

Fulfilling Potential

– achieving a positive future

A social impact study of Ashbrooke School,
part of the Witherslack Group, and their
Integrated Team Around the Child approach

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1. Executive summary: Significant support to achieve significant long-term outcomes

This report demonstrates how the approaches taken to support learners at Ashbrooke School provision (part of the [Witherslack Group](#)), underpinned by their Integrated Team Around the Child (ITAC) approach can, and do, deliver significant long-term positive outcomes both for the learners themselves and for society.

Ashbrooke School's impact

There is drastic difference between what a learner is able to achieve in their life having been supported by the staff and setting at Ashbrooke School, as opposed to the probable alternatives for young people with such severe needs and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). In particular, the school becomes a vital place of safety and stability for young people throughout the transitions and upheavals of life outside of education. Maintaining that safe and stable place is vital to laying the foundations for educational achievement. That, in turn, augmented by access to the [WG Futures](#) programme, paves the way for the Group's aspiration that every young person will leave Witherslack Group to achieve positive long-term employment outcomes.



Through the development, study and evaluation of archetypical learners, we have calculated the average additional social value from a day school placement at Ashbrooke School is **at least £844k**.¹ **The additional social value generated by a placement at Ashbrooke School takes into account the cost of a placement there. A placement at Ashbrooke School represents significant value for money.**

Alongside the quantitative study of learners' life courses, this study explored the long-term outcomes that they are supported to achieve. Figure 1 summarises the immediate, short-term outcomes that our study has observed (inner circle), with the long-term secondary outcomes that result from that short-term change (outer circle).

¹ The impact value shown is the net impact value after deducting incremental costs of provision (where applicable) at Ashbrooke compared to the counterfactual scenario. This is calculated building on principles that align with Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology.

How the approach at Ashbrooke School works over time

The outcomes that Ashbrooke School achieve for their learners is made possible by the ITAC therapeutic approach designed by Witherslack Group, delivered by inspiring, dedicated and highly experienced staff at the school. Those staff are deeply committed and often provide support beyond the school setting, including 52-week access to the clinical team to enable young people to access help when they need it during school holidays, which are, for some, a traumatic and unhappy time.

The Integrated Team Around the Child (ITAC) is carefully co-ordinated to meet their specific needs and to build the secure attachments that the young people with whom they work need. This is what the learners respond to most positively and lays the foundation for all of the education and other outcomes achieved at Ashbrooke School. For young people who may experience chaotic circumstances away from school, the time and care that

the staff invest into the learners is one of the strongest factors in the changing of their life trajectories. That caring ethos is added to by a curriculum that is structured, alongside the Witherslack Group's Futures programme, to help young people to identify their interests and find training and career opportunities that fit with those interests to help them find long-term employment in a place that they will genuinely enjoy.



Figure 1: Summary of outcomes for learners

We heard a story of one member of the team who is able, safely, to plan trips with one young person into the local shopping centre without having any concerns or incidents. The same young person has a three to one ratio in their residential accommodation outside of the school. The difference between the two is a PBS and therapeutic approach to support, which enables Ashbrooke School to offer opportunities and experiences to the young person in question that other support denies them.

Witherslack Group's Three Waves Model² summarises how this can be mapped:

Wave 1: Clinically informed and supported specialist living and learning environments

Wave 2: Targeted clinically led therapeutic intervention

Wave 3: Direct clinical engagement

The Three Waves is built into the approaches of schools across the Witherslack Group and drives the provision of holistic therapeutic support and intervention available to learners across the Group.

² For more information visit www.witherslackgroup.co.uk

Figure 2 demonstrates the impact of this support over the course of a typical learner's time at Ashbrooke School. It shows that, as learners progress, developing new skills and processing trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), the level of intensity of support that they require is adapted to the timing and severity of episodes of dysregulation that take place. It also shows the impact of learning self-regulation strategies and rebuilding trust that enable behaviour to stabilise over time. Significantly, though, Ashbrooke School's staff recognise that incidents and events outside school can re-trigger behaviours that challenge, and they stand alongside and support young people as they process and work through those events.

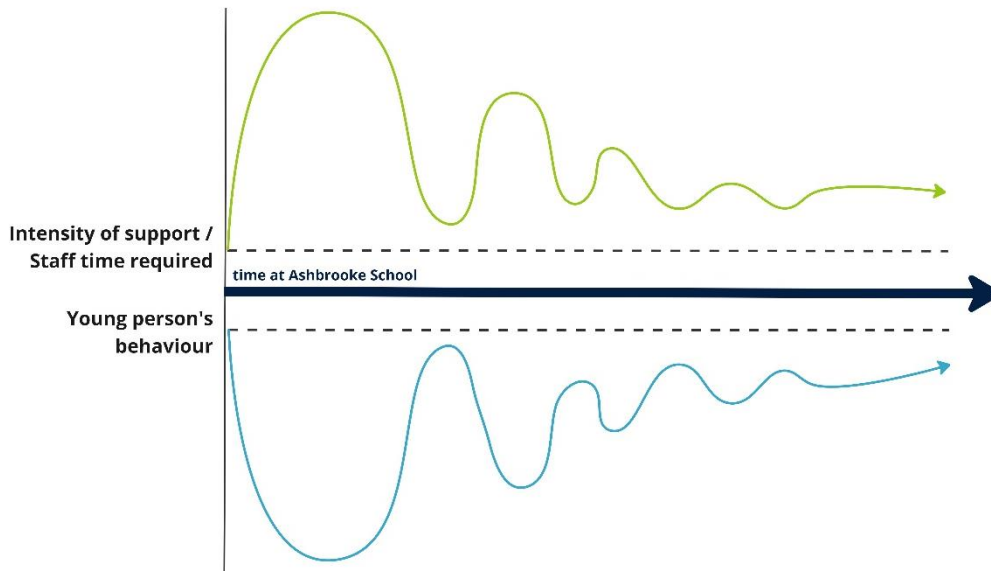


Figure 2: The relationship between the behaviour of young people and the intensity of support required

A placement at Ashbrooke, applying therapeutic approaches to supplement a careers-focused curriculum, drawing on the Witherslack Group Futures programme, can change the lives of young people who have experienced disruption and trauma during their childhood.

It can support them to achieve long-term outcomes, including employment and the ability to live self-sufficient lives, that would otherwise not be possible.

2. Ashbrooke School and the young people that it supports

Ashbrooke School

Ashbrooke School caters for young people who have been diagnosed with a range of complex difficulties which have affected their ability to be successful in previous settings. Their needs have resulted in negative behaviours which have become barriers to their learning. The school offers a nurturing learning environment that provides social and emotional support alongside a targeted curriculum.

The school curriculum embraces all that is learned: via lessons, social times, therapeutic input and role modelling by the adults and peers around them. Ashbrooke School promotes an ethos of respect, responsibility and resilience across all activities. The school aims to teach young people to grow into citizens who are able to work and co-operate with others, whilst developing their knowledge and skills so that they make progress from their different starting points and celebrate both academic and personal success.

Ashbrooke School specialises in educating pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties who are between the ages of 5 – 19. Pupils may have a diagnosis of ADHD, ASD, PDA, Attachment Disorder or Speech, Language and Communication Difficulties.

The school delivers support primarily focusing on the Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) model. Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) approaches are based on a set of overarching values. These values include the commitment to providing support that promotes inclusion, choice, participation and equality of opportunity. Behaviour that challenges usually happens for a reason and may be the person's only way of communicating an unmet need. PBS helps staff to understand the reason for the behaviour so they can better meet the needs of their pupils, enhance their quality of life and reduce the likelihood that the behaviour will happen. Ashbrooke School aims to help children develop the skills they need to manage their own behaviour. Good behaviour patterns are taught, encouraged and rewarded.

Every child at Ashbrooke School has a Positive Behaviour Support Plan and an individual risk assessment. PBS plans are developed in partnership with the child/young person and their family. A PBS plan promotes pro-active and preventative strategies and includes the teaching of new skills. During our visit to the school, we observed staff working compassionately and in a supportive way, in line with the PBS methodology, to help young people who have experienced (or are experiencing) traumatic circumstances in their lives that manifest in behaviours that challenge. This approach distinguishes settings that apply PBS from mainstream settings, in that a typical behaviour management response of imposing sanctions is likely to exacerbate the behaviours. We have observed, in Ashbrooke School and other settings, that a PBS approach helps to de-escalate behaviours that challenge 'in the moment', but also helps young people to achieve improved self-regulation in future.

We observed that, rather like our findings from a similar study at The Grange, Ashbrooke School operates a therapeutic model, with a wide range of specialised and trained staff co-ordinating their efforts, typically focused

around a key support worker who holds the main relationship with the young person. Witherslack Group calls this the Internal Team Around the Child (ITAC) model. Consistency in the support worker relationship is significant in bringing stability to the young person, and the support of therapeutically trained professionals and teaching staff (amongst others) is key to enabling young people to achieve positive emotional, behavioural and academic outcomes. It also enables the school to match the level of behavioural challenge with the level of support provided: contrasting with settings that move to suspend or exclude (i.e. stepping down the support provided) when challenging behaviours arise. Amongst others, the resource needed to step up the level of support comes from Ashbrooke School's on-site Pastoral team of five. The school seeks to work proactively with parents, with Teachers, Teaching Assistants and the School's Family Liaison Officer all playing a significant role in communicating with parents and guardians.

Working alongside the school's 51 teaching staff (including 20 teachers and 24 teaching assistants), the therapeutic team at the school has 13 members of staff:

- Pastoral team: six staff (including a team manager and deputy)
- Speech and Language Therapist
- Therapist
- Three Occupational Therapists
- Psychologist and Assistant Educational Psychologist

In addition to its own resources, Ashbrooke School is able to call upon regional and national resources from Witherslack Group, including therapeutic support, but also Group-wide initiatives such as the WG Futures programme, which aspires to achieve the outcome that all of the young people in Witherslack Group settings go on to access paid employment opportunities into adulthood.

The young people who attend Ashbrooke School

Young people who attend Ashbrooke School have Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in relation to diagnosed needs noted earlier in this section. They are typically placed following a wide range of circumstances from:

- Pupils placed at primary age following initial agreement of their EHCP; to
- The breakdown of multiple placements at mainstream or supported mainstream schools, and a decision to make a placement at Ashbrooke School (typically at secondary age).

Depending on where pupils sit on this range, the School will support both the student and their parents or carers to address trauma that has been built up from interactions with the SEND system or from their own childhood experiences. It is not uncommon for parents to have been exposed to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) themselves. The school's support for parents helps to create a home environment that is more likely to augment the outcomes that can be achieved during the school day and term time provision. Most of the school's recent starters have been at primary age. This indicates positive steps by Ashbrooke School, working in partnership with Local Authority commissioners, to make specialist placements earlier. This can avoid much of the additional

trauma that can be built up for young people who have experienced placement breakdowns and, potentially, missed significant elements of education in the process at primary age.

Section 4 looks more deeply into the probable alternative long-term life course trajectories of learners, extrapolating on from their experiences prior to placement at Ashbrooke School. The likelihood of the learners being able to go on to live meaningful and fulfilling adult lives without specialised support would be severely diminished. Comparing the actual life courses of learners to this 'counterfactual' highlights the significant difference that is made by the team at Ashbrooke School.

A critical feature of these stories is that staff at Ashbrooke School work hard to create a safe and stable environment, which creates a foundation from which young people can develop self-regulation and access education.

Witherslack Group Futures Programme

The WG Futures programme has been recently launched across the Group. It targets ensuring that every young person at every Witherslack Group setting is able to progress on to employment (or further training and then to employment) when they move on. The Group has partnered with employers to create work experience opportunities that are intended to offer motivation and ambition to young people who are interested in specific careers (e.g. construction, catering etc.), as well as a service that enables young people to access jobs from their bank of employers as fully time paid employment when they are ready. The scheme remains accessible to former students as long as they need it, ensuring that employment outcomes can be sustained for the long term.

Significantly, the WG Futures programme seeks to understand the interests and ambitions of young people and to tailor employability activities to fit with that *they* want to do. This contrasts with schemes that simply target employment (of any kind) or which have narrowly defined study pathways that may not suit some young people.

Further information can be found at <https://www.witherslackgroup.co.uk/wgfutures/>.

3. Meeting the needs of young people with an Integrated Therapeutic Approach

Whilst the young people that attend Ashbrooke School each have a unique set of needs; we see common threads of historical childhood trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). To understand their needs, and how Ashbrooke School is able to make a difference to their lives, we conducted a workshop with staff from the School who are intimately involved in the everyday lives of the learners, and shared initial findings with them to seek their views on student life courses. The workshop group was made up of clinical, care and academic focused staff, enabling us insight into every aspect of the lives of learners.

Based on that discussion, and drawing on the unique case studies of real learners, we have created the Theory of Change (see Figure 4) that provides a detailed, but generalised, summary of the typical range of needs and the changes/outcomes that Ashbrooke School is able to achieve. Whilst every learner has similar types of needs, they do not have each of them to the same degree. For example, due to experiences in their early lives, some may have a greater need for safety and containment than others.

Theory of Change

As part of developing an understanding of the change Ashbrooke School brings about for the young people that they support, a Theory of Change can map out the difference that is possible. The Theory of change traces a logical pathway between a child's needs, the activities of Ashbrooke School, and the changes (outcomes) that are achieved in the learner's life as a result. The Theory of change was informed by all elements of our research, including building upon the recent research for NASS into the value of SEND provision³.

To support interpretation of the Theory of change, the key components are outlined in Figure 3 and described below.




Figure 3: Components of a Theory of change

Each element of a Theory of Change can be explained as:

- **Needs:** of learners, as well as the needs of their families and carers where applicable
- **Activities:** the provision and services Ashbrooke School delivers to meet the needs of their learners
- **Approaches:** distinctive features of the methods or qualities of the approach taken by Ashbrooke School that are particularly effective in bringing about change (positive outcomes)

³ Reaching my potential: The value of SEND provision demonstrated through learners' stories – A report for the National Association of Independent Schools and Non-Maintained Special Schools (NASS) [Reaching-my-potential-The-value-of-SEND-provision-demonstrated-through-leaners-stories.pdf \(sonnetimpact.co.uk\)](https://www.sonnetimpact.co.uk/reaching-my-potential-the-value-of-send-provision-demonstrated-through-learners-stories.pdf)

- **Primary outcomes:** the short-term, direct changes for learners that arise from the activities (typically these align to needs and take the form of those needs being met)
 - **Secondary outcomes:** the longer-term and indirect changes in the lives of learners, their families and other stakeholders in society; these outcomes arise from the activities (these may align to needs but may also positively change beyond the needs initially identified)
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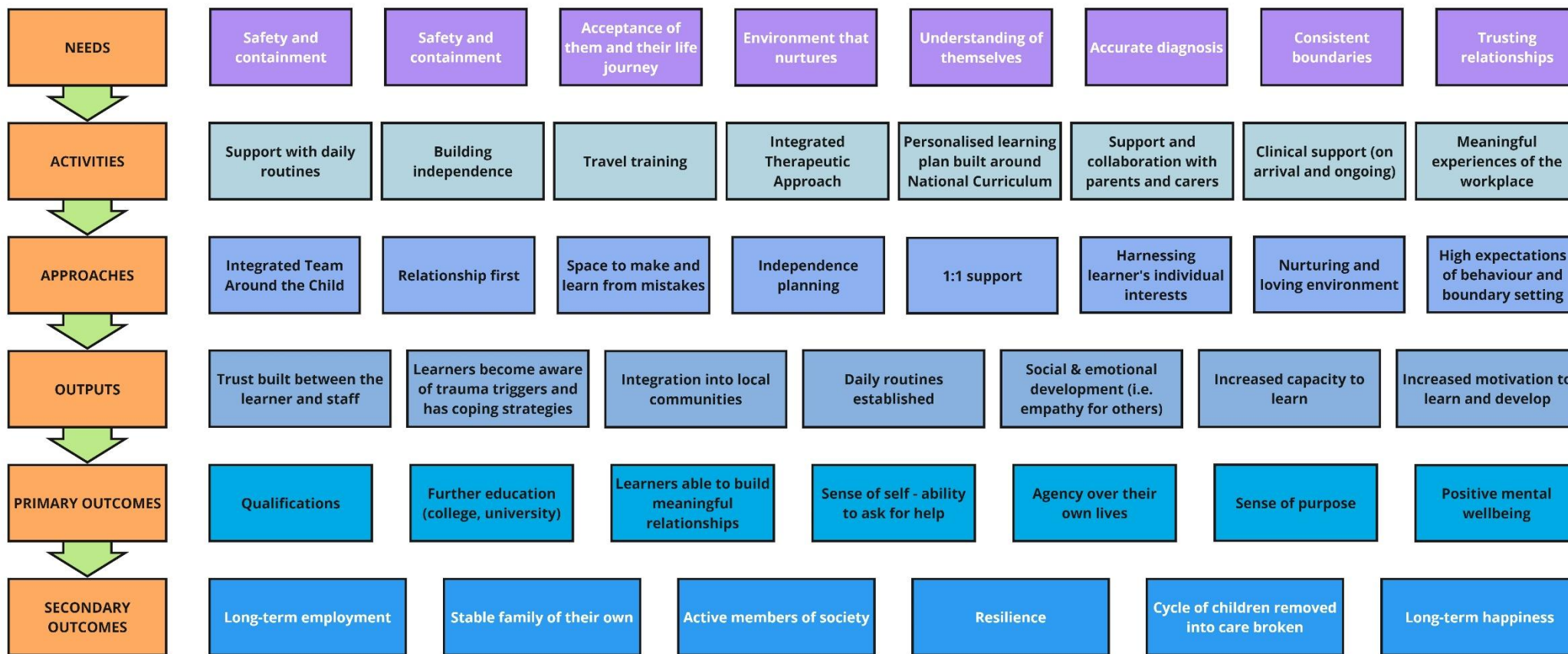


Figure 4: Theory of change for Ashbrooke School



The approaches used by the staff at Ashbrooke School are central to achieving positive outcomes

All Witherslack Group provisions use the unique Integrated Team Around the Child (ITAC) model to provide intensive and adaptable support to every one of their learners. The key feature of the provision that makes this possible is permanently having experienced experts in each of the clinical, therapeutic and academic elements on-site and available to the learners. It is also notable that there has been long-term stability of the team at Ashbrooke School, with many of the key support workers having been in post for significant service lengths. That stability has been a significant contributor to impact for young people, as the interventions that we discuss in this section are enhanced further by that consistency of approach and the working relationship between staff and learners.

We heard a story of one member of the team who is able, safely, to plan trips with one young person into the local shopping centre without having any concerns or incidents. The same young person has a three to one ratio in their residential accommodation outside of the school. The difference between the two is a PBS and therapeutic approach to support, which enables Ashbrooke School to offer opportunities and experiences to the young person in question that other support denies them.

These specialists all contribute to the learners' regular Child Focussed Meetings, which are in place to ensure that their personal provision and treatment remains focused and appropriate for their changing needs and requirements over time. The team around the child are in constant contact with each other, ensuring that all are aware of any developments or changes for the learner, so that all aspects of their support can adjust where needed to ensure that the learner continues to progress.

The other six approaches listed in the Theory of Change (Figure 4) underpin the ITAC approach and are all equally critical to achieving positive outcomes for learners. We highlight two of these in particular that can serve to demonstrate how Ashbrooke School enables such positive changes:

- First, identifying a point or topic of interest upon which to base a learner's development is a key feature of positive outcomes at Ashbrooke School, where staff are able to build such a strong understanding of their learners and their personality and interests. In our conversations with staff members, this aligns strongly with the WG Futures programme, and the careers-focused curriculum that is offered at the School. We noted that Futures Friday builds in regular time for young people to allow interests to develop and to think about how those interests might build towards a career.
- The second approach to highlight is the supportive and nurturing environment that Ashbrooke School provides. All learners will be experiencing Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) challenges, and are likely to have other diagnoses alongside that (e.g. Autism Spectrum Conditions). Many will have experienced ACEs, and the stable, safe and nurturing environment is key to laying foundations for educational engagement. Ashbrooke School's aim is that pupils will know, every day, that they are cared for, and in a safe place.

This environment is only made possible by the consistency of the staff that the learners engage with, and the dedication, care and love that those staff members demonstrate. During our discussions, it was apparent that staff have a strong sense of dedication and commitment to the young people with whom they work.

The activities, approaches and outcomes delivered by Ashbrooke School are only possible with the exemplary staff that work there, and their belief in the potential and abilities of the young people with whom they work. That dedication ensures commitment to applying the strategies and methodologies that have been developed across Witherslack Group’s provisions, notably the ITAC approach and the used of widely recognised and successful methodologies such as PBS. That combination of a dedicated team delivering successful approaches lays the foundation for success at Ashbrooke School.

How this approach correlates to the relationship between staff and the young people

The outputs and primary outcomes achieved for learners lead to the longer-term outcome trends presented in Figure 5. The approaches adopted by the team at Ashbrooke School are similar to the mapping of flexible support that was first identified in our work at The Grange, which is a 52-week residential provision and special school. That illustration highlights the capability of the school to match the level of support needed (as indicated by the prevalence of behaviours that challenge), and to develop a young person’s ability to self-regulate such that, as the learners progress, the intensity of support and therefore staff time that the learner requires decreases.

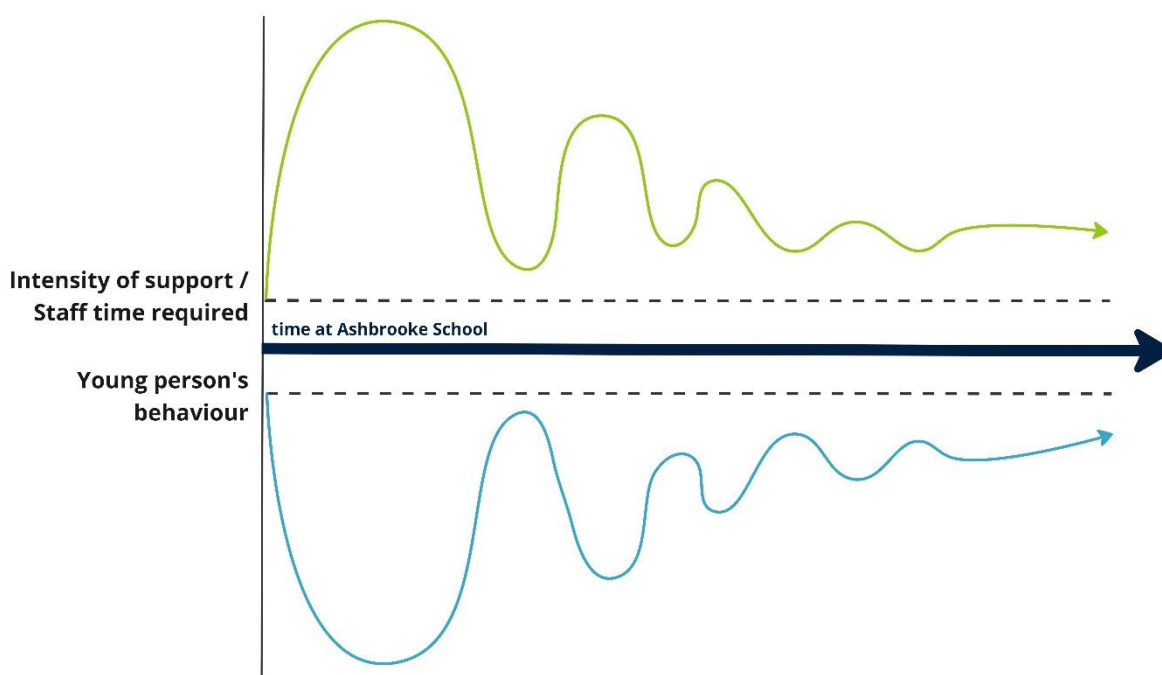


Figure 5: The relationship between the behaviour of young people and the intensity of support required



As relationships develop, and staff gain an understanding of the circumstances each young person has in their background and current experiences outside of school, they also become better able to see early signs of distress and to take early and preventative action. This brings stability and, ultimately, enables young people to develop better ability to self-regulate. Outcomes such as greater sense of self, positive mental wellbeing, ability to build meaningful relationships and increased resilience were all attributed with contributing to the lessening of these arcs on the chart. Staff at The Grange highlighted that learners were quicker to return to a point of stability over time, as they were better supported and equipped with tools and techniques to calm the situations which had triggered their behaviour, and we believe the same to be true based on our discussions with the team at Ashbrooke School.

In particular, we heard several stories of young people who had been moved between care placements outside of school, risking disruption to their education and outcomes as well as potentially causing further trauma. Ashbrooke School has worked hard to make sure that young people in this position remain in placement at the School and to understand and provide support to young people as they go through this or other similar changes. The therapeutic team offers 52 week cover to ensure that young people can benefit from help if they need it outside of the 38 weeks of term time: an important feature for young people who rely on the School as a place of safety and stability, some of whom “dread” summer holidays.

We also heard stories of staff supporting young people who have challenging and unpredictable lives outside of school. Sometimes this has involved taking steps during the school day to allow space for young people to become ready to engage: one example was a young person who had not been able to sleep, and was given space to have a ‘nap’ to help them to be ready to engage productively later on during the day, rather than seeking to push them on in a counter-productive way.

Young people who have attended Ashbrooke School are reassured that staff are ‘there for them’ after they have left: for those who lack the support of a family, staff play a significant role in celebrating their future achievements.

4. Exploring needs and outcomes through archetypes

This section tells the stories of learners that attend Ashbrooke School, and what difference it makes to them if they have their significant needs met.

Approach to developing archetypes

We use the stories of learners at Ashbrooke School to demonstrate the impact that the ITAC approach to specialist provision can make to them. In exploring how Ashbrooke School meets their needs and the difference it makes to them during and after their time at Ashbrooke School, it demonstrates the impact that can be achieved by fully meeting the complex needs of learners akin to those represented. Following best practice for evaluation in complex systems⁴, this approach is qualitative, story-based and person-centric, using profiles of four learners. The needs and stories of these ‘archetypes’ are representative of learners supported by Ashbrooke School.

Information gathered via a facilitated workshop carried out with staff at Ashbrooke School, and follow up testing of findings, was supplemented by insight from the recent Sonnet report for NASS: *Reaching my potential*⁵ and our similar impact evaluation of the Witherslack Group’s provision at The Grange.

Outline of learner journeys

Stories of each of the archetypes are detailed in the pages that follow. This includes life-story charts, which detail the likely trajectory of the archetype learners’ lives, contrasting what happens when they are placed at Ashbrooke School with the most likely alternative provision (typically this can be evidenced by looking at the placement and/or trajectory of placements prior to placement at Ashbrooke School).

These life-stories are blended case studies of multiple current and historical learners, pseudonymised to protect their identities. The names given to the archetypes are chosen at random, without consideration for gender or any other element of their stories, in order to minimise the risk that they could be identified.

⁴ HM Treasury (2020), Magenta Book 2020, Supplementary Guide: Handling Complexity in Policy Evaluation, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/879437/Magenta_Book_supplementary_guide_Handling_Complexity_in_policy_evaluation.pdf

⁵ [The value of special educational needs and disabilities provision \(sonnetimpact.co.uk\)](https://www.sonnetimpact.co.uk/)

Archetype 1: Noah

Placed at Ashbrooke School at 4 years old

Needs and background

Noah is born into a stable and secure home; his parents are attentive and loving. His development is slow and they suspect that he will need some specialist support, especially once he starts attending school. This is confirmed when staff at his nursery notice Noah frequently becoming dysregulated amongst his classmates, struggling to socialise and he is developmentally behind his peers.

Nursery staff support Noah's parents to secure an EHCP ahead of starting at primary school, this means that the Local Authority actively seek out a school provision that will best meet Noah's needs.

Factual life-course (where their needs are met at Ashbrooke School)

Noah is placed with Ashbrooke School, where it initially takes him some time to settle into the new environment. Staff know to give him space to adjust to his surroundings and are sure to not overwhelm him. The new routine is tough for Noah to adapt to and in his first couple of months he struggles to consistently stay in school for the full day.

Staff continue to remind Noah that they are there to support him, and gradually he begins to engage and trust the staff that support him everyday. For Noah's parents this gives them the confidence that he is in the right place to develop and learn, and they are supported by Ashbrooke School's staff to improve his attendance.

As he grows older, Noah's relationships with support staff at Ashbrooke School grow stronger. In addition, he also develops strong friendships with some of his classmates, increasing his enjoyment at school and engagement with joint learning exercises especially. His enjoyment of school provides further reassurance to Noah's parents that he is benefiting from being at Ashbrooke School. When he first started, his mother would be at work but often having to leave early to collect Noah, making it hard for her to fully concentrate on her work and causing friction with some of her colleagues. This is no longer an issue for her, with Noah often telling her how much he enjoys being at school.

When Noah is eight years old, his mother gives birth to Noah's younger brother. Whilst he is extremely excited, the upheaval and change is scary and hard for Noah to comprehend. This leads to a period of unrest and more frequent dysregulation at home and at school. With a new-born child to support as well as Noah struggling to adapt to his new home life, his parents reach out to staff at Ashbrooke School.

Staff are able to work with Noah and his parents to help them all adjust to the new set-up at home, for example by finding ways to include Noah in his little brother's routine so that he remains stimulated and involved, and feels like a strong part of home-life still as opposed to competing for attention with his brother. At school, his interactions with staff, particularly with clinical staff, are centred around how he is feeling and gaining an

understanding of how he is feeling. The trust between Noah and Ashbrooke School staff means that he is comfortable sharing with them, and he does not feel any need to attempt to mask his frustrations and struggles around them. Staff are in regular communication with Noah's parents so that all parties are aware of developments and any potential points of dysregulation, facilitating a strong and supportive environment around Noah whilst he adjusts to the change. He eventually settles into the new routine, and Noah loves being a big brother and helping his parents.

As Noah approaches the progression to secondary provision within Ashbrooke School, he starts to become anxious about the change and going into an environment with children much older than him. Through their experiences with other children, staff are able to anticipate Noah's apprehension and take pre-emptive steps to put him at ease as much as possible. One way they do this is to carry out a number of induction visit days, where Noah is introduced to his future teacher, staff and classroom, in order to build some familiarity with the new environment. The fact that the primary and secondary school buildings are alongside each other at Ashbrooke School make this a simpler exercise for the staff to carry out and they can be flexible to days when they think Noah is most receptive and open to visits.

The connection between the primary and secondary settings also provides Noah with reassurance once he has transitioned to the secondary school as staff allow him to visit and maintain contact with staff in the primary school, which provides him with a safe, reassuring space.

With Noah progressing, and with the agreement of his parents, staff begin to explore ways to expose Noah to experiences outside of the security of school or home, in order to begin preparing him for life beyond school. This starts small with supervised excursions to the local shopping centre. Noah struggles with the sensory overload and stress of interacting with strangers, such as shopkeepers. As a result, his confidence takes a significant dip, and he begins to resist trips out of school.

Staff temper their approach to allow Noah to rebuild his confidence and guide him towards starting to enjoy and look forward to his trips out. He is able to recognise his own progress and over time he enjoys interacting with shop staff and members of the public, to the extent that he is often the one who initiates the conversation.

Alongside his progression in less controlled environments, Noah also enjoys the activities that are part of the WG Futures programme at school. He likes to see what jobs his work at school could eventually lead to, and the sense that he is working towards something for himself. As he gets older and more aware he can see that the combination of his development at school and socially, outside of school, mean that he is giving himself an opportunity to have an enjoyable life once he leaves school.

Noah has always had an interest in cars, which leads the WG Futures programme to encourage him to consider becoming a mechanic. He is really excited by this idea, and they begin to work towards finding him work experience to explore how he would find working in that sort of environment. Noah loves his time at the

mechanic's garage, and he is able to build strong relationships with his colleagues and decides that he definitely wants to become a mechanic when he leaves school.

With this in mind, staff at Ashbrooke School are able to help Noah consider his future as he chooses subjects to study for his GCSEs. The WG Futures programme makes it clear and easy for him to select subjects with skills and knowledge that are relevant and that will help him attend college when he leaves school.

The build up towards sitting his exams is extremely tough for Noah and this comes to a head when he reaches the exam period, he needs a significant amount of support from staff to ensure that he sits the exams, in order to go onto college. Noah's first exam is sat in an exam hall with his peers, but this is too over-stimulating, and staff have to remove him to a room where he is able to sit the exam in a room on his own, where he can concentrate fully and not disturb his classmates. He does the rest of his exams in this way, which means that his stress and anxiety is managed, and he is able to complete all of his exams.

Through his hard work, Noah achieves the results he needs to attend college to study mechanics. He enjoys college and, alongside this, he has maintained contact with the garage where he did his work experience. The garage are very supportive of his studies, offering advice and also offering him a job with them upon completing college.

The transition to working life, after leaving college, is tough for Noah and his parents, who struggle to support him. It comes with a lot of new challenges, for example money management and time management, that Noah must adapt to all at the same time, and it is here that he notices that he misses the guidance he received at Ashbrooke School.

His parents suggest reaching out to some of the staff members that he used to be close to and seeking their help. The staff are extremely supportive to Noah and his parents, who take comfort in the return of some external advice to help them to support Noah. He is now an adult, and his parents had been very wary of over-supporting him and therefore limit his independence in the long-term.

With the continuous support, Noah is able to build a routine for himself that provides stability and allows him to focus on his work, where he begins to make significant progress. As his confidence grows at work, he begins to have ambitions to run his own mechanic business. He speaks with his colleagues about this, and they are very supportive of the idea. Noah's parents are also supportive and help him to set up his company. Noah is extremely proud to have his own business and the fact that it allows him to support himself.

Counterfactual life-course (if a specialised setting such as Ashbrooke School did not exist)

Noah is placed into an alternative provision where he struggles to adjust to school life. He often becomes dysregulated causing him to either be sent home from school early or staying at home and not going into school at all. When this happens, his mother is forced to leave work early, however this is not sustainable for the school,

Noah's mother or her employer in the long-term and his parents and teachers have to work extremely hard to improve Noah's attendance.

His attendance does improve over time, but this has meant that Noah has now missed large periods of his early years at school, which has slowed his development further and he is now significantly behind his classmates both socially and academically. He feels increasingly alone at school, and he struggles to build relationships with support staff and classmates.

Eventually, Noah's isolation develops into frustration, which he increasingly takes out on those around him. His frustrated outbursts are predominantly verbal, which are extremely disruptive, but there are also occasions where these become physical at the people or objects around him. His school try to support Noah as well as they can but come to the decision, along with his parents, that the school is not the right environment for him. The local authority attempt to find him another school, and in the meantime Noah stays at home, further delaying his development and having a significant impact upon his family.

Noah is placed into another provision where he again struggles to adjust to a new set of people and environment, and his disruptive behaviour continues as a result. Dysregulated episodes at home are increasingly hard for his parents to deal with, especially as he is now growing bigger and stronger. Noah's parent's ability to support him is further stretched when his mother gives birth to his little brother. This represents a significant life change for Noah, and he struggles even more where his parents have to split their attention between the two siblings. His mother especially struggles with this and feels increasingly guilty at not being able to give Noah the support she knows that he needs, her mental health deteriorates as a result.

It becomes clear that the changes to Noah's home life and his inability to adapt to his new school mean that he is in need of a different school setting that is better equipped to provide more intense 1:1 support. After another delay, whilst a suitable provision is found, Noah joins his new school, and he begins to respond well almost immediately.

For a period of time, Noah gradually progresses, and he and his parents settle into their newly balanced life. However, as he approaches his GCSEs, Noah becomes increasingly anxious, and he begins to regress. He quickly becomes a school refuser again and spends long periods of time alone in his bedroom without communicating with anyone.

As a result, Noah only sits a few of his GCSEs and is unable to achieve a pass grade in any of them. He refuses to consider going to college and continues to become more reclusive. The little social interaction he has is when he has to leave his bedroom for meals, which he takes to his room to eat alone.

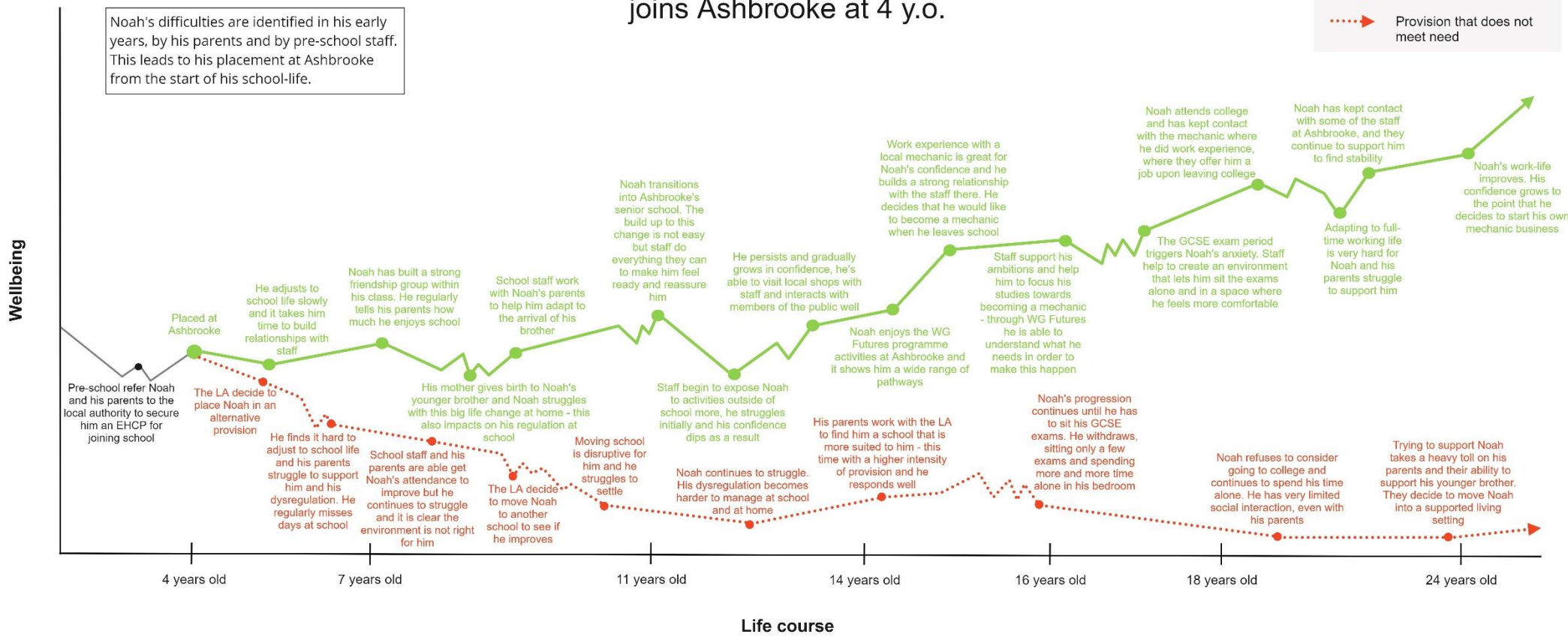
Noah's parents are acutely aware that they are unable to support him appropriately at home, especially as he grows into adulthood. This weighs heavily on both of his parents and eventually they acknowledge that in order for Noah to have the chance of a meaningful life he must move into supported living where there are

professionals with the ability to support him. Initially, this has a significant impact upon Noah's relationship with his parents, who he sees as having abandoned and discarded him. With support, their relationship is repaired but this requires significant effort and persistence from his parents which does have an adverse impact on the relationship of his parents too.

Noah Begins education at Ashbrooke joins Ashbrooke at 4 y.o.

Key

- ▶ Life pre-intervention
- ▶ Provision that meets need
-▶ Provision that does not meet need



Archetype 2: Maya **Placed at Ashbrooke School at 7 years old**

Needs and background

When Maya is born, her mother is no longer with Maya's father, and he plays no part in Maya's life. She immediately struggles to care for Maya on her own. Her mother has no family unit to help her care for Maya and her already fragile mental health deteriorates further. Before Maya's first birthday, her mother has voluntarily given her up into care.

Maya experiences a number of failed care placements with foster parents struggling with the symptoms of her undiagnosed SEMH needs. The repeated upheaval results in Maya developing severe abandonment anxiety, which makes developing trust and connections with people extremely hard for her.

Upon starting at a mainstream primary school, Maya has difficulty socialising and making connections with her classmates, leaving her isolated. It also becomes clear to staff that she struggles with her academic learning, she needs significant additional support, which is not always available. When she is not receiving intense support, she is highly distracted, and consequently disruptive to the wider class. Maya's school recommend to the local authority that she needs a placement to a specialist provision in order to meet her needs.

Factual life-course (where their needs are met at Ashbrooke School)

Maya is placed at Ashbrooke School, where initially the further upheaval leaves her resistant to support and staff work with her carer to make sure that she is attending school. In order to develop a clearer understanding of Maya's needs, a TA works with and supports Maya closely. It takes a long time for her to realise that Ashbrooke School is somewhere that she is going to be permanently, and a strong relationship develops with the TA.

Whilst this relationship is positive, the TA and wider staff around Maya are aware that building reliance upon a single point of support will not help her long-term so they work hard to develop relationships between Maya and other staff members. This serves to lessen the abandonment anxiety that Maya has, it proves to her that there are a number of people around her on whom she can rely and she begins to progress further at Ashbrooke School.

As she approaches the transition from primary to the secondary provision at Ashbrooke School Maya becomes very apprehensive and her abandonment anxiety grows more prominent. Staff are able to make the transition as smooth as possible by gradually introducing her to the staff at Ashbrooke School's secondary provision, enabling her to build relationships ahead of her joining full-time.

As a result, Maya successfully starts secondary school, and takes confidence from this and her ability to control her anxiety. She continues to progress in secondary school and staff notice that she is flourishing socially,

developing a group of close friends around her. Maya's carer notices this outside of school as well, with frequent requests to spend time with friends.

Wider life at home with her carer is also becoming a lot more enjoyable for both Maya and her carer, they have developed a strong understanding of each other, which is aided by Maya's increasing self-awareness. She is now able to understand and identify the triggers of her anxiety, and now has the ability to take active steps to remove herself from the situation or limit its impact. Staff have worked hard with her carer to support Maya to this point, and they are very happy to see that her progress is also translating to home life.

Maya has strong relationships with a number of the support staff at Ashbrooke School but when the TA, with whom she initially connected with, leaves the school, Maya's abandonment trauma resurfaces, and she begins to regress. She withdraws from contact with anyone, even her foster carer at home. During this period, Maya continues to attend school but with very little engagement in her academic studies, meaning her progress stagnates.

The remaining Ashbrooke School staff work very closely with Maya's foster carer to show her that she has a strong support network around her and return to the methods that worked for them at the start of Maya's time with them. Through having developed an understanding of Maya throughout her time at Ashbrooke School, and through the team around her are able to ensure that their approach is consistent and aligned to the support that the foster carer is able to give her at home.

Gradually Maya begins to feel reassured by the support she's receiving and becomes more open to wider support and to learning again. Eventually she begins to make progress again, taking confidence from the resilience that she has been able to demonstrate.

Maya's resilience is the basis of the coping mechanisms that staff help her to learn in the build up to her GCSEs. They have anticipated that her anxiety would heighten during this time so have worked hard to ensure that Maya is able to identify and take active steps to prevent triggers of her anxiety negatively impacting on her exams. As a result, she successfully sits all of her exams, and her grades enable her to go onto college.

The transition to college is a lot smoother than into secondary school for Maya and she is able to quickly make friends with her new classmates. Her group of friends bring Maya comfort and renewed confidence and her college studies make significant progress. With renewed confidence Maya begins a relationship with one of the boys on her college course. She introduces him to her foster carer and feels a strong sense of belonging and security.

When this first romantic relationship ends, Maya's foster carer expects her abandonment anxiety to resurface. Instead, the coping strategies that she learned from the staff at Ashbrooke School around the time of sitting her GCSEs mean that although Maya is upset by the break-up, she does not let it cause a regression and she is able to make sure that her college studies do not suffer.

Counterfactual life-course (if a specialised setting such as Ashbrooke School did not exist)

Maya is placed into a special school, where she struggles to settle after a further change of placement, taking a long time to let any member of staff close enough to begin to understand her needs. She does eventually develop a relationship with one of the TAs and that helps her to settle and begin to enjoy her time at school.

Maya's relationship with the TA is so strong that she has become reliant upon her being there with her all the time when she is in school. The school become aware of this when the TA becomes ill for two days and is unable to be in school for Maya. Without the support, she is unable to concentrate in class and becomes disruptive to other learners, forcing the school to remove Maya from class.

School staff do their best to reduce Maya's reliance upon the TA so that other staff can also support her, to ensure that she can engage with her learning whilst also not disrupting her classmates. However, they are unsuccessful, and Maya is unable to build trust with anyone else that attempts to get close to her.

This situation only gets worse when the TA moves to another school, Maya feels like she has been abandoned again and she retreats, isolating herself from classmates, staff and her foster carer. Academically, Maya stalls and she starts to fall behind her classmates. She refuses to allow anyone else close to her again, she feels as though she is unable to trust anyone. This also impacts upon the relationship she has with her foster carer.

Home life becomes strained to the point that Maya refuses to interact and often skips meals to avoid interaction. She begins to refuse to go to school and her school work declines rapidly. Maya does begin to get anxious when her exams approach, but this subsides upon her deciding that the best way to avoid disappointment and stress is to not try.

Maya is glad to no longer be at school, but she finds college just as challenging. She finds it hard to make friends, only isolating her further and she becomes extremely lonely. Maya considers dropping out of college, but her foster carer persuades her to see out her studies. Upon leaving college Maya finds some part-time work in retail.

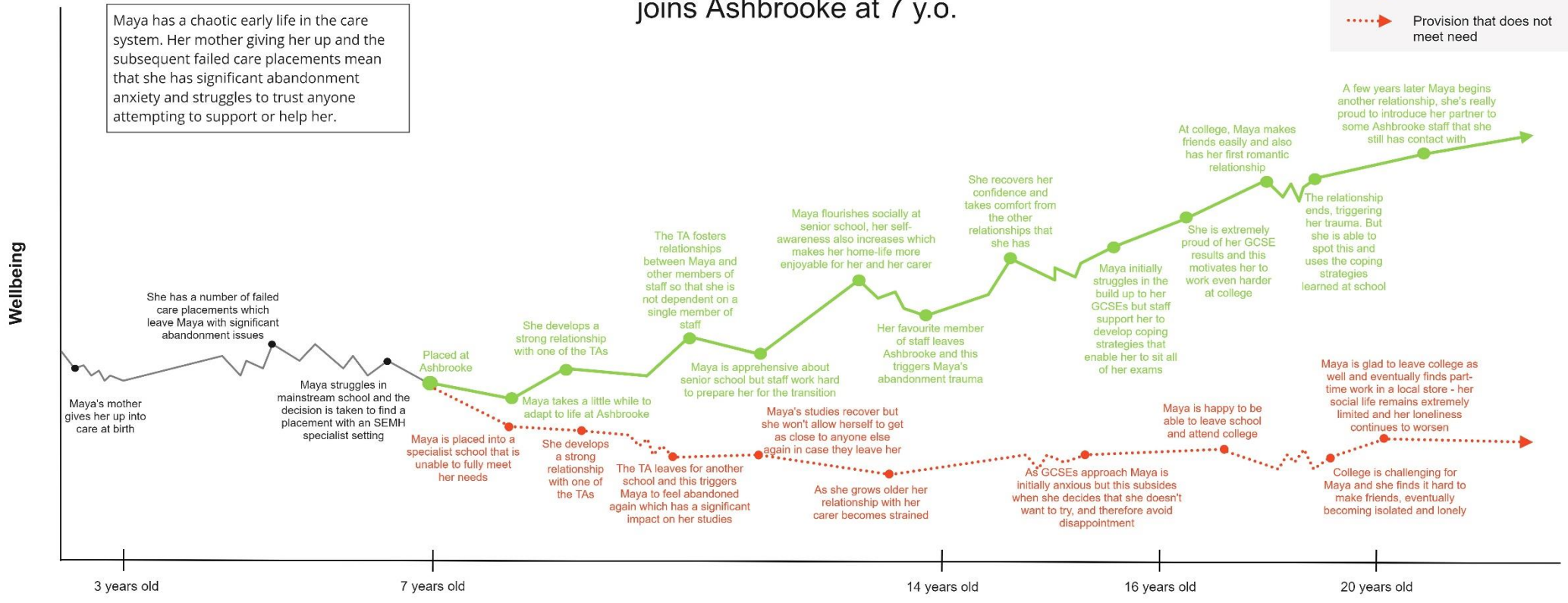
Aside for her work Maya doesn't leave the house, which means that her social life is extremely limited. Her loneliness continues to worsen, and her foster carer feels unable to continue to support her and Maya is forced to enter into residential care, where she becomes even more isolated and lonely.

Maya Trauma of multiple placement breakdowns joins Ashbrooke at 7 y.o.

Key

- Life pre-intervention
- Provision that meets need
- Provision that does not meet need

Maya has a chaotic early life in the care system. Her mother giving her up and the subsequent failed care placements mean that she has significant abandonment anxiety and struggles to trust anyone attempting to support or help her.



Archetype 3: Zein **Placed at Ashbrooke School at 14 years old**

Needs and background

Zein is born into a chaotic and unstable home where the frequent disturbances have significant impact upon his social development. He has two older brothers who will often argue and fight with each other and their father, this happens often in front of Zein and as he grows older, he begins to see this as acceptable behaviour.

He attends a mainstream school and struggles significantly. Zein's attendance is poor and when he does attend, his behaviour is disruptive. He can become extremely frustrated and when this happens he lashes out physically at people or objects close by. When his school try to speak to Zein's parents about this they do not engage. With little sign of progress, the school speak with the local authority and he is moved to a school with an on-site SEN provision.

In the new setting Zein does improve and begins to make progress, but his progress is punctuated by his physical outbursts. These outbursts become harder for the school staff to deal with as he grows older and physically stronger. One of Zein's outbursts results in a member of staff having to attend A&E for injuries trying to restrain him, in order to protect other learners. Consequently, the school take the decision that, for the protection of their staff and learners, that Zein must be moved to a more intense provision.

The local authority escalates his provision again, but the further upheaval means that Zein really struggles to settle and the outbursts and disruption to other learners require significant support and supervision from staff. After six months, Zein's presence in class and the intensity of support that he requires is highly disruptive and the school do not feel that they can support him without serious detriment to the other learners in his class. They agree with the local authority that they will continue to attempt to support Zein as best as they can, only until the local authority identify a more appropriate level of provision.

Factual life-course (where their needs are met at Ashbrooke School)

At 14 years old Zein is placed at Ashbrooke School. He sees his placement as just one more that he will be moved on from before too long if he behaves in a certain way. During his settling in period, staff observe Zein's deliberately disruptive behaviour and as a support group begin to plan a consistent therapeutic approach that they can put in place.

The consistent approach begins to help Zein settle into life at Ashbrooke School and connections start to form with some of the support staff. Zein is no longer being deliberately disruptive in classes, which means that he is in class and able to begin learning.

Alongside his academic learning, clinical staff work closely to support Zein and begin to address the trauma from his adverse childhood experiences. They pay close attention to when he speaks about his home life, and are able

to help him to identify triggers for his outbursts and coping strategies so that he can remove himself from those situations where he is either at risk of harm, or may cause harm himself. Zein's manner becomes much calmer and more open and this helps him to form some strong and supportive friendships amongst his classmates.

He takes his GCSEs in his stride, and without disruption from any outbursts or dysregulation Zein is able to go onto attend college and study carpentry. He has always enjoyed the practical and hands-on tasks that he has been exposed to at Ashbrooke School and likes the idea that he will be able to support himself, through something creative and that he enjoys.

Zein enjoys his time at college, particularly the practical learning that he does. He feels as though he has found a purpose. The WG Futures programme has maintained contact with Zein throughout his time at college and staff can see the hard work and dedication that he has put into his time there. The Futures programme connects him with a local carpentry firm, guiding him through the initial interactions and help him to secure an apprenticeship upon leaving college.

Adapting to working life does not take long and Zein loves being able to put into practice the skills he has developed at college, as well as taking great pride in his work. His manager is impressed and supports him to continue to develop, giving him more opportunities over time. For Zein, this serves as strong motivation to continue to work hard and when this starts to result in his wage increasing, he takes satisfaction from being able to independently support himself.

When he completes his apprenticeship, his wage enables him to move out of the family home into his own flat. Zein knows that home life with his parents is still not the best environment for him and although the first few months of full independence are tough, he knows that he has made the right decision for him in the long-term. His persistence, alongside the coping strategies he developed during his time at Ashbrooke School, allow him to continue to progress at work whilst adapting to living independently which Zein take further confidence from and is proud of the life that he is building for himself.

Counterfactual life-course (if a specialised setting such as Ashbrooke School did not exist)

The local authority do their best but are unable to find a more suitable placement for Zein, which they are unable to do. Due to his perceived violent tendencies, they feel that without a better alternative, they have no choice but to place him into a Secure Training Centre (STC).

The STC is a harsh, regimented environment that imposes a way of life upon Zein that he is far from suited to. He fights against the rules and regimen and outbursts become more violent and severe as a result. After three years in the STC, the build up of his behaviour results in the STC feeling that even they can do no more for Zein, and for the good of their staff and other learners, he is expelled.

For Zein this is a relief. He is glad to be free from the life that he felt was being imposed upon him and the lack of freedom that came with it. This does mean that he leaves the education system without any formal qualifications and therefore limits his ability to find meaningful work.

He spends the majority of his time out of the family home, which he sees as a place of chaos and to be avoided if possible. Instead, he falls into a routine of spending time with a group of friends that he falls in with, some of whom are involved in petty crime. His parents do not agree with his lifestyle and expect him to contribute financially to the home now that he is no longer in school. This leads to further conflict between Zein and his parents, often these become violent and it becomes clear to both parties that he cannot live there any longer.

With no job and no where to live, Zein settles into a cycle of periods in temporary accommodation between periods of homelessness. This leaves him more vulnerable to those friends who are involved in crime, offering him a sofa to stay on in return for helping them to carry out increasingly more serious crimes. Inevitably, this leads to Zein regularly interacting with the police and this eventually escalates to a cycle of repeated arrests, time spent in jail and then returning to crime upon release.

Zein

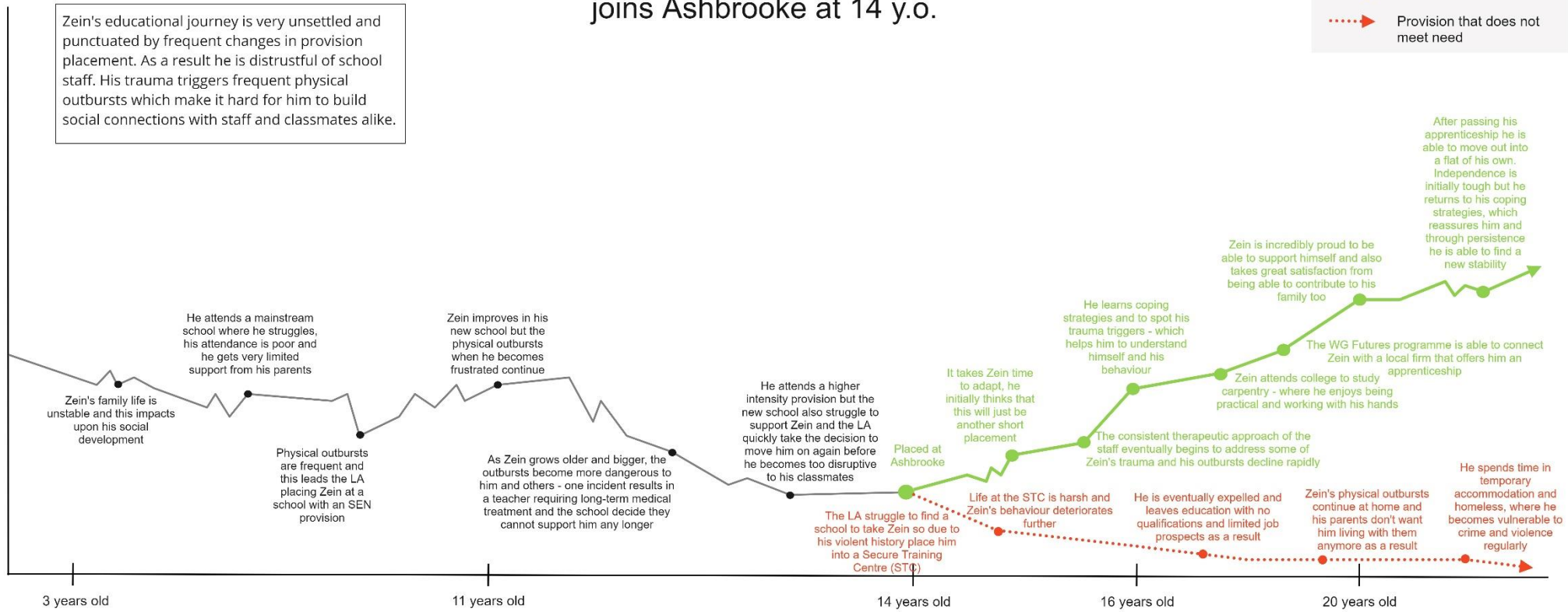
Trauma of multiple placement breakdowns joins Ashbrooke at 14 y.o.

Zein's educational journey is very unsettled and punctuated by frequent changes in provision placement. As a result he is distrustful of school staff. His trauma triggers frequent physical outbursts which make it hard for him to build social connections with staff and classmates alike.

Key

- Life pre-intervention
- Provision that meets need
- Provision that does not meet need

Wellbeing



Life course



Archetype 4: Olivia

Placed at Ashbrooke School at 7 years old

Needs and background

Olivia's is born into a chaotic and extremely traumatic home environment, contact with her father is infrequent and irregular which further adds to the chaos. From the point of birth, Olivia and her mother are known to Social Services and they regularly monitor the situation in the family home. Over the first three years of Olivia's life, Social Services observe her being exposed to significant trauma and decide to remove her into care.

Her first foster placement is into a home with a number of other foster children already in place. This is overwhelming for Olivia, and she struggles to settle there. Her foster carer raises their concerns with the local authority and she is moved into a care home until a more suitable placement can be identified for her.

This process takes almost two years and in that time the Olivia's social development has suffered, with the constant rotation of peers in the home making it hard for her to build any connections. Eventually she is placed into a foster home, where she is the only child.

Around the same time as being placed with the new foster carer, Olivia also starts at a mainstream primary school. Once in school, the shortcomings of Olivia's social development become extremely apparent. This is compounded by her frequently becoming overstimulated by the volume of activity taking place around her in the mainstream setting. She is extremely insular and retreats from even the most limited interaction, including that with her foster carer.

Along with her foster carer, the local authority takes the decision that Olivia needs a significantly greater level of support in order to make progress.

Factual life-course (where their needs are met at Ashbrooke School)

Olivia's transition to Ashbrooke School is carefully managed by the school's staff and this enables them to focus their efforts on helping her settle into the new environment and attempting to develop trust and connection with her. Given space to adapt at her own pace limits the potential for Olivia to become overstimulated and therefore staff are more able to focus their attention on understanding Olivia and her trauma, as opposed to reassuring and settling her if she were to become overstimulated.

Slowly Olivia has built connections with some of the support staff at Ashbrooke School and this allows them to start working to unpick the trauma from her early life, and they employ a therapeutic approach holistically to Olivia's support. This includes bringing her foster carer into the conversations about Olivia's support so that the support at home can be aligned to that which she receives at school. It also serves to educate and inform Olivia's foster carer about why she can behave in certain ways and, as the team around her learn more about her, why and what triggers her to become overstimulated and dysregulated.

Progress continues to be gradual and this enables Olivia to grow in confidence and she develops a small but strong group of friends. After the trauma of significant upheaval and uncertainty in her early life, this is a big step forward for Olivia and she takes great comfort in the security that she feels from those around her. This is also reflected in the relationship that she has with her foster carer, they have grown much closer as Olivia has opened up and learned to trust them completely. For the first time in her life, she has a truly solid foundation from which she can develop and grow.

Moving from primary and into secondary school at Ashbrooke School is a potential hurdle in Olivia's progress but the process is smoothed by careful planning by the school and her carer. The fact that she will continue to be with her close friends in secondary school also makes the transition a lot easier for her; the group are all going through the same thing together and are able to support each other. Olivia continues to make good progress, and a significant marker of her growing confidence is when she starts to voluntarily support some of the younger pupils at Ashbrooke School who she can recognise as having similar difficulties to her experience.

As Olivia reaches puberty, she struggles to understand the changes that are happening to her and her body, particularly the way that changing hormones effect her emotions. For a period of time, Olivia does regress and withdraws from her friendship group and from engaging with her foster carer. This withdrawal makes it hard for the foster carer to support Olivia and they reach out to the team around her at Ashbrooke School for support with this.

Between them, they are able to devise a support plan that supports Olivia to adjust to this significant life change. This takes time but gradually they are able to help Olivia to engage with the support and see the changes as a further part of the progress she is making. Her friendship group, who are all experiencing similar challenges at this time, are also able to provide her with reassurance and the sense that she is not going through this alone eventually helps Olivia to adjust and embrace the changes.

As Olivia's confidence has grown, especially from the point of joining secondary school, Olivia has made great progress academically, and she has developed an enthusiasm for learning that sees her perform extremely well in her GCSEs. She is really proud of this achievement, and this spurs her on to go to college, determined to do the same there.

Olivia realises that she enjoyed supporting the younger students during her time at Ashbrooke School and this leads her to consider this as a potential career. The WG Futures programme connects her with a local special school, where upon completing college, she begins to work as a teaching assistant. Being around children with similar backgrounds to her is initially triggering but she is determined to support them and finds it really rewarding when she is able to see the children progressing. She also finds that this helps her to further understand her own trauma.

After working at the school for two years, colleagues encourage Olivia to study to become a therapist in order to be able to support the children in a more impactful way. Returning to education is initially daunting but she soon

remembers how much she enjoys learning and the greatest reward comes when she observes the positive impact of her support upon the children.

Counterfactual life-course (if a specialised setting such as Ashbrooke School did not exist)

There is little choice of available provision for Olivia, and she is placed into a secure unit⁶. This is a dramatically different environment to her previous school, and this only serves to push Olivia to withdraw further and isolate herself.

Her withdrawn nature means that Olivia does not demand a significant amount of immediate attention from support staff: their time is often more focused on children for whom trauma causes more outward-facing dysregulation. As a result, Olivia spends a lot of time alone, unstimulated and without support to address her own traumatic experiences.

Olivia's trauma becomes further and further rooted and this creates a high barrier to attempts to help her learn and develop any social skills. She is now significantly behind the development of children of a similar age to her. This becomes most apparent when she enters puberty. She struggles to understand that changes that it brings about and she is without the social skills to communicate her confusion and how she is feeling to support workers at the secure unit.

The prospect of GCSEs or any other qualifications is not a possibility for Olivia, and she leaves the secure unit when she is sixteen and returns to the care system. She develops acute social anxiety back in care and she is extremely isolated, lonely and depressed.

At age 18, without a carer to live with, Olivia moves into supported living in adulthood. Her trauma and anxieties are so deep rooted by this point that she only leaves her room in order to eat, and she actively avoids social contact with others, including avoiding attempts at therapeutic intervention to address her depression. Beyond the 35-year view of our journey analysis, Olivia remains in supported accommodation, eventually culminating in an early move to residential care when the supported living setting ceases to be able to meet her physical health needs.

⁶ The Olivia archetype has features of one particular real story that we heard during our workshop discussion with staff at Ashbrooke School. It has been modified to avoid disclosure that would enable the student to be identified. We note that the specific student exceeded the threshold for Local Authority or Independent residential settings that were available at the time. The Local Authority has created, in effect, a bespoke service for the young person in question that has many of the features we would normally expect to see of a secure mental health establishment. In circumstances where a bespoke service could not be introduced, we would expect to see a Local Authority making a placement in secure accommodation.

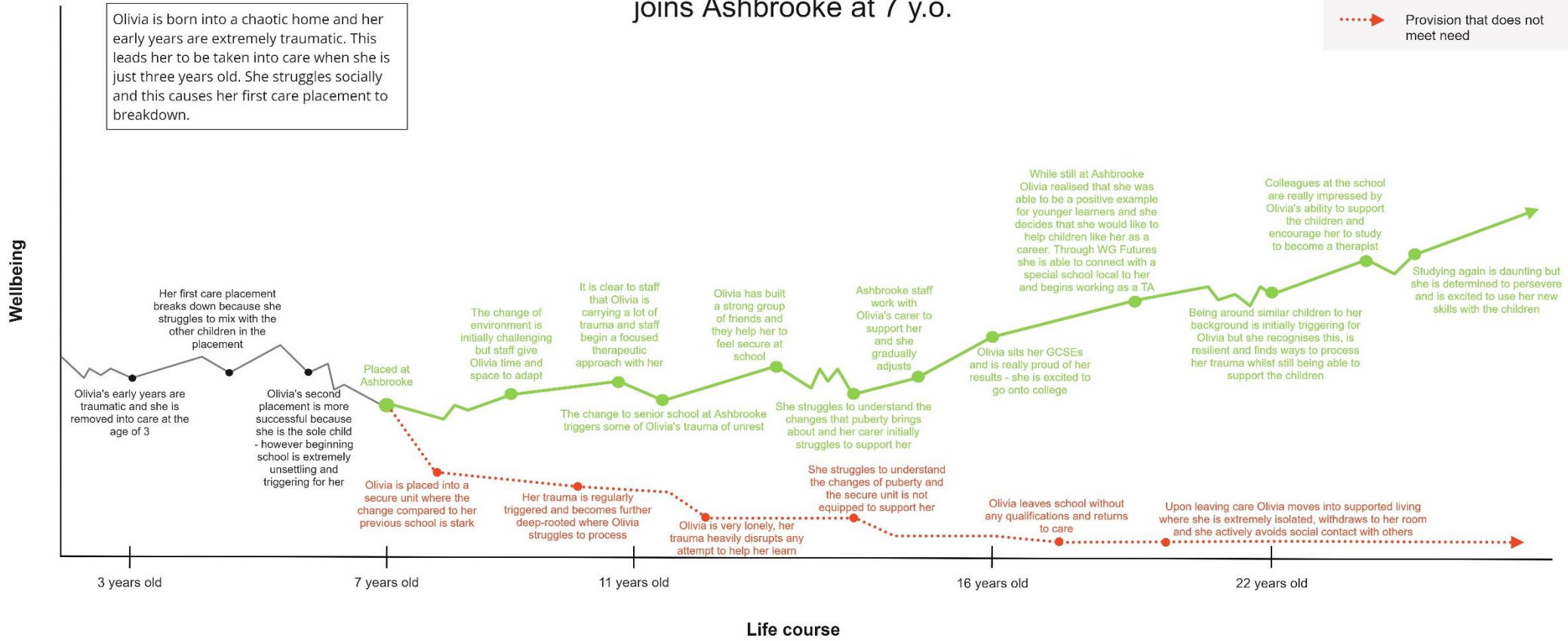
Olivia

Trauma of multiple placement breakdowns joins Ashbrooke at 7 y.o.

Key

- ▶ Life pre-intervention
- ▶ Provision that meets need
-▶ Provision that does not meet need

Olivia is born into a chaotic home and her early years are extremely traumatic. This leads her to be taken into care when she is just three years old. She struggles socially and this causes her first care placement to breakdown.



5. Value to society of meeting the needs of young people

This section provides an evaluation of the difference that the provision delivered at Ashbrooke School makes to the lives of Noah, Maya, Zein and Olivia, the community and family around them and to society as a whole. We are able to express the difference that Ashbrooke School makes in monetary terms for each of the archetypes, by comparing the cost of provision at Ashbrooke School and the outcomes achieved there, with the outcomes identified from their counterfactual journeys. This analysis takes account of long-term outcomes values and/or costs of provision as well as comparing the short-term costs of provision noted under each scenario during their childhood and adolescence.

Modelling outcomes and costs for Ashbrooke School's provision as compared to the probable alternative life courses shows the high impact value of this provision. Explaining what life could look like for the archetypes at Ashbrooke School, where their extremely high levels of need are effectively and fully met provides part of the picture. The difference that the right provision can make can only truly be conveyed when that life course is viewed in the context of what could happen if those learners were not to be placed with Ashbrooke School.

We emphasise that our work focuses solely upon the value of provision at Ashbrooke School. There are Witherslack Group residential Children's Homes in the vicinity that could be an option for residential care commissioned by the Local Authority. Our analysis here tends to assume that young people are resident either with their birth families, a Foster Carer or in Residential Care (regardless of whether that is provided by Witherslack Group or another party). We anticipate that the shared methodologies between the school and a Witherslack Group residential home would add some further value compared to a less closely co-ordinated relationship that might apply in other circumstances. However, as noted above, staff at Ashbrooke School invest significant time into support for parents, carers and other residential provisions to enable home life to complement activity at the school as far as possible so that young people have potential to achieve the same positive outcomes regardless of where they live.

This evaluation builds on the archetypal life journeys of Noah, Maya, Zein and Olivia presented in Sections 4 and 5.

Value to society: the difference between outcomes and costs

From the comparison of the outcomes and costs of provision in the converse scenarios of each archetype, we can establish the additional value brought about by appropriate high-level provision when compared to the probable alternative. The calculation takes into account two elements to ascertain the social value that is generated by Ashbrooke School, and are represented in Figure 6:

- Incremental outcomes observed in the lives of learners (these are assigned monetary values using social value databases) compared to the counterfactual; and
- The incremental cost incurred by placement at Ashbrooke School compared to the counterfactual provision.



Figure 6: Calculating social value

Value of outcomes

Table 1 sets out the themes into which the values of outcomes and events in the archetypes’ life courses are categorised. For example, these events or outcomes include NHS treatment or paid employment. These outcomes and events represent costs to various stakeholders, including the NHS and local authorities, and some represent benefits. These are assigned monetary values based on recognised social value databases⁷ and grey or academic literature. They are organised by different themes and which stakeholder incurs the cost or saving based on the identified outcome.

Table 1: Themes and descriptions

Themes & stakeholder(s)	Description
1. Education outcomes Local authorities & DfE	This encompasses the costs of exclusion and the costs of truancy to LAs in supporting learners to catch up with their wider peer group’s level of progress.
2. Economic outcomes Economy	Captures the additional productivity generated in the economy by pupils and their parents or carers being able to work longer and in better paid roles. For pupils at Ashbrooke School this arises from better engaging in learning and being equipped with key skills for work.
3. Physical health NHS	Accounts for the costs to the NHS of treatment for physical conditions for pupils, families and teachers. For pupils this may be due to reducing the risk of homelessness and risks including injury arising from self-harm which would lead to poorer health outcomes in the counterfactual. For families and teachers this covers the treatment for child-on-adult violence.
4. Mental health NHS & local authorities	Captures the costs to the NHS and local authorities of treatment for mental health conditions experienced by pupils and their families.
5. Social care Local authorities	Covers the long-term costs of residential or supported living, and housing benefit payments that may be received later into the archetypes’ lives if they are not supported to develop resilience and independence skills. This also includes costs of homelessness to the local authority comprising temporary accommodation and costs of community support services.

⁷ Like the [Personal Social Services Research Unit](#) and the [Greater Manchester Combined Authority CBA Model](#)



Themes & stakeholder(s)	Description
6.Criminal justice Police and courts	Represents the costs of learners being involved in crime, whether as a perpetrator or victim. This encompasses the costs of arrests, detention and prison.

Cost of provision

Below sets out the different types of provision that have been considered as part of this evaluation, and the annual cost of a placement in each setting (all costs have been updated to 2023 values for inflation⁸):

Table 2: Type of provision included in the evaluation

Type of provision	Annual cost	Description	Data source
Ashbrooke School	£94k p.a.	Full cost per learner of a placement at Ashbrooke School including; staff costs, young person costs, and organisational costs.	Information supplied by the Witherslack Group in August 2024
Supported mainstream school	£33k p.a.	Cost of placement in a mainstream school, with some additional SEN support	National Association of Independent Schools and Non-Maintained Special Schools (2012) ⁹
Alternative provision	£18k p.a.	Cost of alternative specialist provision	DfE – Alternative provision market analysis (2018) ¹⁰
Out-of-county residential special school	£208k p.a.	Cost of residential placement in a specialist school	National Association of Independent Schools and Non-Maintained Special Schools (2012) ¹¹
Out-of-county day special school	£79k p.a.	This is the combined cost of the school provision, and the LA-provided travel to and from school each day.	Local Government Association Briefing: Special Educational Needs and Disability Funding (2020) ¹²
Day only special school	£40k p.a.	Cost of placement in a specialist provision	Local Government Association Briefing: Special Educational Needs and Disability Funding (2020) ¹³

⁸ HM Treasury (Dec 2023), [GDP deflators at market prices, and money GDP - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/gdp-deflators-at-market-prices-and-money-gdp)

⁹ Clifford, J. and Theobald, C., (2012), Summary of findings: Extension of the 2011 cost comparison methodology to a wider sample, National Association of Independent Schools and Non-Maintained Special Schools.

¹⁰ [DfE \(2018\)](#)

¹¹ Clifford, J. and Theobald, C., (2012), Summary of findings: Extension of the 2011 cost comparison methodology to a wider sample, National Association of Independent Schools and Non-Maintained Special Schools.

¹² [Special Educational Needs and Disability Funding, House of Commons, 29 January 2020 \(local.gov.uk\)](#)

¹³ [Special Educational Needs and Disability Funding, House of Commons, 29 January 2020 \(local.gov.uk\)](#)

Type of provision	Annual cost	Description	Data source
Medium Secure Mental Health Setting	£649k p.a.	Cost secure mental health setting for a young person	Children’s Commissioner (2019) ¹⁴
Secure Training Centre (STC)	£213k p.a.	Cost of STC	Government Criminal Justice and Courts Bill (2014) ¹⁵

Evaluation parameters

The average social values generated by Ashbrooke School across the archetypes presented in this section are in reflection of the following parameters:

- They are the value of improved outcomes in the lives of learners up until the age of 35 years. For prudence, we have not considered the whole life value of certain outcomes to allow appropriately for risk (although some, such as employment, have high longer-term value). In addition, we have tended to select more conservative assumptions for certain outcomes to avoid a risk of over-claiming impact values. Hence the average values should be treated as at least the value generated;
- The results of this analysis show the evaluation of these costs and benefits in net present value terms – i.e. stating future values of all costs and benefits in today’s terms (after applying discounts to future values in line with Green Book methodology);
- Our approach seeks to approximate average outcomes for the storylines and archetypes shown earlier. In reality, some will fall either side of the analysis¹⁶; and
- These figures are also adjusted for deadweight (i.e. the possibility that the young people would have experienced positive outcomes anyway without any intervention) and alternative attribution (being the proportion of the outcomes value that should be attributed to action by other organisations including public bodies).

¹⁴ [Children’s Commissioner](#)

¹⁵ [Gov.uk - Criminal Justice and Courts Bill - Fact sheet: Secure Colleges \(2014\)](#)

¹⁶ We are aware, for example of at least one learner who has gone on to further education and successfully obtained a degree, which would be expected to result in a premium compared to the average productivity modelled here.



Average additional social value of a placement at Ashbrooke School

£844k average additional
social value
£622k + **£222k**
outcomes avoided costs

Figure 7: Average additional social value of placement at Ashbrooke School

To establish the average social value of a placement at Ashbrooke School we have used the evaluations of Noah, Maya, Zein and Olivia (Archetypes 1, 2, 3 and 4). These archetypes represent four commonly identified learner and circumstances at Ashbrooke School, whilst also accounting for the fact that whilst many learners now join at an early age (Primary or Early Years), some older placements are still found, where there is often a more intensive need for provision in order to achieve positive outcomes with less time for the school to deliver a change.

Of particular importance is the need for consistency in placements at Ashbrooke School, even when positive outcomes have been achieved. The lifecourses shown above highlight that transitions and change events can occur for young people throughout childhood and adolescence: the stability of a placement at Ashbrooke School and the school's ability to provide resource in an agile way to respond to those changing needs is critical to sustaining positive outcomes through to age 18. Our report earlier in 2024 on The Grange highlighted the potential risks associated with an earlier decision to move a young person to lower intensity provision, and we emphasise that similar risks can also apply to Ashbrooke School.

Archetype 1: Noah

A child who is able to secure an EHCP ahead of starting school

Placed at Ashbrooke School at 4 years old



Figure 8: Additional social value for Archetype 1

The values in Figure 8 make clear that for a learner akin to Noah, there is significant long-term social value that can be achieved by following the ITAC approach used at Ashbrooke School. This is despite a placement at Ashbrooke School costing more than their counterfactual setting. Greater investment in the right quality of provision during a learner’s early life presents significant long-term value for money.

We shall now examine how these values are achieved and highlight the key points of different between the factual (where Noah’s needs are met at Ashbrooke School) and the counterfactual (where he is not placed with Ashbrooke School) lifecourses.

Outcomes: £669k

This is the result of significant positive outcomes becoming achievable in the factual lifecourse, whilst in the counterfactual lifecourse (both set out in Section 4) significant and costly negative outcomes are identified. Figure 9 sets out the striking difference between the lifetime outcomes for the contrasting lifecourses.



Figure 9: Comparative outcome values for Noah’s lifecourses



The greatest contributor to the £669k difference between the -£486k and the positive £182k of outcomes is the avoided cost of Noah having to enter into supported living once an adult in the counterfactual lifecourse. Before alternative attribution and deadweight are applied, the avoided cost to society equates to at least **£471k**. Conversely, in the factual lifecourse, Noah is able to make positive contributions to society in the form of formal employment, the productivity generated by Noah over the course of his lifetime is at least **£229k**.

Another significant negative outcome from Noah's counterfactual lifecourse is the combined economic impact that Noah's being NEET (£71k) and the absenteeism he causes in his parents' working life (£29k), equating to a further **£100k** of avoided negative outcome.

Costs: £324k

This is the difference in cost of the two different educational provisions that Noah experiences in the two lifecourses. For the eight years evaluated (from, and including, the age of eleven to eighteen), each lifecourse has a different combination of provision and costs (set out in Table 2).

In the counterfactual the total cost of their education provision is **£521k** (discounted for deadweight and alternative attribution), consisting predominantly of:

- 6 years in an alternative provision
- 5 years in a day only special school
- 2 years in an out of county residential setting

There are some further costs included such as consistent persistent truancy, totalling £15k, until he reaches the residential setting for the final two years of his education.

In comparison, for the same period, a placement with Ashbrooke School costs the DfE roughly **£845k** (discounted for deadweight and alternative attribution). Unlike the counterfactual, a placement at Ashbrooke School is the only cost incurred due to the full holistic nature of the provision.

Therefore, for the entirety of Noah's education, the factual life course costs £324k more than the counterfactual.

Archetype 2: Maya
A child with a chaotic early life and multiple placement breakdown
Placed at Ashbrooke School at 7 years old



Figure 10: Additional social value for Maya

Maya is an example of a learners at Ashbrooke School that generate significant social value through the provision of appropriate support, but in comparison to some of the more extreme learners, such as Noah and Zein, the value is not as sizeable. However, it can be argued that the greatest value from her factual lifecourse, the ability to have meaningful and lasting relationships in her adult life, is not reliably quantifiable.

As for Noah (Archetype 1), we will now examine the differing points of value and cost within the alternate life courses.

Outcomes: £459k

Figure 11 sets out the net outcomes from each of the life courses evaluated, which result in the £459k total outcomes for Maya.



Figure 11: Comparative outcome values for Maya's lifecourses

The greatest single set of negative outcomes in the counterfactual, which are totally avoided in the factual life course, are the social care costs amounting to **£419k**. In the counterfactual, at the age of 26, Maya is placed into



supported living as it is not suitable for her to live alone given her needs. This, and the other social care costs in the counterfactual, are avoided completely in the factual life course.

The second largest negative outcome from Maya's counterfactual lifecourse is the mental health support and treatment she requires throughout her life. The combined costs of CAMHS services in her childhood, and adult mental health care once she is an adult equates to **£159k**.

In stark contrast, in Maya's factual lifecourse she incurs minimal adult mental health support costs upon leaving school, and none whilst at school thanks to Ashbrooke School's holistic provision that includes clinical support around her mental health.

Maya, like Noah in Archetype 1, generates substantial economic benefit to society over the course of her factual lifecourse. Through the ability to find and sustain meaningful employment, Maya's lifetime economic contribution is roughly **£200k**.

Maya earns close to minimum wage for the early years of her employment, before progressing to achieve productivity of approximately £30k per annum (being the average UK GVA per capita¹⁷), which is then discounted in future years for inflation to achieve the net present value. Therefore, we believe this figure to be a conservative representation of her true earning potential as she progresses in her chosen employment.

Costs: £287k

Maya is similar to Noah in that her educational journey with Ashbrooke School is of higher value than her counterfactual lifecourse. Instead of attending Ashbrooke School, at an annual cost of £94k p.a., the annual cost of Maya's day only special school is over 50% cheaper at £40k p.a.¹⁸. Consequently, the total cost of Maya's education in her counterfactual lifecourse is £434k, as opposed to £721k in her factual lifecourse with Ashbrooke School. Both of these figures have been adjusted for alternative attribution and deadweight.

¹⁷ Office for National Statistics (2021)

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossvalueaddedgva/datasets/nominalregionalgrossvalueaddedbalancedperheadandincomecomponents>

¹⁸ See Table 2



Archetype 3: Zein

A child with an unsettled educational journey consisting of multiple placements

Placed at Ashbrooke School at 14 years old



Figure 12: Additional social value for Zein

Meeting Zein’s needs not only generates significant outcomes for society, doing so also generates significant cost savings. This is even after taking into account the fact that attending Ashbrooke School is a high value educational setting.

The context and reasoning for these figures are detailed below.

Outcomes: £689k

Figure 13 sets out the net outcomes of the contrasting lifecourses that combine in the £689k total outcomes for Zein.



Figure 13: Comparative outcome values for Zein's lifecourses

The nature of contrast between Zein’s two lifecourses is stark. In his factual journey he goes on to full-time employment as a carpenter, contributing **£213k** to society via productivity during his lifecourse.



As detailed in Section 4 however, his counterfactual lifecourse is far bleaker and there are numerous negative outcomes that we have been able to value. Zein's criminal activity and interactions with the criminal justice system, including time spent in jail, cost society **£174k**.

This cost is dwarfed by the cost he generates via social care outcomes. When not in jail, Zein finds himself stuck between stints in temporary accommodation and sleeping rough, at a lifetime cost of roughly £84k. Later in his life, his lifestyle also results in him fathering a child on two occasions, both of which due to the circumstance into which they are born are immediately removed into care. This generates significant cost of £288k to society. The total cost to the social care system of Zein's counterfactual lifecourse is at least **£372k**.

Avoided costs: £93k

Zein's time with Ashbrooke School, in his factual lifecourse, carries a total cost of £221k. The reason that this represents a saving versus the counterfactual lifecourse for Zein is due to the fact that with a viable alternative, the local authority place Zein into the extremely expensive STC provision. The three-year period that he spends there, plus his eventual expulsion, costs £336k. These figures are after alternative attribution and deadweight have been taken into account.

Archetype 4: Olivia

A child born into a chaotic and extremely traumatic home

Placed at Ashbrooke School at 7 years old

£2.1m additional social value
of Olivia archetype

£668k + **£1.4m**
outcomes avoided costs

Figure 14: Additional social value for Olivia

As Figure 14 shows, Olivia's story combines both significant positive outcomes, and even more significant avoided costs.

Outcomes: £668k

Figure 13 sets out the net outcomes of the contrasting lifecourses that combine in the £980k total outcomes for Olivia.

 **-£96k** positive outcomes in
factual lifecourse

negative outcomes in
counterfactual lifecourse **-£764k** 

Figure 15: Comparative outcome values for Olivia's lifecourses

The greatest factor in Olivia's positive outcomes is her economic contribution driven by her employment. Initially, as a Teaching Assistant, when her productivity is in line with earning minimum wage, and then having qualified, her productivity increases to being in line with average national earnings.

Avoided costs: £1.4m

The avoided cost for Olivia is extremely large, and this is down to the type of provision that she is in, both during her education and upon leaving. With no other provision for her to attend, Olivia is forced to attend a costly Secure Unit with an annual cost of over £213k per year. This is more than double the annual cost for her placement at Ashbrooke School (£87k p.a.).

Furthermore, there is stark contrast between life upon leaving the education system. In her factual lifecourse, Olivia benefits from the foundation she receives via Ashbrooke School to contribute to society in her adult life. In her counterfactual lifecourse however, having been in the Secure Unit, Olivia is not capable of being fully self-sufficient and therefore must move into supported living, at a cost of £1.8k per week.

Average additional value to society could be as high as £870k

As is set out in detail in Appendix 2, the average additional value presented for each archetype is a weighted average of three scenarios (high, medium and low outcomes), which are compared to the outcomes of the counterfactual scenario. This approach mitigates against the study being perceived to have only evaluated the best-case scenario versus the worst-case scenario (the counterfactual).

However, if just the highest outcome scenario was considered for Noah, Maya, Zein and Olivia, then the average additional value to society would therefore be the marginally higher value of **£870k**. In stating this figure, it is important to be clear as to how it has been achieved, in comparison to the more prudent weighted average driven value stated at the top of this section.

The fact that the weighted average is roughly £30k lower than if only the high outcome scenario were used suggests that this is a prudent and sensible figure to be using to represent the value to society of Ashbrooke School's provision.

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates unequivocally that a placement with Ashbrooke School, with its active use of the WG Futures programme as part of its curriculum, and the ITAC approach that they follow, delivers significant positive impact for learners and society as a whole. That impact can be quantified in the form of financial outcomes and cost savings compared to alternative placement options.

Our analysis is based upon archetypes derived from real stories of young people that we heard during our discussions with staff at Ashbrooke School, combined together to pick out common features and to ensure that none of the archetypes is so closely linked to any one pupil that they could be identified. The stories of learners that we learned about during this study, and the stories of how staff have supported them, are inspirational. In some extreme cases, it appears likely that a placement at Ashbrooke School, with its therapeutic and integrated approach to education and mental wellbeing, is enabling a day school placement to be sustained where we might normally expect to see a young person with that level of need being placed in a residential establishment.

The staff team we met with are deeply committed to helping the young people at the school, both to overcome their SEMH needs, but also to support them to achieve academic success and long-term employment outcomes. One particularly striking story was of a young person whose care team outside of school requires a ratio of more than 2:1 at any time within their accommodation (and that team avoids any activity that involves leaving that setting). The Teaching Assistant assigned to this young person at Ashbrooke School will safely and successfully arrange trips to visit local shops, encouraging the young person to interact with others in the process, and without incident. When we probed the reasons for this difference, the answer was stark: the residential setting that has been commissioned is, in effect, the provision that would be designed to exacerbate the SEMH needs and trauma that the young person experiences. Contrasting that with the therapeutic approach delivered at Ashbrooke School highlights the importance of the ITAC model, the highly qualified support team that deliver it, and the ambition and dedication that staff at Ashbrooke School bring to their roles. In that case, Ashbrooke School is delivering positive outcomes despite the damaging circumstances of other interventions around them.

Of course, that's one particularly striking example. We also heard stories of young people whose families have also experienced their own trauma and have mental health, amongst other, needs: but they want the best for their children and want to work with the school to achieve that. Staff dedicate significant resource and expertise to develop support plans for each young person, but this can often involve working directly with parents to help them to overcome their issues and, therefore, to be in a better place to work alongside the school to achieve positive outcomes for young people at the school. We have not included outcomes for parents as part of our review during this work, but it seems likely that a number of parents have been helped to achieve their own outcomes as a by-product of supporting the children placed at the school.

Working with the learner, for the learner

Every single element of provision at Ashbrooke School, enabled by the ITAC approach, is targeted to meet the needs of the learner and is adaptable and agile to change as the learner grows older and as their needs for support change over time, eventually preparing them to live independent and fulfilling adult lives upon leaving. The work that Ashbrooke School's staff deliver (set out in activities in the Theory of change at Figure 4) is underpinned by the way in which they deliver it, and this is the catalyst for the drastic turnaround in the trajectory of the lives of the learners. Figure 16 pulls these approaches out separate to the Theory of change.



Figure 16: Approaches employed by Ashbrooke School staff

Alongside the ITAC, they employ further measures that combine to create the environment for the learner that is most likely to enable them to succeed and progress. The focus of the progression is not solely in an academic sense but predominantly upon their social, emotional, mental and physical health development – which eventually facilitates their academic progress. Staff bring an understanding that academic delivery is only meaningfully possible when a young person is ready to learn. Rather than compelling them to join an activity (potentially exacerbating trauma or mental health needs), they re-structure activities or change plans to enable young people first to self-regulate and then to join education when they are ready to learn effectively. That approach, combined with access to the WG Futures programme that enables the school to focus young people on a career opportunity that will excite them and fit with their interests, delivers engagement in education.

Witherslack Group's commitment to ensure that all of the young people who have been with their establishments will access employment opportunities into adulthood is ambitious, but their scale enables them to access relationships with employers to make that goal plausible for many young people who might otherwise struggle.

Rather like we found in our earlier report on The Grange, we found that Ashbrooke School has a team that can flexibly be deployed to support young people whose need for support has escalated, with support to help them self-regulate and develop strategies to reduce the frequency and severity of behaviours that challenge over time. As shown in Figure 17, as they spend more time at Ashbrooke School, with the work and approaches of the staff embedding themselves over that time, the level of support that the learner requires reduces. This is mirrored by the outcomes achieved in relation to behaviour, with fewer episodes of dysregulation and a reduction in severity of the episodes that do still occur.

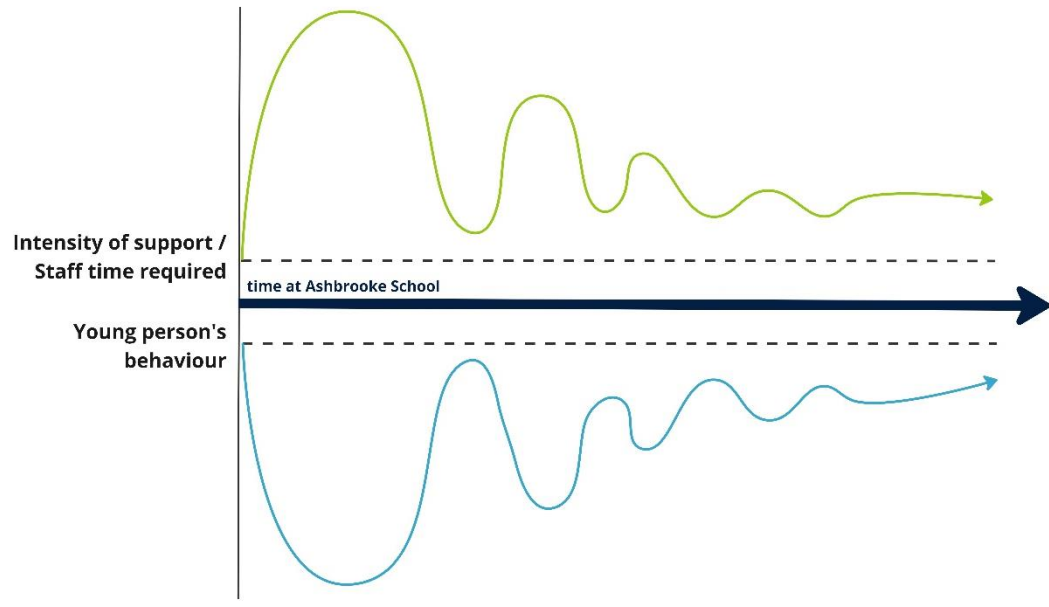


Figure 17: The relationship between the behaviour of young people and the intensity of support required

Figure 17 can also be considered to represent the increasing independence and self-awareness that the learners develop over their time at Ashbrooke School, empowering them with resilience to overcome the challenges of their traumatic experiences and the challenges of adult life.

Figure 18 shows how the support and approach at Ashbrooke School eventually results in the long-term secondary outcomes at the outer edges of the circle.

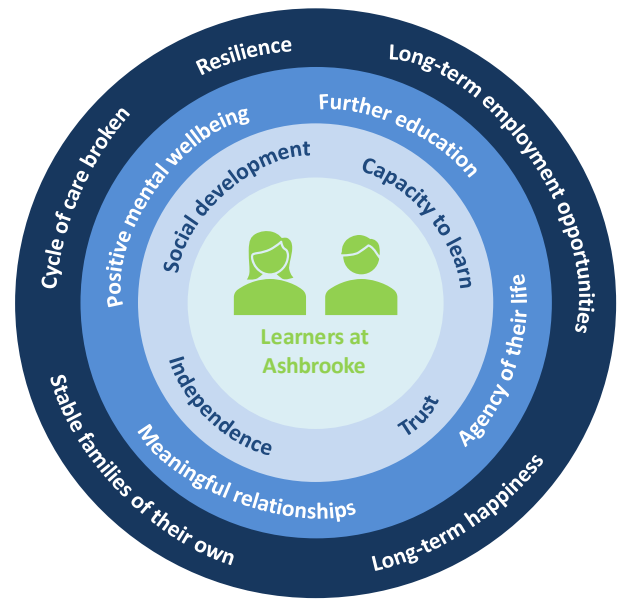


Figure 18: Summary of outcomes achievable for learners

Significant social value from meeting the most intense of needs

In economic terms, the lifetime outcomes of the contrasting life courses for Noah, Maya, Zein and Olivia mirror the striking differences in the two trajectories; the factual (where their needs are met) and the counterfactual (where their needs are not met and follow a negative trajectory).



Figure 19: Average additional social value of placement at Ashbrooke School

As sets out, substantial value to society is achieved by placing a learner with Ashbrooke School. Section 5 provides greater detail as to the specific outcomes and costs that contribute to this value. What these numbers make clear is that, despite the high financial cost of placing a learner at Ashbrooke School compared, this cost represents significant value for money when the full lifetime possibilities for the learners are taken into account. In particular, we emphasise that our analysis takes a relatively prudent view of the duration of a counterfactual placement in a day-only special school. For some young people, it is possible that a much more rapid escalation to residential provision would be required. As such, the result shown above is *at least* the value of the outcomes achieved.

Ashbrooke School is targeting intake primarily at the younger end of its age range, where the level of support provided can avoid escalation in level of need. However, the example of Zein shows that older age placements can be made, where the alternative would be a relatively rapid escalation of need to the point where only residential provision or even secure mental health provision would be available to commissioners as options.

Appendix 1: Research approach and methodology

Research approaches and underlying principles

The following approaches and principles were used to develop and deliver this study.

Developing stories based on archetypes

To explore how Ashbrooke School meets learners' needs, we took a qualitative story-based and person-centric approach. Through this we developed profiles of three archetypical learners, which represent common features of most young people who attend the School. We have described, but not evaluated, a fourth Archetype that represents a young person who is at the more extreme end of need that can be supported at Ashbrooke School: that situation is very much a minority, but demonstrates the capability of staff at Ashbrooke School to support young people whose needs are extremely high, and who might otherwise be placed in a much higher cost setting.

These stories served as a foundation for the evaluation of identified outcomes to learners that attend Ashbrooke School, and to explore what drives these valuable outcomes. Rather than evaluating outcomes, and then attaching some case studies to illustrate them, this approach builds the evaluation on the foundation of these stories. As such, it follows the approach advocated in the EU GECES standards¹⁹ and in other best practice guidance.

The archetypes are used to explore how Ashbrooke School meets learners' needs, and what difference that makes to the learners themselves as well as their communities and wider stakeholders like local authorities, government departments and the economy.

Supported by evidence

These archetypes and their stories were developed through research with staff from Ashbrooke School, as well as being informed by secondary sources. The stories told in this report are highly nuanced and built using the evidence gathered during this research. Further evidence to support the analysis in this report was drawn in from Sonnet's earlier work with The Grange and the wider Witherslack Group, as well as from appropriate and similar sector studies by Sonnet (such as the *Reaching my potential*²⁰ report for NASS) and from external sources such as national cost databases and third-party research studies.

¹⁹ Clifford, J., Hehenberger, L. and Fantini, M. (2014). *Proposed approaches to social impact measurement in European Commission legislation and in practice relating to EuSEFs and the EaSI*, report by GECES (Groupe d'experts de la Commission sur l'entrepreneuriat social) subgroup on impact measurement. Brussels. European Commission.

²⁰ 'Reaching my potential: The value of SEND provision demonstrated through learners' stories. A report for the National Association of Independent Schools and Non-Maintained Special Schools (NASS)', London. Sonnet Impact.

Evaluating primary and secondary outcomes

This study has sought to find and evaluate both primary and secondary outcomes for learners. It also considered how changes in the learners' lives would affect other people and stakeholders. The analysis takes into account secondary outcomes to groups like other teachers, commissioners, NHS services and the economy.

Model-based quantitative evaluation

Informed by the likely assessment of outcomes for the archetypes with and without their needs met, we developed an Excel model which values outcomes and events in the lives of the archetypes for both of these eventualities.

For Archetypes 1,2 and 3, the model compares their journey in Ashbrooke School's provision against their most probable alternative pathway (where their needs are not met).

Research activities

A mixed-methods approach was used to develop the archetypes and life journey modelling. Table 3 provides detail on each stage of research and the research participants involved. At each stage we have sought to involve Ashbrooke School and Witherslack Group staff members as much as possible, in order to ensure that our findings are truly reflective of Ashbrooke School and its learners.

Table 3: Summary of research activities

Research activity	Description and purpose	Participants
Rapid-literature review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of national statistics, academic and grey literature to provide the wider context for this study Topics explored included: SEND policy, education spending, and impact of specialist provision 	N/A
Initial information gathering meeting with Ashbrooke School / Witherslack Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A meeting to gain an overview of Ashbrooke School, and how it works and plan for the first workshop 	Steering Group for this study (including project leads from Witherslack Group and Ashbrooke School)
Workshop 1: Theory of change and archetype development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exploring the approaches of Ashbrooke School's provision Understanding the stories of learners that attend Ashbrooke School Outlining the archetypes of Ashbrooke School's learners 	Staff from all elements of Ashbrooke School's provision

Theory of change and archetype development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of findings from information gathering and workshop 1 • Developing theory of change and archetype storylines (including counterfactuals) 	N/A
Consultation: Testing of theory of change and archetypes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testing and refining archetype journey maps and the theory of change for Ashbrooke School by sharing and receiving comments on material 	Staff from all elements of Ashbrooke School’s provision reviewed and commented on material shared by Sonnet
Archetype lifecourse modelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building an Excel model which values the cost of provision and the value of outcomes and events in the life journeys of each of the archetype 	N/A
Review and refinement with Steering Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing initial modelling outputs, cost lines and assumptions within the lifecourse modelling 	Steering Group for this study

Limitations of this research

Direct involvement of Ashbrooke School’s learners in the research

Learners from Ashbrooke School were not directly involved in this research. There are two key reasons for this, the first is that the learners at the School have such intense levels of need and have experienced significant trauma, which attempting to gather their stories would be highly challenging and also have a very high likelihood of re-traumatising them. Even with appropriate safeguarding and support in place from staff at Ashbrooke School, we could not be certain that our conversations would not be triggering. It would, for example, be unhelpful to ask them to imagine what their life would have been like without the support they are currently receiving.

Secondly, while learners may be able to comment on their current educational experience, they will not be able to anticipate what their education means for their future outcomes, e.g. in terms of qualifications, and their long-term wellbeing, health and productivity. As such, learners themselves are a less well-informed audience on the effectiveness of specialist provision. Staff are able to comment on these matters based on their knowledge of historical case studies, giving a more balanced view across a broader sample of young people they have supported.

The people best placed to assisted and collaborate with us on the development of the archetypical learner profile, their educational journeys and outcomes upon leaving Ashbrooke School, are the staff who work every day to support the learners. They are well informed about the immediate difference Ashbrooke School’s provision can make, and, as set out in this report they remain invested and supportive in the lives of learners even upon them leaving the school. That long-term involvement includes access for learners to the WG Futures programme to support their employment journey and protect long-term outcomes.



Limited evidence on long-term outcomes for learners of having their needs met

Academic literature on the longer-term outcomes of and what difference provision made to them is limited. This research is underpinned by the assumption that better outcomes on leaving education should lead to better life outcomes for Ashbrooke School's learners. This seems to be a reasonable assumption to make given that government policy in SEND is targeted towards meeting learners' needs to prepare them for adulthood.

Appendix 2: Evaluation approach to lifecourse modelling

Model overview

This section sets out data and key assumptions used to develop the archetype lifecourse modelling, the results of which are presented in Section 6 of this report. The key feature of this model is that it compares the societal costs and benefits in the lives of the archetypes if they have their needs met at Ashbrooke School (the factual lifecourse), with the societal costs and benefits in the most probable alternative provision where their needs are not met (the counterfactual lifecourse). We present the difference between the two converse scenarios as the net value to society of the archetypes having their needs met at Ashbrooke School.

For each of the three Archetypes, the model is based on the following sequential steps:

1. Estimate the costs of provision in the factual and counterfactual scenarios during the school years for each learner
2. Value a range of outcomes in the factual and counterfactual lifecourses for each learner, with a range of outcomes (low, medium and high) explored in the learners' factual lifecourses.
3. Bring together the incremental costs of provision with the value of incremental benefits achieved when learners have their needs met

Cost of provision in the contrasting scenarios

Calculating costs where the archetypes are placed with Ashbrooke School

We have used information provided to us by The Witherslack Group to calculate the annual cost of provision at Ashbrooke School. The total average cost is £94,020 per annum.

In addition to the cost of a placement at Ashbrooke School, our calculations also include the annual pupil premium cost of £2,530²¹, which is incurred by DfE for each learner. This results in the annual total cost for a learner at Ashbrooke School being £350,214. Table 4 sets out the total cost of each of the archetypes' time spent at Ashbrooke School.

Table 4: Total cost of Ashbrooke School provision per archetype

Archetype	Years at Ashbrooke School	Total cost
1. Noah	15	£1,046,255
2. Maya	12	£877,829
3. Zein	5	£410,153
4. Olivia	12	£887,829

The total costs in Table 4 are at Net Present Value (NPV), with costs in future years discounted for future inflation.

²¹ Gov.uk <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium/pupil-premium>

For Archetypes 1, 2 and 3, these costs are equivalent to the total cost of their education provision, as well as costs of therapeutic intervention structured as part of the school day at Ashbrooke School. It does not include costs of transportation to and from school or costs of provision (including residential or foster care costs) outside of the school.

Calculating costs where the archetypes are not placed at Ashbrooke School

The counterfactual stories differ across the archetypes in terms of the type of educational provision.

Table 5: Cost of provision in counterfactual lifecourses of archetypes

Service or provision	Annual cost	No. of years required	NPV of Cost
Noah			
Alternative provision	£20,285	6	£111,873
Day-only special school	£45,945	5	£174,661
Pupil premium cost	£2,362	15	£28,154
Out-of-county residential setting (inc. pupil premium)	£207,810	2	£279,864
Total for Noah's counterfactual			£593,093
Maya			
Day only special school	£45,945	10	£395,478
Pupil premium	£2,362	10	£20,330
Total for Maya's counterfactual			£415,807
Zein			
Medium secure mental health setting	£213,746	3	£619,798
Pupil premium	£2,352	3	£6,848
Total for Zein's counterfactual			£626,647
Olivia			
Secure Training Centre	£213,746	10	£1,839,859
Pupil premium	£2,352	10	£20,330
Total for Olivia's counterfactual			£1,860,189

Net cost of provision

In Table 6, the difference in cost between the contrasting lifecourses of each of the archetypes' stories. As is shown the net difference column, for all aside from Zein, a placement at Ashbrooke School of a higher value than the counterfactual lifecourse.

Table 6: Difference in cost of provision for the archetypes – Ashbrooke School v. counterfactual

Archetype	Ashbrooke School	Counterfactual provision	Net difference
Noah	£1,046,255	£566,398	-£479,857
Maya	£877,829	£395,477	-£482,352
Zein	£410,153	£619,798	£209,945
Olivia	£887,829	£1,839,859	£952,030

Value of outcomes

To value the difference that the archetypes having their needs met makes, we use a cost-based and economic approach which values outcomes and events in each of the scenarios. These events and outcomes are often costs incurred or avoided by stakeholders and productivity gains through employment. These follows the stories of each archetype told in Section 4.

The outcomes and events in the modelling and their assumed values are set out in Table 7, and are arranged by cost theme.

Table 7: Unit value of outcomes assumed in modelling (separately inflation-adjusted and expressed in 2023 values)

Cost theme	Outcome	Unit value	Source
Education outcomes	Persistent truancy	£1,656 p.a.	2007, Misspent Youth, Education costs of truancy https://www.thinknpc.org/resource-hub/misspent-youth/
	Exclusion	£1,844 p.a.	2006, Manchester Unit Cost Database E&S2.0.4 https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk › media › unit-cost-database-v20
Economic outcomes	Baseline productivity	£22,853 p.a.	Someone employed at national minimum wage (£9.50 per hr) and work 40 hours a week, earns £19,760; apply 10% uplift to this to allow for productivity exceeding wages ONS GVA 2023
	Absenteeism	£123 per day	UK GVA per capita 2020, divided by number of working days in a year (248) ONS GVA 2023

Cost theme	Outcome	Unit value	Source
	NEET	£119,204 lifetime cost	Drawn from academic and government sources and includes JSA and productivity costs during the ages of 18-21 years
	Parental productivity	£32,007 p.a.	England GVA per capita 2021 ONS GVA 2023
Health outcomes – physical	GP visits (excl. direct care)	£32 per visit	PSSRU , 2022, Unit Costs of Health and Social Care 2022
	A&E visits	£359 per visit	Kings Fund , 2022
	Community physiotherapist	£99 per session	PSSRU , 2021, Unit Costs of Health and Social Care 2021
	Community Occupational Therapy	£98 per session	PSSRU , 2021, Unit Costs of Health and Social Care 2021
	Community speech therapist	£112 per session	PSSRU , 2021, Unit Costs of Health and Social Care 2021
Health outcomes – mental	MH treatment – adult	£2,386 per intervention	Estimate cost of a series of sessions to treat mental health concern. Based on NICE guidance for social anxiety disorder, 2015
	MH treatment – pupil/young person	£1,280 per intervention	Average cost per counselling intervention for children with mental or emotional difficulties PSSRU , 2022
	Secure mental health services	£722 per intervention	Cost of high dependency secure provision PSSRU , 2022
	CAMHS	£8,883 per intervention	Clifford, J. and Theobald, C., (2012), Summary of findings: Extension of the 2011 cost comparison methodology to a wider sample, National Association of Independent Schools
	Self-harm incidence	£971 per incident	Mean hospital cost per episode of self-harm Tsiachristas A, et al. (2017) General hospital costs in England of medical and psychiatric care for patients who self-harm: a retrospective analysis. <i>The Lancet Psychiatry</i> 4, 759–767. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5614771/
Social care outcomes	Temporary accommodation	£131 per week	New Economy Manchester Unit Cost Database , 2021
	Rough sleeping	£9,661 p.a.	Average annual LA expenditure per individual, New Economy Manchester Unit Cost Database , 2021

Cost theme	Outcome	Unit value	Source
	Supported Living	£1,802 per week	Mencap , <i>Funding supported housing for all</i> , 2017
	Residential care (adult)	£2,022 per week	Mencap , <i>Funding supported housing for all</i> , 2017
	Housing benefit	£143 per week	2022, Manchester Unit Cost Database v.2.3.1 HO9.4
	Foster care	£716 per week	2022, Manchester Unit Cost Database v.2.3.1 SS2.0
	Future child into residential care	£266,900	Total Local Authority expenditure (minus capital) weekly rate multiplied by service use by client of 52.18 weeks p.a. Jones, Karen C. and Burns, Amanda (2021) Unit Costs of Health and Social Care 2021. Unit Costs of Health and Social Care . PSSRU , 2022 Department for Education (2020) Section 251 documents, Department for Education [accessed 29 October 2021]. Markus, F., Cox, J., Morris, D. and Greenhalgh, R. (2015). New Economy Manchester Unit Cost Database , 2021
Criminal justice outcomes	Arrest – detained	£1,140 per incident	£342 police costs; £245 duty solicitor costs; £6 YOS input (Most arrests will not include YOS input) New Economy Manchester Unit Cost Database , 2021
	Arrest – no further action	£548 per incident	Police cost only New Economy Manchester Unit Cost Database , 2021
	Prison	£50,897 per place p.a.	Ministry of Justice , 2015
	Juvenile custody	£343 per night	Average unit cost of bed per night in young offender institution New Economy Manchester Unit Cost Database , 2021

Low, medium and high outcomes

For each of the archetypes, the model has three different outcome levels when needs are met: low, medium and high. These scenarios capture the possibility that learners will not always realise their full potential, despite being in a high-level provision. In our research we heard that learners may not always be able to achieve their full potential because of factors like:

- Other public services not providing the support learners need during their education, for example CAMHS
- Insufficient support from other public services for learners as they transition into adult life
- Lacking a supportive family or a family with chaotic circumstances that is in need of additional support (the effects of which can be seen from stories of young people seeking help from Ashbrooke School during school holidays); and

- Vulnerability to outside influences in adult life.

The weights on the outcomes for each archetype assumed in this modelling are set out in Table 8.

Table 8: Weights placed on low, medium and high outcome scenarios

Archetype	Outcome weights		
	Low	Medium	High
Noah	30%	40%	30%
Maya	30%	40%	30%
Zein	30%	40%	30%
Olivia	30%	40%	30%

Assumed outcomes when needs are and are not met

The model is informed by assumptions on how often certain outcomes occur in the archetypes’ lives when their needs are met (low, medium and high) and when their needs are not met. These are summarised in the following tables:

- Noah - Table 9
- Maya - Table 11
- Zein – Table 13
- Olivia - Table 15

These tables show how many times each outcome occurs in the lives of each archetype when their needs are met in low, medium and high scenarios) and when their needs are not met. It presents the two by broad time periods: when they are a child or young person after joining Ashbrooke School (and up to the age of 18 years), and in adulthood – from age 19 to 35 years. We model outcomes up to the age of 35 years for all of the archetypes, assuming tail off in the strength of outcomes over time due to their educational provision.²²

The numbers in these tables represent the number of times each outcome or event is assumed to happen to each archetype in their childhood or adulthood. Each table is then followed by a summary of the value of the outcomes set out in four modelled situations: when their need is not fully met and high, medium and low outcomes when needs are met.

²² We only extend the modelling to 35 years of age for costs of provision and benefits to ensure the modelling is appropriately cautious.





Table 10: Noah – summary of valued outcomes

	When needs are not fully met	When needs are met		
		Low	Medium	High
Education outcomes	-£609,978	-£1,077,150	-£1,047,649	-£1,046,255
Economic outcomes	-£100,297	£229,388	£234,317	£239,418
Health – physical	-£6,174	-£0	-£0	-£0
Health – mental	-£72,259	-£9,677	-£5,882	-£2,443
Social care	-£471,045	£0	£0	£0
Criminal justice system	£0	£0	£0	£0
Total	-£1,259,663	-£857,438	-£819,214	-£809,281

Table 12: Summary of valued outcomes for Maya

	When needs are not fully met	When needs are met		
		Low	Medium	High
Education outcomes	-£415,807	-£901,450	-£901,450	-£901,450
Economic outcomes	£74,007	£182,901	£201,643	£219,312
Health – physical	£0	£0	£0	£0
Health – mental	-£159,191	-£7,925	-£5,417	£0
Social care	-£419,586	£0	£0	£0
Criminal justice system	£0	£0	£0	£0
Total	-£920,578	-£726,468	-£705,225	-£682,139

Table 14: Summary of valued outcomes for Zein

	When needs are not fully met	When needs are met		
		Low	Medium	High
Education outcomes	-£631,624	-£421,190	-£421,190	-£421,190
Economic outcomes	-£33,207	£272,536	£272,536	£285,743
Health – physical	-£5,058	£0	£0	£0
Health – mental	-£93,859	£0	£0	£0
Social care	-£372,775	£0	£0	£0
Criminal justice system	-£174,107	£0	£0	£0
Total	-£1,310,630	-£148,654	-£148,654	-£135,447

Table 16: Summary of valued outcomes for Olivia

	When needs are not fully met	When needs are met		
		Low	Medium	High
Education outcomes	-£1,860,189	-£1,052,107	-£877,829	-£877,829
Economic outcomes	£0	£316,858	£254,327	£265,447
Health – physical	£0	£0	£0	£0
Health – mental	-£12,519	-£10,383	-£5,610	-£1,579
Social care	-£942,694	-£434,608	-£372,374	-£372,374
Criminal justice system	£0	£0	£0	£0
Total	-£2,815,402	-£1,180,240	-£1,001,486	-£986,335

Table 17 shows the results from the outcomes by each of Oscar and Alicia assuming low, medium and high outcomes for provision that meets the need of the archetypes, set against the provisions that do not meet their needs.

Table 17: Value of outcomes for Noah, Maya, Zein and Olivia archetypes - adjusted for alternative attribution and deadweight

Archetype	Net outcomes gain per archetype		
	Low	Medium	High
Noah	£662,218	£669,197	£676,028
Maya	£442,266	£459,261	£477,730
Zein	£686,147	£686,147	£696,712
Olivia	£661,664	£665,245	£677,365

Table 18 shows the results once weights are applied on low, medium and high outcomes to create one set of outcomes for when the learners are placed at Ashbrooke School (where needs are met). It shows the value gained to learners, their families and society from attending Ashbrooke School, leading to improved long-term outcomes.

Table 18: Value of outcomes for archetypes - weighted outcomes and adjusted for alternative attribution and deadweight

Archetype	Net outcomes gained per archetype (weighted average)
Noah	£669,153
Maya	£459,703
Zein	£689,316
Olivia	£667,807
Overall average outcomes gained	£621,495

The outcomes calculated in this model take reasonable account of the key areas of deduction required in impact evaluations – they are adjusted for deadweight and alternative attribution. For a summary of these adjustments see Table 19.

Table 19: Key model adjustments for outcomes

Adjustment	Description	Key assumptions/source
Deadweight	Best practice ²³ requires any evaluation of outcomes to be adjusted to exclude ‘deadweight’ – the extent to which those outcomes could have arisen without the intervention.	We have assumed a relatively low (5%) deadweight loss as their needs are relatively pronounced and, as such, if their support needs are not fully met then it is very unlikely that they are able to fulfil their potential.
Alternative attribution	This accounts for positive outcomes that are reasonably attributable to a partner or third party.	We have set a modest (15%) alternative attribution. Our focus in this report is on the effect of education only, excluding the impact achieved by other organisations and individuals involved in supporting young people at Ashbrooke School. We have noted that there are a range of circumstances from those that work collaboratively with the school (e.g. parents engaging to support and augment outcomes achieved), to those that pose a risk to the outcomes achieved by Ashbrooke School (e.g. the circumstances outlined in the Olivia archetype, or family circumstances where chaotic circumstances are not conducive to good education outcomes and where Ashbrooke School staff work hard to mitigate the impact of those circumstances). On balance, a deduction at this level appears to fall within a reasonable range that might be expected to apply.

²³ Clifford, J., Hochenberger, L. and Fantini, M. (2014). Proposed Approaches to Social Impact Measurement in European Commission legislation and in practice relating to: EuSEFs and the EaSI



It is also important to note that both future values of outcomes and costs in the model are discounted per HM Treasury guidelines for social cost/benefit analysis with brief details provided in Table 20. Impacts taking place from the second year of the modelling and into adult life are discounted appropriately reflecting the number of years into the future they take place.

Table 20: Key model adjustments to outcomes

Adjustment	Description	Key assumptions/source
Discounting cash flows	This analysis takes into account, where necessary, the premise that the value of money changes over time.	We adjust future cash flows by 3.5% per HM Treasury Green Book convention and methodology. ²⁴

Impacts not quantified

It is important to note that not all outcomes for Ashbrooke School learners are quantified in this modelling. Due to a lack of evidence or complexity of modelling the following outcomes, these are not accounted for in the values estimated above.

Costs and benefits of post-18 education

In some of the stories of learners we heard of Ashbrooke School learners going on to attend education or training post-18. Attending Ashbrooke School will have played a significant part in laying the foundations for reaching that destination upon leaving school. It is anticipated that attending education beyond the age of formal participation would have net benefits over the course of a person’s life. It appears to be prudent to assume that a learner at Ashbrooke School may complete post-16 qualifications such as NVQs that are relevant to their chosen career. It is prudent to exclude outcomes from subsequent education, which fall outside the remit of Ashbrooke School’s provision.

Limitations

Some assumptions in the model are subject to additional uncertainty

The model’s scope is broad, and we might not have costed all elements of a particular story in the life of an archetype. For example, if an archetype is involved in a crime and goes through a process within the criminal justice system, we might not have factored in all of the costs of this process due to the limited time to model every aspect of this journey. We are confident, however, that we will have captured the key outcomes that generate costs to stakeholders.

²⁴ HM Treasury (2022), The Green Book: Central Government Guidance on Appraisal and Evaluation



DELIVERING IMPACT MATTERS

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