP and mainstream senior leaders



# Inclusive School Leadership

12 mainstream colleagues joined the Difference Leaders on the Inclusive Leadership Course in 2019-20.

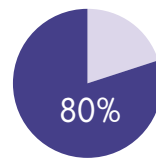
Intensive delivery from The Difference's Programme Team is split into six days across the year. These are accompanied by a series of work-based assignments which leaders take back to their schools to shift their own practice with students, the practice of staff they lead, and the systems in school which measure the impact of these changes and reinforce inclusive practice.

By summer 2020, we had expanded the course to reach 41 mainstream leaders, spanning 42 local authorities and 10 multi-academy trusts.

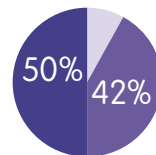
In 1 in 10 cases, headteachers have elected to go on the course themselves, rather than send a deputy or assistant head.

"We've always badged ourselves as an inclusive school... but actually I'm not sure we were practising inclusion in its very broadest sense. The Difference course has changed our practice across the school."

**Jemima Reilly**  
Headteacher, Morpeth School



**80%** of participants reported a change in the systems they used to recognise and communicate students' needs to staff *as a result of the training programme within the first year.*



During the first year, **50%** reported already implementing new training for staff in their schools or introducing new policies as a result of the course. A further **42%** reported plans to implement new staff training and school systems in the new academic year. This will be monitored for the Alumni.



**100%** Multi-Academy Trusts booked further places for the following year.

"Coming into this course was much more than just changing a few policies... it was about our vision and a culture change in the way we work with our young people – especially the most vulnerable."

**Catherine Dalton, Assistant Headteacher, Oasis Don Valley**

## The Difference Inclusive Leadership Course

The Difference opened access to our core training for Difference Leaders, to **mainstream senior leaders** of Inclusion. *They learn together.* Some have already seen **reductions in exclusion.**

## THE SOLUTION

### Meet Inclusive Leader alumni: Aidan

When Aidan joined the Inclusive Leadership Course, by his own admission he was sceptical. He had been teaching for 20 years and had seen a lot of behaviour training on offer which was “a bit woolly”. Yet, exclusions at his school were the highest in the borough, and he was committed to finding and implementing a different approach.

By the end of Day 1, Aidan felt bought in. Working with 11 other mainstream leaders, and the 10 Difference Leaders, there was an honesty about where everyone was and what they wanted to come next, using expert input from The Difference Programme team. “There’s a really non-judgemental culture,” says Aidan.

The course struck a chord with Aidan’s purpose in being a teacher: social justice. Following sessions on systems theory and trauma-informed practice, Aidan re-wrote the school’s behaviour policy, and delivered The Difference’s content to his own staff team. “I made Shaun’s trauma session my own, and I made it directly personal,” he says. “I talked about a young man I worked with at my previous school. He had just been put in prison for kidnapping and torturing someone. But when I first met him, he was a really good kid. Things changed when his auntie died – she was his carer. When things got so bad we excluded him. He lost her, then he lost us. Then he really lost his way.”

With new staff training and school systems, the progress in Aidan’s school from being on the course is far from woolly – they’ve gone from being the highest to lowest excluding school in the borough. And Aidan’s keen to emphasise that they don’t turn a blind eye to poor behaviour, “if anything our expectations of all pupils are a lot higher.”



## Tara's Story

Tara had been in trouble at school many times before. Things seemed to really be reaching the end of the road when she crossed a boundary after maths one day. Annoyed in the playground, Tara lit a cigarette in front of her teacher, in bold defiance of the rules. When asked to put the cigarette out, Tara refused. This time though, her words triggered a different response from school leaders.

"I don't even care, Miss. My life is so sh\*t."

"We all understood what was going on for Tara, since we'd had the trauma training... we knew what would happen to her if we let her go."

The school knew that there were safeguarding concerns with Tara – regular experiences of domestic violence. They'd already tried to reduce sending Tara home for fixed term exclusions – where she might experience more of the same trauma which was driving her depression and recklessness. Nevertheless, for defiance like this, previous versions of the behaviour policy might have taken a "zero tolerance" approach and called for a permanent exclusion.

Aidan recalls the day this happened. Tara's teachers were called in to discuss the case. The Difference's Inclusive Leadership Course hadn't just given Aidan and the staff team some new skills in reducing exclusion, it had reinforced their will.

"We all understood what was going on for Tara, since we'd had the trauma training. And we knew what would happen to her, if we let her go. She would become another statistic. We talked through the sanction for this outburst, and the strategy to get her back on track."

### Whatever it takes

"We agreed as a team – then and there – that we would do everything in our power to keep Tara safe in this tough time in her life, and to keep her from being excluded."

Aidan and the team gave Tara a dedicated mentor, kept in close contact with family, and celebrated anything and everything positive in Tara's work and behaviour.

Over time the change was tangible. As the school refused to give up on Tara, her self-esteem improved, and so did her behaviour.

The pride of Tara's teachers is also tangible. Tara is in the sixth form now, unthinkable just over a year earlier. She is on time, smartly dressed. There has been no more truanting. No more going missing. The next time Tara leaves home, it'll be for university.



# Meet Head of Inclusive Leadership MOHAMED

Mohamed joins The Difference fresh from pioneering inclusive practice at Dunraven Education Trust, including responding to pupil vulnerability during the Covid-19 pandemic and summer lockdown.

Mohamed has spent over a decade building inclusive practice in the trust's 'Outstanding' all-through mainstream, Dunraven School. His use of an asset-based, community development approach – empowering young people and families – alongside multi-disciplinary strategies in safeguarding and inclusion, drove down both fixed term and permanent exclusions across the school over that time.

Seeing the tragic outcomes of pupils permanently excluded from the school, Mohamed and his team built an inclusion hub on the school site as a short-stay alternative to permanent exclusion: The Base. The work here – supporting children in crisis and enabling them to reintegrate back into the mainstream following this period – has formed the inspiration for a three-year campaign by the Evening Standard, to support other London schools to build similar trauma-informed approaches to reducing exclusion.

# The impact of Covid-19 on students

During lockdown the drivers behind pupil vulnerability and exclusion increased:

- Rising domestic violence
- Rising bereavement
- Rising child poverty
- Rising serious mental health problems

There is more need than ever for teacher development supporting vulnerable children.

## Covid-19 impact on mainstream school exclusion

With new and heightened factors causing student vulnerability, the need for specialist school leadership development like The Difference's increases.

In response to the Covid-19 Pandemic, The Difference:

- Increased the capacity of our Programme Team, with new hires
- Expanded the Inclusive Leadership Course to more schools across the country
- Began working with groups of schools within multi-academy trusts or local authorities, to have impact at greater scale than individual schools
- Engaged in new practice research projects to identify and spread effective practice in the Covid context



## The Difference Response

We have **more than trebled** access to the Inclusive Leadership Course, increasing partnership from 12 to **45 school leaders**.

Clusters of leaders are developing practice: in Cheshire West & Chester, across MATs Ark, Oasis, Dixons and Inspiration Trust, and schools participating in the Evening Standard campaign to reduce exclusion in London.

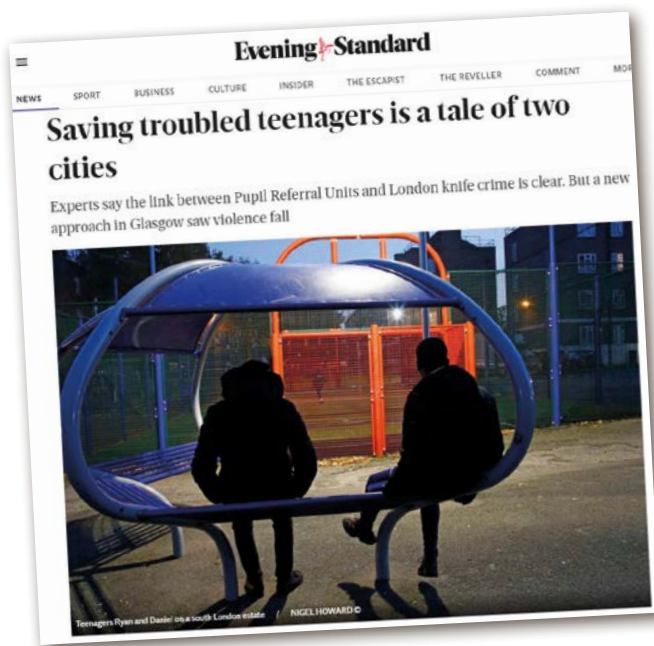
# New Practice Research

As The Difference designed the training programmes during 2019-20, we ensured this was built on best practice in working with the most vulnerable learners, through research into some of the best schools in the country.

In 2019-20, Programme Director Shaun Brown conducted research visits and conversations with 67 schools for excluded pupils (of 350 PRUs nationally). He also conducted a research deep-dive to a range of Glasgow schools, hosted by Education Director, Maureen McKenna, to understand how the Glasgow Model had seen youth violence and exclusions fall across the city, and borrow lessons for the Difference Inclusive Leadership Course.



Maureen McKenna, Glasgow's Education Director speaking to teachers at The Difference's Included conference. The Difference introduced Maureen to the Evening Standard too, shaping their campaign to reduce London's exclusions.



This year, The Difference began a new piece of research with the multi-academy trust Ark schools, a network of 38 mainstream schools, to understand the differences in staff practice and school policies which contribute to different levels of exclusion, and to develop with the schools a plan to share and grow further best practice in inclusion across the trust. Lessons



from this work are not only shaping Ark's next steps on inclusion, but also further development of the Inclusive Leadership Course.

## A space for Inclusion

IPPR found:

- The need to raise the status of Inclusive Leadership
- The need for evidence-led professional development to reach teachers nationally



# IncludED Teacher Conference

The Difference's work to raise the status of focusing on outcomes for the most vulnerable children in our schools, and generating opportunities for professional dialogue and development in Inclusion focused on:

- Drawing together best practice from around the country, and creating a space for this to be shared

- Organising our second annual IncludED Teacher conferences

The Difference's annual Teachers' Conferences were run in November 2019, bringing together researchers, policymakers, practitioners and teachers keen to know more about the practice and systems which can improve outcomes for vulnerable learners and, especially, to reduce exclusion from school.



Our speaker series raised the status of inclusive leadership, bringing Head of Policy at Ofsted and former Regional Schools Commissioners to speak alongside young people, researchers and AP Leaders.

## Expanded IncludED Conferences

We ran **two conferences** in the North & South of England, showcasing **51 speakers** including young experts, academics, policymakers and frontline practitioners.

We reached **430 delegates**, the readership of **two sector magazines**, across **six articles** and live-tweeting of journalists, making **248,000 Twitter impressions**.

“Every generation has their task, and your task is to make sure that every child has the opportunity to succeed. The fact that it’s tough doesn’t mean that we don’t try hard.

The body of knowledge and the proof of practice matters, and that’s why I respect the work of The Difference so much.”

**Baroness Estelle Morris  
addressing IncludEd North**



<h1>The Difference</h1>		 <p>An education conference for teachers and school leaders <b>SOUTH</b> Saturday 2nd November - Thomas Tallis School</p>					
<b>Registration</b> 9.30 am		<b>Registration at the Main Entrance of the School - Refreshments in the canteen</b> 9.30 - 10.00am					
<b>Welcome</b> 10 am Main Hall		<b>Student Stories</b> Hear from some young people about their experiences of exclusion		<b>Maureen McKenna - Glasgow Executive Director of Education</b> What can the Glasgow model of tackling serious youth violence teach London's schools?			
<b>Morning Workshops</b>  <b>Session 1</b> 10.55 - 11.45		<b>School Leader Journeys</b> Career conversations inspired by Iesha Small's book "The Unexpected Leader" With Vicky Shires, Mohamed Abdallah, Alison Kriel, and Caron Johnson, Emmanel Akpan-Inwang, facilitated by Laura McInerney  Main Hall	<b>Taking trauma-aware practice into the classroom</b>  Shaun Brown Programme Director, The Difference  0-311	<b>Race, Education &amp; the Status Quo: Exploring the effect of government policy on black children in London Schools</b>  Dr Nic Taylor-Mullins School Leader  0-312	<b>Measuring the impact of relationships: A mental health perspective on exclusions</b>  Prof. Tamsin Ford Cambridge University  0-314	<b>The journey to serious youth violence: learning from West Midlands combined authority &amp; school implications</b>  Dr Alex Chard Director YCTCS Ltd.  1-313	<b>What does research-based inclusion look like in practice? Lessons across local authorities</b> Graeme Duncan and Belinda Logan, Right to Succeed  1-314
<b>Session 2</b> 11.50 - 12.40		<b>Exclusions policy in England</b>  Kiran Gill IPPR Research fellow in conversation with Jo Hutchinson (EPI), Laura Partridge (RSA) & Cath Murray (CSJ)  Main Hall	<b>Taking trauma-aware practice into the classroom</b>  Shaun Brown Programme Director, The Difference  0-311	<b>Mental Health in Schools: Lessons from the Tower Hamlets trailblazer</b>  Alastair Pearson Tower Hamlets CAMHS  0-312	<b>Reframing blame: Enabling teachers to recognise and respond to exploitation</b>  Nicola Webster, Lauren Ashton and Rebecca McDonnell, The Children's Society  0-314	<b>"Can't read? Teach them. Can't behave? Exclude them!" When literacy needs are "misread" and what we can do</b>  Diver Youth Trust, National Literacy Trust and School leaders  1-313	<b>What does research-based inclusion look like in practice? Lessons across local authorities</b> Graeme Duncan and Belinda Logan, Right to Succeed  1-314

# Meet IncludED delegate Despina

Despina didn't know much about The Difference when she bought her conference ticket. Her friend had suggested attending, and having recently taken up a new pastoral post in her school, Despina thought she'd give it a go.

"I didn't originally want to work in pastoral – I suppose if I'm honest, I didn't think I'd be any good at it, as my background was in curriculum. I was a Head of Department and then my first Senior Leadership role was Progress and Interventions. At IncludED I felt I really had my eyes opened."

Despina attended a session where Programme Director Shaun Brown interviewed Mohamed Abdallah, then at Dunraven School, on his work reducing exclusions across his school.

### New ideas; new resources

Mohamed mentioned his use of trainee social workers in his school. Despina waited until the end of the panel, and asked Mohamed for his contact details. After the conference she arranged to visit Mohamed in school to learn more. Thanks to what she learned, Despina appointed two trainee social workers in her own school. Now they support students who are experiencing barriers to their learning, as well as their families.

### Staff training

Mohamed's asset-based approach really shaped Despina's approach to her new pastoral role in a way which has impacted the school significantly during and after covid.

"I realised that as teachers, we can sometimes come across as 'judgey' and we don't give enough credit to our students and their families, who are often managing as best as they can in difficult situations. When lockdown hit, I prioritised finding out more about our students and their families and ensuring that this was shared amongst staff. I was really pleased with the change. While some of my friends in teaching said they struggled to stay in touch with some of their families experiencing more vulnerability in lockdown, I think we got closer to our families. Since we came back in September, attendance has been high and I think improved parent-school trust and relationships are a factor."

### School systems

After the conference, Despina began rethinking other aspects of inclusion like use of fixed term exclusions. Thinking about the escalating risks of students sent out of school for long periods of time, Despina decided to partner with another local school and to pilot an alternative fixed term exclusion. Now when pupils need to be excluded for a short period, they go to the partner school – adults still have eyes on these young people and they are safe while they reflect on their behaviour and prepare to return to school.

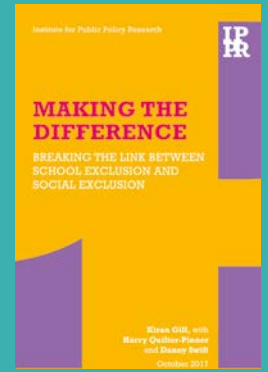
"At first, I wondered if we would be seen as lowering standards. But actually behaviour is better," she says "because there are better relationships with families and fewer battles with students. And actually expectations are higher – because we expect students to keep coming to school, to repair mistakes they make and to keep learning."

## THE PROBLEM

# Sharing best practice

IPPR found:

- Teachers struggled to access best practice and latest research on educating vulnerable pupils
- Teacher communities and networks focusing on Assessment & Progress not mirrored in Wellbeing & Safeguarding



# Research Dissemination

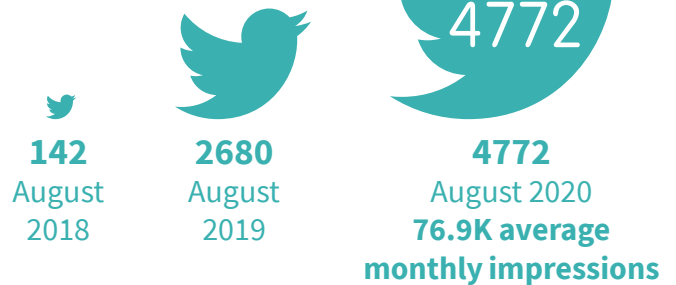
Our work sharing best practice across the sector focused on:

- Growing our Four Bullet Friday Bulletin readership, sharing practice to a widening audience of teachers and school leaders from AP and mainstream; researchers and policymakers; and professionals beyond the education sector.
- Delivering our research through conferences, events and podcasts – sharing our learning from our work with schools through the Difference Leaders Programme and Inclusive Leadership Course.

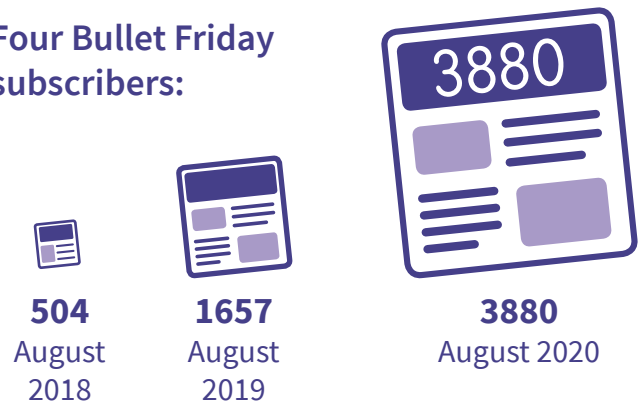
The Difference's CEO and Programme Director disseminated both The Difference's IPPR Research and our developing understanding of best practice derived from our community of schools for excluded pupils; and our work with Inclusive Leaders developing staff and systems to reduce exclusion. They presented at teacher conferences across the country, delivered online training in lockdown and spoke on podcasts and to the national media.

Our sector presence and online presence have grown:

Twitter followers:



Four Bullet Friday subscribers:



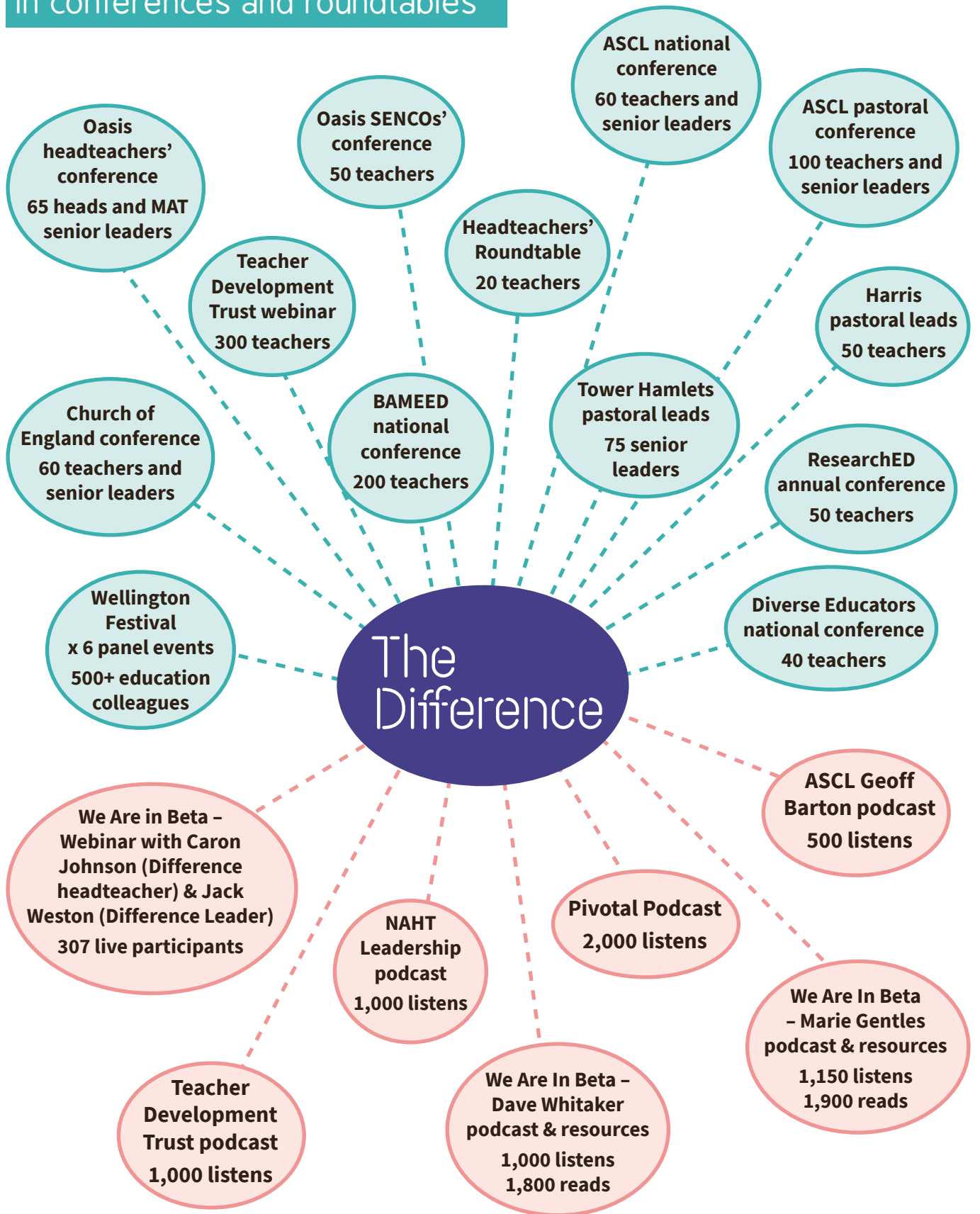
## Growing a community and disseminating research

Growing our online community of teachers and professionals committed to improving outcomes for vulnerable learners.

Disseminating our research to over 10,000 colleagues.

## THE SOLUTION

Addressed over 1500 colleagues in conferences and roundtables



Reached more than 10,000 education colleagues through sector podcasts

# Media reach

1. **The Difference in the News:** Founder, Kiran was invited on the BBC's [Victoria Derbyshire](#) programme following new data on who teaches vulnerable children. As exclusions rise, new data shows that the most vulnerable pupils are two and a half times more likely to be taught by an unqualified teacher.




**Channel 4 News**

UNQUALIFIED TEACHERS



1. **The Difference:** This week The Difference took Princess Beatrice and Holly Branson to visit the primary and secondary provisions of The Hawkswood Group PRU in Walltham Forest, to learn more about school exclusion. Thanks to Big Change's support for The Difference, Richard Branson has also begun [raising awareness](#) of exclusions, as part of his support for this year's [Share](#) challenge.



**NewStatesman**

10 CULTURE WORLD SCIENCE & TECH LONG READS MAGAZINE EVENTS SPOTLIGHT Q

**EDUCATION** 25 JULY 2018

**"Forgotten children": Our education system is excluding, and failing, more pupils**

...res show the number of children excluded has risen for year in a row.

**Evening Standard**

RACHEL SYLVESTER

**Dithering ministers must tackle knife crime**

Reducing the number of pupils who are permanently excluded from school will save lives and money in the long run

Rachel Sylvester Tuesday February 05 2019, 12:01am, The Times

**The Spark**

Home Episodes

**Kiran Gill and Excluded Pupils**

Helan Lewis meets the educationalist Kiran Gill, founder of The Difference, to hear how she is setting out to improve the life chances of pupils excluded from mainstream education.

Available now 43 minutes

**SCHOOLS WEEK** EDITION 209 | FRIDAY, MAR 26, 2020

**Feature**

FRANCES WHITTINGHAM | @FRANCESWHITTINGHAM

**The programme making all the difference to behaviour and exclusions**



**Evening Standard's £1m campaign to cut school exclusions**

DAVID COHEN | Wednesday 9 January 2020 11:03

News Coronavirus Food for London Comment Football *style* GO London Lifestyle Showbiz ES Magazine Homes & Property

1. **News:** The Education Secretary pledged to hold schools to greater account on exclusion, a lead story in [The Times](#) this week. Meanwhile, [Sky News](#) published an investigation into high populations of schools for excluded pupils. Kiran spoke live on Sky News, calling for more teachers to work with the pupils who need them most. Sounds like a teacher you know? Ask them to fill in our [Expression of Interest form here!](#)

**School Exclusions – What's the Alternative?**

Techniques that support students in PRUs can have a positive impact for all young people, says Shaun Brown...

Shaun Brown

Added: 09th October 2019




**School Exclusions – What's the Alternative?**

Techniques that support students in PRUs can have a positive impact for all young people, says Shaun Brown...

Shaun Brown

Added: 09th October 2019





**Meet the woman making 'The Difference' for vulnerable pupils**

Tes talks to Kiran Gill, a former teacher trying to make working with excluded children the 'brain surgery of teaching'

By Caroline Henshaw

14 December 2018

Share this f t in e

**Education charity takes novel approach to exclusions research**

Jens Staufenberg | 11:21, Mar 27, 2018



**'We're always there for them': is the tide turning against zero-tolerance in UK schools?**

More teachers are rejecting cruel school culture and opting for 'trauma-informed' behaviour management, based on children's emotional needs



**'Working in a pupil-referral unit changed my career'**

The challenges of working in a pupil-referral unit show us how to support pupils in mainstream schools, says Shaun Brown

Shaun Brown

January 2019

Share this f t in e



**Fiona Millar**

Sat 10 Oct 2020 08:00 BST

1,810 191

# Policy



The third wave of impact  
for The Difference is  
**developing policy.**

We find patterns across schools in policies  
which help and hinder improved outcomes  
for vulnerable learners, and share with  
**sector influencers and policy makers.**



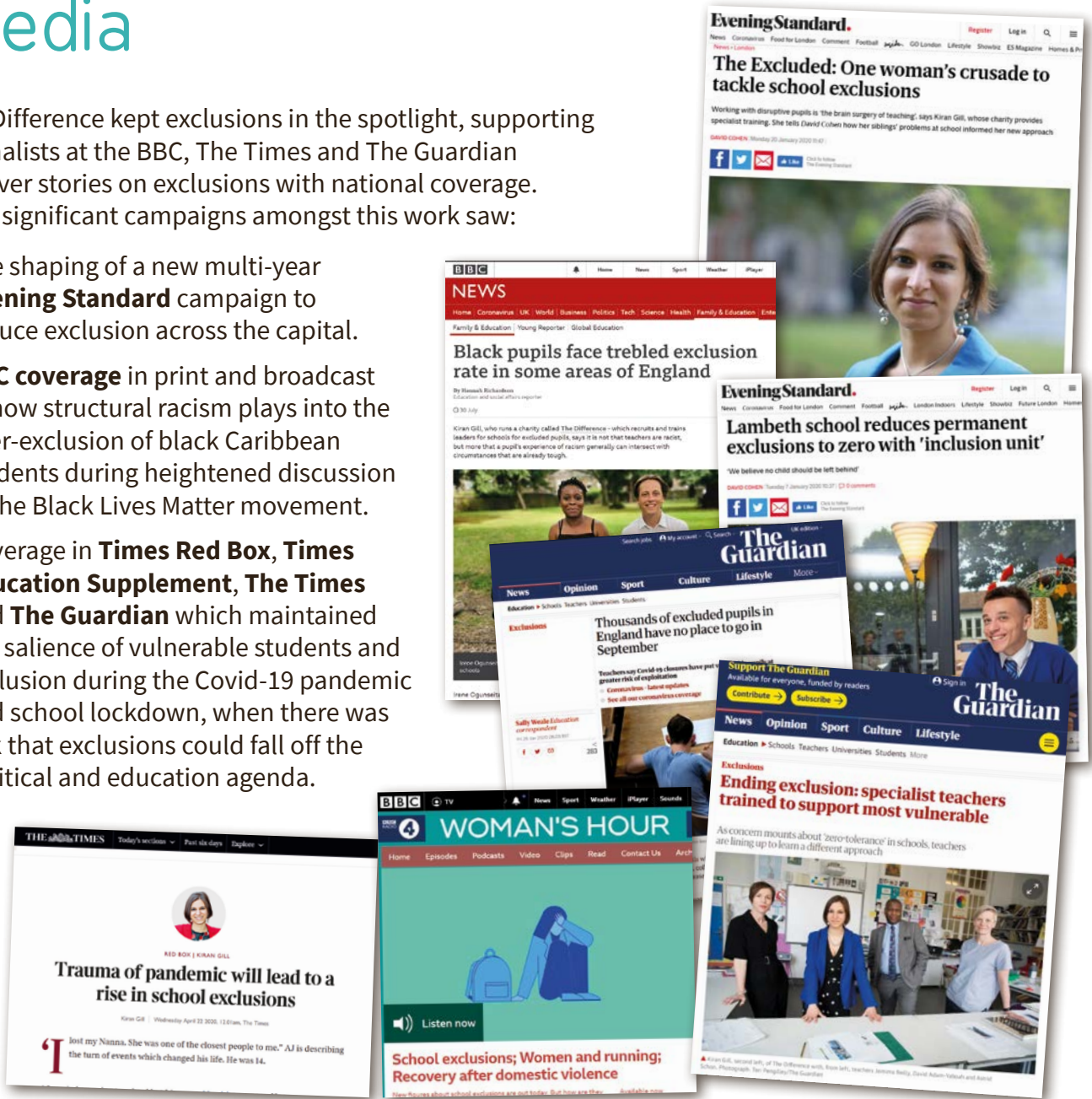
IPPR found:

- School exclusions not on the political agenda
- Accountability and resourcing not always focused on the most vulnerable children

## Media

The Difference kept exclusions in the spotlight, supporting journalists at the BBC, The Times and The Guardian to cover stories on exclusions with national coverage. Most significant campaigns amongst this work saw:

- The shaping of a new multi-year **Evening Standard** campaign to reduce exclusion across the capital.
- **BBC coverage** in print and broadcast of how structural racism plays into the over-exclusion of black Caribbean students during heightened discussion of the Black Lives Matter movement.
- Coverage in **Times Red Box, Times Education Supplement, The Times** and **The Guardian** which maintained the salience of vulnerable students and exclusion during the Covid-19 pandemic and school lockdown, when there was risk that exclusions could fall off the political and education agenda.



## Advocating for vulnerable children

The Difference ensured that exclusions stayed on the agenda. We made sure that children's stories and teachers' realities informed policymakers' decisions and new funding.

# Informing Policymakers

The Difference worked to inform national policymakers about the frontline realities of policies affecting excluded pupils and those vulnerable to exclusion, organising roundtables and meetings between our Difference Headteachers and policymakers at the **Department for Education**; and presenting evidence to the **Education Select Committee** in the **House of Commons**.



**Department for Education**

## DfE AP Workforce roundtable

The Department for Education asked The Difference to convene a roundtable on workforce development in AP schools, introducing them to our headteachers to discuss how to build an attractive career pathway for teachers in AP.



## APPG on knife crime

The Difference Programme Director Shaun Brown was invited to present to the APPG, discussing the role school leadership can play in keeping children safe from child criminal exploitation.

# The Difference

## CSJ AP Quality Benchmarks

The Difference's Programme Team has worked closely with Dennis Simms as part of the IntegratED programme.



**IntegratED**

## Cabinet Office Serious Youth Violence Team

The Difference hosted trips to AP schools for policymakers, including this team, visiting the excellent staff and challenging site of Tunmarsh Pupil Referral Unit.

## VRU Roundtables on violence reduction

The Difference has participated in regular roundtables at London City Hall's Violence Reduction Unit to inform the work they do to reduce youth violence. See page 50.



The Difference acted as an advisor to think-tanks in new pieces of research, notably Social Finance UK's research with Cheshire West and Chester Local Authority, and Education Policy Institute's research into access to Education, Health and Care Plans.



**UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD**  
**School Exclusion Risks after Covid-19**

**EDUCATION POLICY INSTITUTE**  
**Pupil special educational needs and disabilities: identification, access and patterns of mental health support**  
*(research phase; publication pending)*

**UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON**  
**Creating Place and Belonging in Schools**  
*(research phase; publication pending)*

**ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL AND COLLEGE LEADERS**  
**Developing inclusion policy for transgender students**

**NATIONAL EDUCATION UNION**  
**Understanding Exclusion from School**

**TOWER HAMLETS**  
**Deployment of new Mental Health Workers in schools**

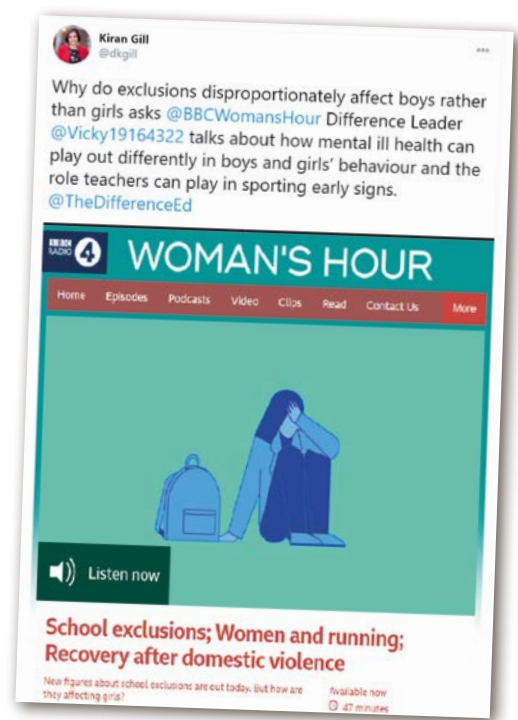
**CACI & YOUTH JUSTICE BOARD**  
**The power of technology systems to transform outcomes for vulnerable children and young people**

**ASSOCIATION FOR SCHOOL AND COLLEGE LEADERS & JOHN CATT PUBLISHERS**  
**The Forgotten Third: Do a third have to fail for two thirds to pass?**

**CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE**  
**Warming the Cold Spots of Alternative Provision**



**SOCIAL FINANCE UK**  
**Maximising access to education: Who's at risk of exclusion?**



The Difference partnered with Social Finance through their research phase 2018-2020, and also supported on the press coverage of their research; helping the most important findings on exclusions shape public imagination. We helped secure coverage in The Guardian and BBC Radio 4's Women's Hour on the impact of unofficial exclusion of girls.

# New Policy Research

The Difference conducted two original pieces of research with national implications this year:

- A [survey of schools serving excluded pupils nationally](#), in collaboration with think-tank Centre for Social Justice, which revealed 16-year olds' lack of access to post-16 education during and after lockdown. (For a case study of the impact on policy – see below).
- A [new think piece](#) with think-tank Institute for Public Policy Research, which identified the gap in school funding and accountability for children experiencing domestic violence, exploitation and other safeguarding threats.

**SCHOOLS WEEK**


Search schools

**News**

## AP heads call on government to fund specialist sixth forms

James Carr

Fri 26th Jun 2020, 17:28



**Alternative Provision (AP) headteachers are calling for funding to set up specialist sixth forms to stem the thousands of vulnerable pupils who become lost from education at age 16.**

A new survey commissioned by The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) and teacher training charity The Difference found 9 out of 10 AP providers said they would open 16 to 19 provision if the government would fund the provision.

**SCHOOLS WEEK**

Friday November 13th 2020

Search schools

**Opinion**

## Making the vulnerable visible is how we will close gaps

Harry Quilter-Pinner\* and Kiran Gill\*\*

\*associate director for work and the welfare state, IPPR and \*\*associate fellow, IPPR and CEO, The Difference

Sun 4th Oct 2020, 5:00



**Policy makers are able to really see vulnerable students for the first time, but will they choose to look? Ask Harry Quilter-Pinner and Kiran Gill**

# How does The Difference influence policy?



MARCH

The Difference hear from Heads and Difference Leaders who are increasingly concerned about **Year 11s** in lockdown. These 16 year olds feel cut loose, with exams cancelled and schools lockdown. Leaders are concerned these children are being **criminally exploited** and will **struggle to start college** in September with **no support**, so are due to be unemployed.

MAY

Following direct introductions through 2019-20 by The Difference, when the DfE convenes a Covid-response Stakeholder Group of AP Heads, many of these leaders are from Difference partner schools. These perspectives shape DfE crisis leadership and **longer-term mitigation** strategy.

The **Youth Endowment Fund** open Covid Grant Round to support young people being drawn into violent crime, with a focus on lockdown exploitation. The Difference organises a roundtable with the grant managers and Difference Partner Headteachers and arranges pro bono bid-writing support from McKinsey & Company.

APRIL

Kiran raises the issue with the **Department for Education (DfE)**; Robert Halfon MP, Chair of the House of Commons Education **Select Committee**; **London City Hall's Violence Reduction Unit**; and the **Youth Endowment Foundation**.





JUNE

DfE announce new **Transition Fund** to support AP schools in managing post-16 transition. Difference Leaders like Ellie and David begin using this fund to provide extra support for estranged students to engage with the process of applying for college.



SEPTEMBER

Minister Vicky Ford invites the CSJ and Difference Headteachers to discuss the **Transition Fund**, and longer-term need for AP sixth forms.

**Sadiq Khan** announces further funding for career coaching, as part of the City Hall's **Violence Reduction Unit** work. This is for all AP schools in the city, giving new funds to Difference partner schools.

JULY

Robert Halfon calls Kiran to present The Difference's research to the **Select Committee**.

JUNE

The Difference commissions a survey of AP Headteachers nationally with think-tank the CSJ and published as part of the **IntegratED** collaborative.

BBCR4's **The Today Programme** and **The Guardian** cover the survey, and its results that show 1 in 4 excluded **Year 11s** may be being criminally exploited without school to go to. The survey shows demand for AP Sixth Forms for lowest attaining pupils.

**Robert Halfon MP** writes to Kiran about the issue; London's Violence Reduction Unit ask for further information to share with the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan.

AUGUST



Difference Partner school The Rowans wins the **Youth Endowment Fund** bid, and runs holiday project to reduce exploitation of vulnerable young people.

OCTOBER

A new **All Party Parliamentary Group** for Exclusions and outcomes founded by IntegratED, a coalition of charities working to improve AP and reduce exclusion of which The Difference is a key member.

MPs and Peers engaged by The Difference 2017-2020 join the APPG, including Robert Halfon MP, Edward Timpson MP, Baroness Morris and Lord Knight.

# Who are The Difference?

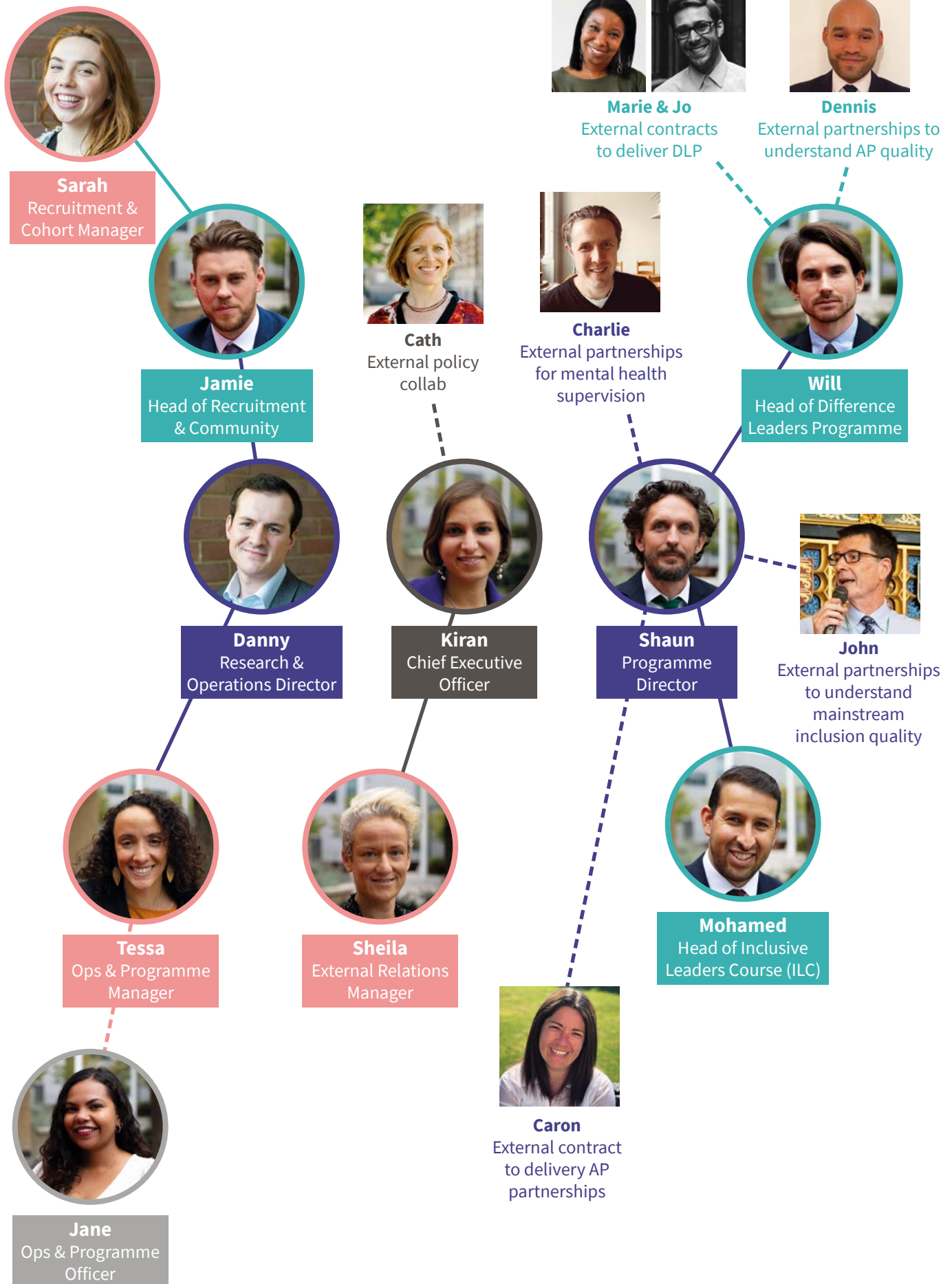


In academic year 2019-2020, The Difference charity set itself the organisational target to **improve the sustainability of our organisation, grow our governance structures, and to reduce risks inherent in a small start-up team.**

- Grow our team to full size to deliver the Viability Pilot, allowing dedicated team capacity to develop internal policies and systems which share organisational knowledge across a broader team; develop philanthropic relationships, growth of traded services and business planning for sustainability; drive continuous improvement of our programmes, capture of impact and plans for longer-term evaluation.
- Strengthen and grow our Trustee board in our first full year as a charity, ensuring a board with a diverse set of skills to support The Difference's staff team, and develop the post-Viability Pilot strategy to scale our work.



# The Difference Team





**Kiran Gill**  
Chief Executive Officer

Kiran runs the organisation, leading the team, the strategy for impact at scale and the external partnerships The Difference holds with policymakers, philanthropists and press. She also still delivers on elements of The Difference Leaders Programme, works as an assessor in our recruitment process and staffs our consultancy and research work with external organisations like Ark and the Violence Reduction Unit. In 2019/20, Kiran led the teacher attraction work at The Difference, which is now being taken on by new hire Jamie.

Kiran began her career in inner-city London, as an English teacher in schools serving the most deprived postcodes in the country. After five years on the frontline, Kiran left to work in education policy, searching for solutions to the rising numbers of vulnerable children falling out of schools. Kiran was working at the Social Mobility Commission when she conceived the idea for *The Difference*. She has led its work full-time since January 2017.



**Shaun Brown**  
Programme Director

Shaun leads the strategy and growth of our programmes, and derives the learning from this delivery into practice to be shared across the sector, along with policy implications. Shaun builds relationships with schools for excluded pupils across the country, delivers significantly on our programmes and staffs The Difference's consultancy, research and external affairs work.

Shaun's innovative safeguarding work has achieved national recognition from Ofsted. He is a specialist in whole-school inclusion, trauma-aware practice, multi-agency working and contextual safeguarding. After working as a Head of Geography for several years, Shaun became more interested in the pupils who were falling through the gaps. This inspired Shaun to spend a decade teaching and leading in pupil referral units, before returning to mainstream to apply that knowledge to strategically reduce exclusion as a Deputy Head. Shaun's career route and impact was a case study in The Difference's IPPR research and has formed a blueprint for the Difference Leaders Programme.



**Danny Swift**  
Research & Operations Director

Danny's leadership at The Difference covers Finance and Operations, Programme Evaluation, Research, Business Planning and Strategy. Danny joined The Difference in 2017, and led the establishment of The Difference as an independent charity, ready to deliver the Difference Leaders Programme. In 2019/20, Danny led the [Recruitment process](#) for Difference Leaders and [Placement process](#) for matching teachers to partner schools. He now line-manages the growth of this work, whilst developing The Difference's ability to research and learn from its programmes.

Danny joined the Teach First programme after his Masters in Physics & Philosophy, wanting to improve university access for disadvantaged children in challenging schools. He was successful in this ambition, teaching and leading maths in Manchester's Moss Side, and later in inner-city London. Danny started to become curious about the pupils who disappeared from his school register and where they went, and began to focus his energy away from Oxbridge applications, and towards the students for whom getting into, and staying in, school each day was an achievement.

Danny was eventually drawn to a research project into school exclusions at IPPR, eventually co-authoring the *Making the Difference* report. He has been developing and delivering the strategy for the charity ever since.



**Will Moss**  
Head of the Difference Leaders Programme

Will leads the Difference Leaders Programme, coordinating and delivering training inputs, managing Difference Leaders' wellbeing and effectiveness in their posts, and developing the systems within delivery for scale post-pilot.

Will is a specialist in teaching and learning, and school improvement. Will has led initial teacher training courses and in-school professional development, recognised as Gold standard by the Institute for Education. His experience in school turnaround has led to him providing consultancy leadership support to failing schools and transforming teaching and learning capacity, as recognised by improved Ofsted judgements.



**Mohamed Abdallah**  
Head of the Inclusive Leadership Course

Mohamed was a new hire in 2019/20, brought into the team to grow our relationships with mainstream schools, learning from the Viability Pilot and understanding the impact of The Difference's Inclusive Leadership Course on reducing the likelihood of exclusion in the mainstream schools we partner with. Mohamed will also support The Difference's growth in research and consultancy work to shape policy in multi-academy trusts and local authorities.

Mohamed's career began in youth work and pupil referral units, before spending over a decade leading pioneering inclusive practice at the 'Outstanding' all-through mainstream, Dunraven School. Mohamed's use of an Asset-Based Community Development approach – empowering young people and families – alongside a multi-disciplinary approach to safeguarding and inclusion drove down both fixed term and permanent exclusions across the school.



**Jamie Rogers**  
Head of Recruitment & Community

Jamie was a new hire in 2019/20, brought into the team to grow our ability to reach increasing numbers of teachers beyond our programmes with the practice The Difference is observing, to improve life-outcomes for vulnerable children. He also leads the recruitment process for Difference Leaders, and participants on our mainstream Inclusive Leadership Course.

Jamie was one of the youngest headteachers in the country, where he transformed an 'inadequate' school, with low levels of safety and wellbeing for children and staff, into a thriving school with strong community and attainment. Jamie brought new funding into his school, re-branded its perception within its local community, and inspired staff to achieve previously unimagined success with children who needed their support.



**Sarah Worth**  
Recruitment & Cohort Manager

Sarah is a founding member of The Difference, joining the team in 2018. In her current post, she manages the selection process for our Difference Leaders, pastoral support to underpin their retention on the programme, and develops the cohort events which build their potential to have impact as a community beyond their impact as individuals.

Sarah started working with excluded pupils as a teaching assistant, but found herself doing less assisting and more teaching. Without many qualified teachers around, Sarah experienced first-hand the injustices that brought her to The Difference. Sarah previously worked as Chief of Staff at The Difference, managing the office, partnership relationships with schools, supporters and The Difference Leaders.



**Sheila Chapman**  
External Relations Manager

Sheila was a new hire in 2019/20, brought into the team to improve The Difference's ability to capture the impact of our work and share this with our growing network of philanthropic partners.

As an independent monitor at a London remand prison, Sheila saw how social exclusion and involvement with the criminal justice system often begins with school exclusion. At the same time, Sheila's experience as a safeguarding lead governor at an inner-city comprehensive showed her how a school that operates with inclusion at its heart can make all the difference for vulnerable children. She brings skills from twenty years as an international capital markets lawyer, working at Allen & Overy and Barclays in London and New York, into her post.



**Tessa Jennett**  
Operations & Programme Manager

Tessa has worked in Operations at The Difference since the 2018 Recruitment season. Tessa's role now encompasses finance, HR, operational and administrative support, as well as managing events.

An alumna of the Year Here programme, it was through working in a pastoral role in an inner city London special school that Tessa realised her ambition to improve support for vulnerable young people. She also leads her own enterprise, Lemonade, supporting children's mental health, two days a week.



**Jane Stevenson**  
Operations & Programme Officer

Jane was a new hire in 2020, brought into the team to improve The Difference's ability to coordinate our growing work-streams. She manages Kiran and Shaun's time, supports the programme team in their delivery and the team's administration needs. Jane trained as a mental health nurse and brings her problem-solving, organisational skills and strong emotional sensitivity to a role which ensures the charity works!

# The Difference Trustees

In the academic year 2019/20, The Difference gained a new Chair with experience spanning education practice and policy; and developing teams and female leadership. Christine Megson has grown the strength and capacity of our Board, adding new member Dave Whitaker and building close links between each trustee and The Difference staff.



**Christine Megson** (Chair)  
Independent consultant



**Darren Xiberras**  
University of South Wales



**James Benamor**  
Richmond Group



**Carly Mitchell** (mat leave)  
Oasis Community Learning



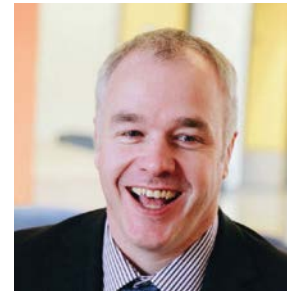
**Mwansi Phiri**  
Big Society Capital



**Jo Hutchinson**  
Education Policy Institute



**Claire Heald**  
Inspiration Trust



**Dave Whitaker**  
Wellspring Academy Trust

## Christine Megson Chair

Christine's career includes roles as Principal of Stafford Further Education College, leading on establishing the first academies at the Department for Education; public service redesign in the Cabinet Office; systemic change to tackling childhood obesity in the Department of Health including starting up the new charity the School Food Trust; developing place-based approaches to vulnerable families in Sheffield. Christine's current leadership work ranges from Sheffield Hallam University, The Key for School Leaders, coaching co-headteachers and running the Fabian Women's Mentoring Programme for women aspiring to a greater role in politics and public life. In governance, Christine has been a non-executive on a hospital trust, a charity trustee and is currently a founding adviser developing King's Cross Academy.

## Darren Xiberras Finance

Darren is currently Chief Finance Officer at the University of South Wales, and immediately before that held the same role for the education charity Teach First. Darren is a fully qualified accountant with over fifteen years' experience at Board level in many for profit and not-for-profit organisations delivering services to the general public and public sector institutions. As well as acting as The Difference trustee, Darren is also a co-opted member of the Audit & Risk Committee of the National Citizen Service and a trustee at Solent Student Union where he also chairs the Finance Committee. He also chairs the Welsh Higher Education Finance Directors' Group and represents Wales on the British Universities Finance Directors' Group (BUFDG) Executive Committee.

## Dave Whitaker Safeguarding

Dave Whitaker is Director of Learning at Wellspring Trust, with responsibility for the 11 alternative provision and special schools within it, across Yorkshire and the Humber. As well as running 22 schools, the Trust has supported 80 more mainstream schools across the country and, since it was set up, has never permanently excluded a pupil. Dave is a founding member of grassroots think-tank the Headteachers' Roundtable; and leads a teaching school from within the Wellspring Trust. Dave brings insight into AP policy and funding, alongside excellent practice. He supports The Difference's Executive in building partnerships with schools for excluded pupils, listening to the policy insights from this group, and continuously improving our training to support AP school improvement.

## James Benamor HR

James founded The Richmond Group in 1991. Since then, it has gone on to make the Sunday Times Fast Track list as one of the fastest growing UK companies, and is rated as one of the 100 best companies to work for. In recent years, James has split his time between the Richmond Group and investment in education technology/philanthropy benefitting marginalised young people. James' support for The Difference is partially driven by the relationships he built with excluded pupils in Moss Side, through the BBC's 'Secret Millionaire' show, where James worked in a school for excluded pupils. James brings to The Difference's governance not only experience in growing start-up organisations and teams, but from his own life brings an insight into the lives and potential of some of those young people we serve who are currently on the wrong path, but have the capacity to build positive things for society.

## Carly Mitchell (maternity leave)

Carly Mitchell leads school improvement within Oasis Community Learning (one of the country's largest multi academy trusts, serving 52 schools). Carly was Founding Principal of Oasis Academy South Bank, a free school in Waterloo. Oasis Southbank's foundation of love, nurture and a rigorous academic focus has contributed to disadvantaged students at the academy out-performing their national counterparts; with OASB coming top in the country for attainment of pupil premium children in the school's first GCSE year of 2017. Carly's commitment to inclusion has seen the school take many children on roll who had been excluded from other schools, and many other vulnerable young people gain a second chance within the academy to work out their dream job and how to get it; and become model citizens. Carly is a 2004 Ambassador of Teach First and a 2007 alumnus of Future Leaders: two pioneering leadership programmes for teachers.

## Claire Heald (maternity cover)

Claire Heald is Standards Director at Inspiration Trust (a multi-academy trust in the East of England), leading on school improvement, curriculum development, teacher and leader development and inclusion. She is also the Executive Principal of Jane Austen College. Claire founded Jane Austen College in 2014, a free school specialising in English. She is an experienced educational leader and speaker and a National Leader of Education (NLE).

Claire applies her expertise as a Difference Trustee to our work building our relationships with mainstream schools to share practice across the sector, and continuously improving our training and consultancy services to support mainstream schools in improving school inclusion.

## Mwansa Phiri

Mwansa is a Social Impact Manager at Big Society Capital, and brings her expertise in philanthropy and charity growth to The Difference, supporting us to develop a sustainable financial strategy and evidence the impact of our work to our supporters. Mwansa is a Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellow, with a research background in how community-oriented initiatives can empower people facing charges, and their families, to fight for fairer outcomes from the criminal justice system. Mwansa began her career as a Teach First teacher.

## Jo Hutchinson


Jo is Director for Social Mobility and Vulnerable Learners at the think-tank Education Policy Institute (EPI). After graduating from the London School of Economics with a Masters (MPA) in Public and Economic Policy, Jo spent ten years as a statistician at the Department for Education, specializing in analysis and research of school outcomes to support policies including behaviour and attendance, floor standards and accountability, and attainment gaps.

Major projects Jo led on included the development and launch of the Disadvantage Attainment Gap Index, a world-first application of mean rank difference methodology to deliver standardized tracking of educational inequality across changing assessment measures; evidence for the London Mayor's Education Inquiry; and international evidence for the National Curriculum Review.

Since joining EPI in 2016, Jo's published research includes EPI's annual report series on disadvantage gaps, and reports on grammar schools and social mobility, the attainment of pupils with English as an additional language, access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, and the growing prevalence of unexplained pupil exits from schools. Current research includes patterns of access to support for special educational needs and disabilities, investigating Ofsted's intractable schools, and the educational experiences of refugee and asylum-seeking children. Jo brings this knowledge of education policy and research to The Difference, and supports The Difference executive in planning our research, influencing and evaluation work.

# Bishop Rose Hudson-Wilkin

## New Patron of The Difference

A portrait of Bishop Rose Hudson-Wilkin, a Black woman with short hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a dark blue clerical jacket over a white clerical collar and a light-colored scarf. The background is a soft-focus green outdoor setting.

“At The Difference our focus is finding future senior leaders – they are the teachers that can make the biggest difference. We equip them to work with vulnerable children ... so they don’t end up in the criminal justice system and – before we know it – with no place in society.”

**Bishop Rose speaking on BBC Today Programme, 30 July 2020**

# Thank you

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