

**Academic Mentors:** Academic Mentors are trained graduates employed by schools to provide intensive catch-up support to their pupils. In the first year, academic mentors were provided by Teach First.

### ***First year of the NTP: The Education Endowment Foundation and Teach First***

Once the programme was given the go-ahead, the Department for Education asked the EEF and Teach First to run the NTP for the first year of its operation. The Sutton Trust, Impetus and Nesta were no longer directly involved with the programme from this point. Despite the programme's stated focus on the most disadvantaged young people, there was no target for pupil premium students in the NTP's first year, with schools able to decide which of their students would most benefit. The programme hit its target to enrol 250,000 pupils by the end of the year, although around 18% of those enrolled had not started their course of tuition at that point.<sup>16</sup> However, many felt that the programme was not reaching pupils quickly enough, and schools reported issues with accessing tutoring in a form that suited their needs.<sup>17</sup>

As well as providing tuition directly, the EEF-run NTP also sought to expand the tutoring market to new areas. While many different tutoring organisations were available in some part of the country, notably in the South East, schools in the north and/or in rural areas could often find it difficult to access high quality provision. The EEF specifically stated that it wanted to tackle this issue with the NTP, with the organisation's CEO, Becky Francis, saying the NTP aimed to "inject some rigour and quality into a largely unregulated market. Although there are some excellent tutoring companies out there, not all have high standards, not all implement robust safeguarding practices, not all are cost effective and not all take the effort to train their staff or fit tuition into a school's curriculum."<sup>18</sup>

The NTP initially struggled to reach schools in all regions, with data released in March 2021 finding the programme was reaching at or near 100% of its target schools in some regions (100% in the South West and 96% in the South East), but far lower rates in other regions, reaching just 59% of schools in both Yorkshire and the Humber and in the North West, with concerns raised there were not enough providers in the north of England to provide tutoring.<sup>19</sup> Despite the stated purpose of the programme, the first year of the NTP did not have a specific target for reaching pupil premium students, with the Sutton Trust estimating around 47% of those reached in the first year were eligible for PP.<sup>20</sup>

In October 2022, the National Foundation for Educational Research released an independent evaluation of the first year of the NTP's operation (2020-2021), looking at both Tuition Partners and Academic Mentors.<sup>21</sup> The evaluation's findings were as follows:

- Only 46% of the pupils selected for Tuition Partners in evaluation schools were eligible for pupil premium (PP), a low proportion compared to the proportion of students eligible for PP in those schools overall.

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<sup>16</sup> S. Booth (2022) *Long Read: How the flagship tutoring programme is slowly sinking*. Schools Week. Accessed March 2023. Available at: <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/long-read-how-the-flagship-tutoring-programme-is-slowly-sinking/>

<sup>17</sup> National Audit Office (2021) *Support for children's education during the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic*. National Audit Office. Available at: <https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/support-for-childrens-education-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

<sup>18</sup> I. Barker (2021) *Tutoring: will the NTP help students 'catch up'?* Times Educational Supplement. Available at: <https://www.tes.com/magazine/teaching-learning/general/tutoring-will-ntp-help-students-catch>

<sup>19</sup> S. Booth (2021) *Data reveals scale of National Tutoring Programme's northern challenge*. Schools Week. Available here: <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/data-reveals-scale-of-national-tutoring-programmes-northern-challenge/>

<sup>20</sup> See Table 1b

<sup>21</sup> Education Endowment Foundation (2022) *NEW: Independent evaluation of the National Tutoring Programme (NTP)*. EEF. Accessed March 2023. Available at: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/new-independent-evaluation-of-the-national-tutoring-programme-ntp>

- The limited reach of the programme to pupil premium students made the impact on this group difficult for the researchers to determine. To try to get around that, the authors looked at a subset of schools who did select high proportions of pupil premium schools. In those schools, they did find a positive impact for Tuition Partners on both English and maths (equivalent to two months additional progress). However, as this analysis was based on only a subset of schools, they stress it should be treated with caution.
- Most of the tuition taking place was happening during lesson time, with some school staff concerned about students falling behind due to missing lessons.
- Academic Mentors had similar issues, with only 49% of students receiving this support being eligible for pupil premium. Again, this made it difficult to determine the impact on this group of students.
- NFER recommended that more should be done to target the NTP at disadvantaged pupils.

However, the report authors noted that both delivery and evaluation of the NTP in this time period were done during extreme disruption, as the COVID-19 pandemic was still ongoing, including further school closures and normal exam processes being suspended. They highlight that this wider context needed to be considered when making any assessment of the first year of the NTP's operations. The EEF also released its own reflections on Year 1 of the NTP, highlighting the tension between an evidenced-based programme design and the flexibility schools need to deliver an intervention, and the challenge of maintaining quality when scaling an intervention.<sup>22</sup>

### ***Second year of the NTP: Randstad***

The contract for the second year of the NTP's operation was put out to tender by the Department for Education. The EEF (who set up a spin-off organisation, the National Tutoring Foundation, for the purpose) and Teach First bid to run the NTP for a second year, but in June 2021 the government announced that a Dutch multinational human resources firm, Randstad, would deliver the NTP from September of that year for the next three years, with annual review points. The firm bid to run the programme at a much lower cost than the EEF, although its bid was rated lower on quality.<sup>23</sup>

At the same time the government announced the contract had been won by Randstad, it also announced a major increase in courses being offered by the NTP, promising two million tutoring courses would be delivered in the next academic year, a huge increase on the 250,000 courses students were enrolled on in the previous year. Government also announced at this point that schools could start to source additional tutoring using locally-sourced tutors,<sup>24</sup> rather than being limited to provision via Tuition Partners.

Schools had reported they were struggling to access support through the NTP, pointing to the shortage of qualified tutors in parts of England, and school unions had requested money should instead go to

<sup>22</sup> A. Ellis-Thompson, L. King and J. Cinnamon (2021) *National Tutoring Programme Tuition Partners: Year 1 (2020-21): Reflections on scaling interventions to create system change*. Education Endowment Foundation. Available here: [https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Covid-19\\_Resources/NTP\\_Y1\\_resources/NTP\\_TP\\_Year\\_1\\_Reflections.pdf](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Covid-19_Resources/NTP_Y1_resources/NTP_TP_Year_1_Reflections.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> S. Booth (2022) *Long Read: How the flagship tutoring programme is slowly sinking*. Schools Week. Accessed March 2023. Available here: <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/long-read-how-the-flagship-tutoring-programme-is-slowly-sinking/>

<sup>24</sup> Department for Education and G. Williamson (2021, June 2) *Huge expansion of tutoring in next step of education recovery*. GOV.UK. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/huge-expansion-of-tutoring-in-next-step-of-education-recovery>

schools directly to find their own tutors.<sup>25</sup> There was also increasing pressure to cover more pupils, as the impacts of the pandemic on learning continued to bite. Nonetheless, this was a fundamental shift in the delivery of the NTP, with the focus changing considerably from the quality of delivery (with tuition only available via specific partners who had met a number of quality criteria), to quantity.

This policy shift does appear to have helped to expand reach in the year Randstad ran the NTP, with over 2 million courses started over the course of the year, 81% of which were school-led.<sup>26</sup> However, little is known about the quality of this school-led provision. Schools are given support to find “high quality tutors” and school-led tutors are provided training (which is compulsory for any tutors who do not hold qualified teacher status). But the training is short, with the Department of Education estimating it only takes approximately 11 hours to complete.<sup>27</sup> There are few safeguards that the tutoring being provided is of high quality.

NFER are currently completing an evaluation of Year 2 of the NTP,<sup>28</sup> results of which are not yet available. There has, however, been considerable criticism of Randstad’s delivery. For example, Randstad initially had a target for 65% of the NTP’s tuition to go to pupil premium students in Year 2, a target that it subsequently dropped resulting in criticism from several tutoring organisations,<sup>29</sup> and from MPs.<sup>30</sup> Ultimately, the government made use of the break clause in Randstad’s contract to re-tender for Year 3 and 4 of the NTP, although the firm was not barred from re-bidding to run the programme.

### ***Government plans for year three and beyond***

With the departure of Randstad, the Department for Education announced that from September 2022, all tutoring funding would go directly to schools, based on how many students were eligible for the pupil premium.<sup>31</sup> And while both Tuition Partners and Academic Mentors will still exist, schools will organise tutoring directly, with support and training provided by external organisations.<sup>32</sup> Three separate small tenders were put out by the Department for training tutors (awarded to charity The Education Development Trust), quality assurance (awarded to education software provider Tribal Group PLC, who were subcontracted by Randstad to look at quality in Year 2), and recruiting and deploying academic mentors (awarded to consultancy firm Cognition Education).<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> S. Weale and R. Adams (2021) *Schools struggling to access tutoring programme for disadvantaged children*. The Guardian. Accessed March 2023. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/apr/29/schools-struggling-to-access-tutoring-programme-for-disadvantaged-children>

<sup>26</sup> HM Government (2022) *National Tutoring Programme (Academic Year 2021/22)*. GOV.UK. Available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/national-tutoring-programme/2021-22>

<sup>27</sup> Department for Education (2022) *School-Led Tutoring Guidance: The National Tutoring Programme*. GOV.UK. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1069886/Updated\\_School-Led\\_Tutoring\\_Guidance\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1069886/Updated_School-Led_Tutoring_Guidance_.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> C. Cullinane and R. Montacute (2020) *COVID-19 and Social Mobility Impact Brief #1: School Shutdown*. Sutton Trust. Available at: <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/covid-19-and-social-mobility-impact-brief/>

<sup>29</sup> S. Booth (2022) *Randstad ‘failure’ blamed for ditched tutoring target*. Schools Week. Available at: <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/randstad-failure-blamed-for-ditched-national-tutoring-programme-target/>

<sup>30</sup> R. Adams (2022). *National tutoring scheme failing disadvantaged pupils, say MPs*. The Guardian. Available here:

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/mar/10/national-tutoring-scheme-failing-disadvantaged-pupils-say-mps>

<sup>31</sup> NASUWT (2022) *National Tutoring Programme*. NASUWT (The Teachers’ Union). Available at: <https://www.nasuwf.org.uk/advice/health-safety/coronavirus-guidance/covid-19-advice/covid-19-advice-england/national-tutoring-programme.html#:~:text=for%202022%2F2023-,Funding,Pupil%20Premium%20per%20eligible%20pupil>

<sup>32</sup> S. Booth and J. Dickens (2022) *Tutor cash will go straight to schools as Randstad AXED*. Schools Week. Available at: <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/tutor-cash-will-go-straight-to-schools-as-randstad-axed/>

<sup>33</sup> Department for Education (2022) *National Tutoring Programme – Delivery partner(s) from AY 2022/23 – Quality Assurance of Tuition Partners – CF AN (con\_15275)*. GOV.UK. Available at: <https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/notice/e6805fc8-b9cb-4171-92de-669cab1af0f1?origin=SearchResults&p=1>

, Department for Education (2022) *National Tutoring Programme – Delivery partner(s) from AY 2022/23 – Quality Assurance of Tuition Partners – CF AN (con\_15276)*. GOV.UK. Available at: <https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/notice/878f993d->