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Paul Hamlyn Foundation

Evaluation of Learning Away: Executive Summary

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

1. *Learning Away* aimed to support schools across the UK in significantly enhancing young people's learning, achievement and wellbeing by using innovative residential experiences as an integral part of the curriculum. The initiative was funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF) from 2008 to 2015.
2. A total of 60 schools (primary, secondary and special), operating in 13 partnerships, were involved in delivering Learning Away. Schools participating in Learning Away developed new models of residential experiences that were teacher and student designed and led and included a wide range of activities and venues. Residential experiences included camping (on school sites, locally or further afield), co-constructed partnerships with outdoor providers, and school exchanges in urban and rural environments. Each partnership of schools had a distinct identity and focused on the challenges and themes relevant to their particular context, from GCSE attainment to community cohesion, from family support and raising aspirations, to cultural diversity.
3. Learning Away aimed to encourage schools – both those with strong existing residential programmes, and those that had not yet committed significantly to residential learning – to change their residential provision and highlight what could be achieved. Schools that received funding had to demonstrate that they were working towards a number of guiding principles for developing an integrated approach to high-quality residential learning, including integration with the curriculum, that they were inclusive, provided a range of experiences, were progressive programmes and involved staff and students in delivery (for further details see <http://learningaway.org.uk/impact/guiding-principles/>).

### Aims of the Evaluation

4. In 2012, PHF commissioned York Consulting to evaluate the effectiveness of Learning Away. The evaluation had two overarching aims:
  - to test and evidence four key Learning Away propositions focused on the belief that high quality residential learning: has a strong, positive impact on academic achievement and provides a wide range of student-level outcomes; can transform the learning experience of students; can help to transform schools; and does not need to be expensive;
  - to generate new insights and understanding about how and why residential learning can and does achieve these outcomes.
5. Within the four key propositions, PHF and Learning Away partnerships identified a set of hypotheses, which related to a number of key impact and process themes that the evaluation sought to test and evidence. The core hypotheses focused on:
  - **Relationships:** residentials can foster deeper student-teacher/adult and student-student relationships that can be sustained back in schools and result in improved learner engagement and progress/achievement;

- **Resilience, Self-confidence and Wellbeing:** residentials can significantly improve students' resilience, self-confidence, and sense of wellbeing;
- **Engagement with Learning:** residentials can significantly improve students' engagement with their learning, leading to improved school attendance and behaviour;
- **Achievement:** residentials can boost attainment in SATs and GCSE/National 4 and 5 qualifications (previously Standard Grades in Scotland) in the core subjects of English, maths and science;
- **Knowledge, Skills and Understanding:** residentials can significantly improve student knowledge, understanding and skills in a wide range of curriculum areas at the primary and secondary phase;
- **Cohesion:** residentials can significantly boost cohesion, interpersonal relationships and a sense of belonging across schools/communities;
- **Leadership, Co-design and Facilitation:** residentials can offer rich opportunities for student leadership, co-design and facilitation of learning that can be extended and sustained back in school to positive effect;
- **Transition:** residentials can significantly improve students' transition experiences;
- **Pedagogical Skills:** residentials can enable teachers in primary and secondary schools to widen and develop their pedagogical skills in ways that support learner engagement and progress/attainment.

## Methodological Approach

6. The evaluation took a mixed methods approach, which included:
  - **student, staff and parent surveys:**
    - students completed pre- and post-residential surveys, along with long-term follow-up surveys to capture their views on the impact of Learning Away;
    - staff involved in delivering Learning Away completed pre and post residential surveys along with a final staff survey to capture their views on the impact of the programme. Other staff were also asked to complete surveys for individual students where Learning Away was felt to have had a significant impact;
    - parents were asked to complete a survey after their child attended a Learning Away residential;
  - **focus groups:** undertaken by PHF Learning Away advisors with students and staff post-residential;
  - **quantitative data collection:** attainment, behaviour and attendance data was collected in partnerships where delivery of the programme was focused on improving outcomes in these areas.
7. This is the final report produced by York Consulting as part of the evaluation of Learning Away. It presents the findings from the surveys, focus groups and quantitative data analysis undertaken throughout the programme.

## Overview of Surveys and Focus Groups

8. The following surveys and focus groups were completed during the evaluation:
- **Student surveys:** 11,461 surveys were completed (5,821 pre-residential surveys, 4,652 post-residential surveys and 988 long-term follow-up surveys<sup>1</sup>) from 53 schools. The numbers of surveys completed by school phase were:
    - primary surveys (key stage 1 and key stage 2): 4,872 pre-residential; 3,842 post-residential; and 688 long-term follow-ups;
    - secondary surveys: 915 pre-residential; 787 post residential; and 300 long-term follow-ups.
  - **Parent surveys:** 718 parent surveys were completed. The vast majority (635) were from parents of primary-aged children.
  - **Staff surveys:**
    - 285 pre-residential and 254 post-residential surveys were completed by staff. A further 51 staff completed a final staff survey to gather views of the overall impact of the programme, both on individual members of staff and their schools;
    - student impact surveys: 32 were completed by staff, highlighting impact on individual students.
  - **Focus groups:**
    - **student focus groups:** 63 focus groups involving 398 students across 27 schools (19 primary, seven secondary and one special school);
    - **staff focus groups:** 40 focus groups involving 192 staff across 37 schools (26 primary, eight secondary and three special schools).

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<sup>1</sup> completed two to three terms after the residential

## KEY FINDINGS

### (A) Impact

#### Impact on Relationships

9. One of the most significant impacts of Learning Away was on relationships, both peer relationships and those between staff and students (at the secondary and primary level).
10. The main impacts on peer relationships (identified in focus groups) were: the opportunities residential provided for students to develop new peer relationships, including vertical relationships across age groups; the development of more trusting and respectful relationships between students, including a change in existing power relationships; and opportunities for students to develop social skills, as well as skills to form relationships.
11. The main impacts on staff-student relationships (identified in focus groups) were: the opportunity for staff and students to develop new relationships, as well as enhancing/changing existing relationships; providing a context where attitudes towards one another could be changed; providing better insights and understanding into each other's behaviour; and the development of more trusting and respectful relationships.
12. Survey responses also highlighted the impact of the residential on both peer and staff-student relationships. Responses to the final staff survey showed that the change in staff-student relationships was the most significant longer-term impact of Learning Away. Similarly, student survey responses showed that:
  - post residential, 70% of key stage 2 pupils felt they knew their teachers better and 71% felt they got on better with their peers as a result of their residential experiences. These views were enhanced in long-term follow-up responses: 79% of key stage 2 pupils felt they knew their teachers better, and 71% felt they got on better with their peers as a result of their residential experiences. Approximately two thirds of key stage 2 pupils (in both post and long-term follow-up surveys) felt that their teachers knew them better as a result of the residential;
  - post residential, more than 80% of secondary students felt that the residential had helped improve their relationships with their peers and teachers. Interestingly, 71% of secondary students felt that, as a result of the residential, their teachers had a better understanding of how they liked to learn best. Given that only 56% of students felt that this was the case prior to the residential this can be seen as an important finding.
  - although secondary students' responses to long-term follow-up surveys were slightly less positive than their post-residential responses, the drop was not as great as in other areas of impact, suggesting that changes in relationships seen during and immediately after the residential were generally sustained in the longer term;

- post residential, 84% of staff felt that the Learning Away residential had begun to achieve its aims in relation to improving relationships, and 60% stated that immediate outcomes had been achieved in terms of providing opportunities to: enable participants to get to know each other in new and different settings (62%); develop new friendships (61%); and learn in different groups (42%).
13. Learning Away also evidenced the value of family residentials in improving home-school relationships, impacting on relationships within families, and improving staff-student relationships with children within those families

### **Impact on Resilience, Self-confidence and Wellbeing**

14. When focus group participants were asked to identify what difference the residential had made to students, they were most likely to identify an increase in confidence: within students themselves, in their learning, and in their relationships with others. Positive impacts on confidence were directly linked to consequent positive outcomes, such as improved relationships, better engagement with learning and the development of leadership skills.
15. Survey responses reinforced the views expressed in focus groups:
- post residential, the majority of key stage 2 and secondary students were proud of what they achieved on the trip (82% and 89% respectively), and these views were maintained in the long-term follow-up surveys (84% and 82%). More than three quarters (78%) of key stage 2 pupils and 87% of secondary students stated that they felt more confident to try new things as a result of their residential experience. Responses to long-term follow-up surveys showed that 79% of key stage 2 pupils and 80% of secondary students had tried new things that they would not have done before the residential;
  - post residential, 75% of staff said that the residential had already begun to achieve its aims in relation to improving students' resilience, confidence and wellbeing by providing activities and experiences, which challenged students and gave them new experiences, as well as the opportunity to develop new relationships within a supportive group environment. Importantly, they also felt that the residentials gave students opportunities to be more independent and helped develop their resilience;
  - just under three quarters (74%) of parents said their children were more willing to try new things and more than two thirds (67%) said their children were more confident as a result of their residential experiences.

### **Impact on Engagement with Learning**

16. Positive impacts on students' engagement with learning were also identified, particularly for secondary students. Both staff and students identified impacts on students' behaviour and attendance and staff noted that the residential experience had helped re-engage those students in danger of exclusion. Residentials were felt to be particularly effective for students who had difficulty concentrating and engaging in the classroom context, as it gave them a positive experience of themselves. The more relaxed learning environment, the availability of one-to-one support and small group work, practical and experiential learning opportunities, as well as the chance to experience success, were all felt to contribute to improved learner engagement.
17. The majority of impacts identified were in relation to improved behaviour. However, a small number of secondary students also identified improvements in their attendance

and time keeping as a result of their residential experiences, and nearly a quarter (23%) of parents stated that their child's attendance at school was better as a result of their residential experiences. Quantitative evidence provided by one of the partnerships demonstrated the impact on the attendance of students who were at risk of disengagement. Following participation in family residentials, the attendance of more than three quarters of students improved and for approximately two thirds of students these improvements were maintained in the longer term.

## Impact on Achievement

18. Staff and students felt the residentials had impacted on their levels of attainment and in surveys and focus groups provided evidence of students' progress in learning, for example: moving from BTEC to GCSE courses; improving the confidence of lower attaining students resulting in improved attainment back in school; students having a better awareness of their strengths and weaknesses; and knowing what they needed to do to improve their attainment.
19. Quantitative data provided by partnerships also highlighted the impact on student achievement. Data was provided which showed that secondary students who attended Learning Away residentials improved their performance and achieved higher than their predicted grades (in GCSEs and Highers). Students from one partnership who attended a GCSE maths residential out-performed their peers who did not attend the residential (both groups were C/D borderline students). More than a third of students who attended the residential improved their maths score post residential compared to 14% of their peers and more than two thirds (69%) achieved a C grade in their GCSE compared to none of their peers. Both of these results were statistically significant indicating a conclusive positive impact on achievement.
20. Similarly, 61% of students who attended a Higher Drama residential achieved higher than their predicted grade, compared to 21% of students who did not attend the residential. Staff and students linked this impact to the increased focus on specific drama work and activities; the ability to have focused one-to-one teaching; the opportunity to allow peer assessment and for students to receive feedback from classmates who were sitting the same exam. In addition, there was another factor, which none of the staff or students anticipated, and that was the development of a group ethos and a drive towards students doing the best they possibly could.
21. Pre- and post-residential assessments also showed positive impacts on students' achievement, suggesting a residential effect when students were tested at or immediately after the event. Impacts were identified in a range of subjects, notably science, maths and English. However, in one partnership impacts on achievement seen immediately after the residential were not reflected in improvements in students' predicted or actual GCSE grades in the longer term.
22. There was also evidence from the primary partnerships that Learning Away residentials were impacting on pupils' progress and achievement. Staff and pupils from two primary partnerships stated that they had seen an improvement in literacy scores pre and post residential and both attributed this to their residential experiences. Staff noted an impact on low and average achievers and boys' literacy scores in particular. Furthermore, primary staff commented that pupils' attitudes to learning and reading and writing had also improved as a result of their residential experiences, resulting in improved progress.
23. Survey responses showed that:



- more than half (58%) of key stage 2 pupils thought they would do better in their school work as a result of the residential and just under half (48%) felt they would do better in their tests or SATs. The views of secondary students continued to be positive in the post residential context with two thirds or more thinking that as a result of the residential they: would make better progress in their subject (72%); had a better understanding of the subject (72%); were better at problem solving (66%); and would do better in their exams/tests (66%). Secondary students were most positive about how they were taught on the residential, with more than three quarters (76%) saying that the way they were taught would help them do better in the subject;
- positive responses of key stage 2 pupils seen post residential were maintained in the long-term follow-up surveys. Long-term follow-up responses from secondary students were less positive. Nevertheless, approximately one half of secondary students still felt that the residential had had a positive impact on them two to three terms after the residential;
- post residential, more than half (57%) of staff respondents felt that Learning Away residential were beginning to achieve their aims in relation to improving student attainment and/or progress in specific subject areas.

### **Impact on Knowledge, Skills and Understanding**

24. Impacts on students' knowledge and skills were also identified by participants including that students were:
- becoming more independent learners, as well as learning how to work as a team (both primary and secondary students);
  - developing a deeper and better understanding of the subject, for example, using different approaches to problem solving in maths and developing specific skills in music (secondary students);
  - developing study and research skills (both primary and secondary students);
  - improving creativity: residential provided inspiration and helped to enrich students' work in a range of subject areas (both primary and secondary students);
  - developing vocabulary and speaking and listening skills (particularly for primary pupils).
25. Post residential, nearly three quarters of staff survey respondents felt that the residential had begun to achieve their aims in relation to improving students' knowledge, understanding and skills. Students' survey responses also showed the impact on team working and problem solving: three quarters of key stage 2 pupils in post-residential and in long-term follow-up surveys stated that they were better at working in groups in school because of the residential. Pre residential, 43% of key stage 2 pupils said even if they did not know the answer when they were given a task, they could work it out. Post-residential 63% felt that they were better at problem solving as a result of their residential experiences; in long-term follow-up surveys this figure was 60%.
26. Secondary students were also positive about the residential facilitating the development of their subject knowledge and understanding. Post residential, more than two thirds (68%) of students felt that they knew more about the subject; they were better at problem solving (69%); and they felt the subject was more interesting and important to them (69%). Long-term follow-up responses from secondary

students were less positive than key stage 2 respondents. Nevertheless, more than half of secondary students still felt the residential had impacted on their knowledge of the subject; the way they were taught on the residential helped them learn, they had a better understanding of what they were trying to learn and had learnt new skills.

### **Impact on Cohesion**

27. The sense of community developed on the residential and the memorability of the experiences helped to boost cohesion, interpersonal relationships and a sense of belonging amongst participants.
28. Post residential, 70% of staff survey respondents stated that the residential had begun to achieve its aims in relation to improving cohesion and interpersonal relationships by, most commonly, providing opportunities for students to: engage in new activities in new environments; work with other students outside of their normal peer groups; and shine at new activities thereby enhancing their standing with their peers. Both staff and students talked of improved relationships between students (both from their own schools and other schools), as well as students' increased confidence to develop new relationships, both with staff and other students. Staff also identified that students who did not normally work as part of a team did so on the residential, and continued to do so back at school.
29. Students' survey responses showed that as a result of the residential, key stage 2 pupils were more likely to think that everyone in their school got on well together, and that the residential helped them realise that they could get on with people from other schools.

### **Impact on Leadership, Co-design and Facilitation**

30. The most significant evidence of this impact was on secondary students involved in student leadership programmes. Student leaders were responsible for planning and delivering residential activities, either for their peers or for younger students.
31. A range of impacts were identified (in focus groups and staff surveys) for both student leaders and for those they were leading, including: increased confidence, particularly being given responsibility to lead activities; providing a role model for other students; improved organisational and presentation skills; improved independence and maturity; and an enhanced learning experience as a result of student involvement in designing and planning the residential.
32. Students were most likely to identify an increase in their confidence as a result of being involved in leadership activities. Experiencing success in leadership activities motivated students to take on additional responsibilities and made them want to continue with their leadership role. This created a 'virtuous circle' of behaviour that led to improved student motivation and engagement. Residential that were part of a progressive programme of activity enhanced the development of students' leadership skills, enabling them to build on them year on year.
33. Survey responses showed that students' views changed as a result of their residential experiences:

- prior to attending the residential, only 40% of secondary students felt they could be a role model to others. Post residential more than two thirds (67%) of secondary students felt that the residential had made them realise they could be a role model to others. This view was maintained in students' responses to long-term follow-up surveys, which suggests a positive impact on the views of those students who had lower awareness prior to going on the residential;
- on return from the residential, approximately three quarters (75%) of secondary students said they had the opportunity to be involved in leading the activities that they thought they would, and enjoyed the opportunity to lead activities whilst on the residential (79%). Long-term follow-up survey responses showed that 53% of students had been able to lead activities back in school, but only 42% had got more involved in helping to decide what they learnt or how they learnt in school.

### Impact on Transition

34. Residential were also used to facilitate students' transition experiences (mainly between primary and secondary school, but also across year groups and key stages). The main impact identified in focus groups was that, as a result of their residential experience, primary pupils were better prepared for secondary school and had developed the skills and relationships they needed to manage within the secondary school environment. Both secondary and primary staff stated that the residential was "worth half a term" in terms of the progress students had made. The opportunities for social interaction on the residential was seen as one of the biggest benefits for students, in terms of facilitating integration and providing opportunities for students to mix with other students, which many were not used to doing. Post-residential staff survey responses showed that more than half (59%) of respondents felt that the residential had supported staff to facilitate students' transition experiences.
35. Students' survey responses also showed that residential helped support them to develop the skills to make positive transitions. Prior to attending the residential, key stage 2 pupils were most positive about trying new things, but were less certain about changing class or whether they found it easy to make new friends. Post residential, just over two thirds (67%) of key stage 2 pupils felt that, because of the residential, they found it easier to make new friends and just over half (53%) were excited about changing class or school, and these views were maintained in long-term follow-up surveys.
36. Prior to the residential, secondary students' survey responses showed that they were least positive about changing class or school in the following year, and were most positive about trying new things. After the residential, the majority of secondary students liked trying new things (89%); were happier working with people who were not their close friends (85%); felt they were better at coping with new situations (85%); and found it easier to make new friends (85%). Furthermore, nearly two thirds (64%) of students were happier about changing class or school after the residential (reducing to 62% in the long-term follow-up surveys), which was the thing they had been least positive about before going on the residential.

## Impact on Pedagogical Skills

37. Staff (in both surveys and focus groups) identified that residential experiences provided opportunities for them to widen and develop their pedagogical skills. The main areas of impact identified were:
- providing opportunities to develop new ways of teaching and learning that were transferred back to the classroom context, including learning outside the classroom, group learning, problem based learning, discovery learning, student-led enquiry and creative learning;
  - impact on curriculum delivery and providing a more integrated curriculum;
  - staff developing relationships with colleagues from their own and other schools, as well as with other professionals involved in the delivery of residential learning;
  - impact on individual members of staff and professional development opportunities;
  - staff developing a better awareness of, and insight into, students' and families' needs.
38. Staff surveys completed after the residential showed that professionally and as a team of staff Learning Away was achieving its goals (72% and 69% respectively), and staff expected it to impact on their own practice and that of their colleagues (62% and 61% respectively).

## (B) How Residentials Contribute to Impact: Developing a Learning Away Community

39. Residentials provide the opportunity and experience of living with others, which leads to the development of a strong sense of community and belonging. Key aspects of the residential experience that made a difference to participants and achieved positive outcomes were:
- **The time, space and intensity of the residential experience:** this was key to developing relationships and learning opportunities. Participants were away from home for an extended period of time, away from their usual routines and distractions, which provides opportunities for them to be immersed in learning and to develop relationships. Unstructured time provided opportunities for discussion and self-reflection and more informal learning. The value of informal time and overnight stays on the quality of the experience and the change in relationships was clearly evidenced.
  - **Residentials were a leveller:** residentials provided a new space and context where participants were equal and existing barriers and hierarchies could be broken down. The residential context allowed students to see different qualities in each other, which impacted on their interpersonal relationships, both on the residential and back in school.
  - **Relationships developed through sense of community/living together:** residentials allowed participants to create a new positive community away from their normal distractions and gave them time and space to address their goals (both personal and learning related) within a supportive environment. Residentials helped to develop a sense of responsibility and maturity: participants were responsible for themselves and others, helping to promote self-reliance and team work.
  - **Challenging activities and opportunities to experience success:** residentials provided a range of practical and physical challenges impacting on confidence, self-belief and attitude to learning, both on the residential and back in the classroom. Success in activities was linked to success in the subject, and these memories were interlinked when students returned to school.
  - **New ways of learning/ownership of, and engagement with learning:** residential learning provided a context and model for students and teachers to explore new ways of teaching and learning, and provides experiential and context-based learning. Both of these were factors that helped to develop students' understanding and knowledge, facilitating their engagement with, and progress in, learning. Residentials provided important opportunities for students to revisit and build on their learning experiences from one day to the next.

## (C) Quality Principles: Elements of a 'Brilliant Residential'

40. As part of the evaluation of Learning Away, York Consulting was asked to test the concept of the 'brilliant residential'<sup>2</sup> and identify the key elements that make for high quality residential. The following provides a summary overview of what the evaluation suggests makes a brilliant residential, in terms of improving outcomes for students and developing learning opportunities within schools:

- **providing progressive residential:** which give students opportunities to engage in residential experiences on an ongoing basis throughout their school career (i.e. 5-18). Progressive residential provide a sequence of coordinated residential learning experiences for students that help to develop and embed learning and skills year on year. Providing progressive residential gives students a clear picture of how they can progress in developing their skills and knowledge. The progressive element is important for sustaining and enhancing growth in confidence year on year;
- **providing residential that are embedded within existing programmes of delivery,** i.e. are integrated with the curriculum and closely linked to classroom activities. Staff noted that the standard of students' work was enhanced after their residential experience, because they were able to draw on what they had learnt on the residential;
- **providing residential that are designed and led by school staff:** staff involvement in the design and delivery of residential experiences means that activities can be specifically developed to meet the needs and learning objectives of students within their own schools. This approach also helps to embed, reinforce and progress learning from the residential back in school and facilitates the integration of the residential experience fully within the school curriculum. Residential also provide valuable staff development opportunities and give staff opportunities to share practice and learn from others;
- **providing residential that are designed and led by students:** involving students in designing, planning and leading residential experiences allows students' to have ownership and control of their learning, which helps enrich the residential experience, leads to improved engagement and confidence and attitude in working with others. Students involved in running residential can also be important role models for other students;
- **providing new and memorable experiences:** the Learning Away residential have shown that new does not need to be exotic or expensive, and that memorable experiences are not always planned and are often linked to overcoming adversity. Learning Away demonstrated the value of lower-cost residential, which were financially sustainable in the longer term.

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<sup>2</sup> Learning Away has developed the concept of 'brilliant residential' which are led by teachers, co-designed with students and fully integrated into the curriculum. Brilliant residential can impact on students of all ages and can help to deliver whole school change (for further details see <http://learningaway.org.uk/residential/#>).

## CONCLUSIONS

41. Learning Away has shown that a residential learning experience provides opportunities, benefits and impacts that cannot be achieved in any other educational context or setting. Throughout the evaluation process, impacts on relationships (both student-student and staff-student) and on students' confidence were strongly and consistently demonstrated. The strength of relationships developed was significant and often unexpected. There was also strong evidence that impacts in these areas led to positive outcomes in terms of students' engagement with, and progress in, their learning, as well as their self-belief and expectation that they would make progress and succeed.
42. The evaluation provided some promising (albeit small scale) quantitative evidence of impact on achievement. Data was provided which showed that secondary students who attended Learning Away residential improved their performance and achieved higher than their predicted grades (in GCSEs and Highers). Pre- and post-residential assessments also showed positive impacts on students' achievement, suggesting a residential effect when students were tested at or immediately after the event. However, in one partnership impacts on achievement seen immediately after the residential were not reflected in improvements in students' predicted or actual GCSE grades in the longer term. This suggests that there is a need to gather further data to provide more robust evidence of the impact of residential on achievement in the longer term.
43. There was also evidence from primary partnerships that Learning Away residential impacted on pupils' progress and achievement, in terms of improvement in pupils' literacy scores pre and post residential. Staff noted an impact on low and average achievers and boys' literacy scores in particular.
44. The longitudinal nature of this evaluation meant that we were able to evidence the longer-term impacts on both staff and students of involvement in this five-year programme. We were able to show the cumulative impact, for example, on staff confidence, skills and expertise in running residential programmes and on the delivery of the curriculum back in school. We were also able to show how residential experiences impacted on students as they progressed through their school career and how the progressive nature of many of the residential facilitated the development of students' leadership skills, helped maintain their engagement with learning and led to positive transitions.
45. Learning Away highlighted how the bonds created on residential, between students, between staff and students and between staff were maintained back in school. The evidence shows the benefits of students going away with staff who teach them, in terms of maintaining these improved relationships back in school, as well as providing opportunities to build on and reinforce learning. We have seen how residential provided opportunities for participants to see others in a different light, and how these changed views were maintained back in school. We have also seen students' empathy and respect for one another increase through being involved in the Learning Away community, and how staff and students developed a common language of experience, which helped them stay connected long after the residential experience. Furthermore, Learning Away showed how residential could break down the barriers between different groups within classes, in schools and between schools, reflected, for example, in a reduction in bullying and teasing.

46. Learning Away also provided significant staff (teaching and non-teaching) development opportunities, providing opportunities for staff to grow and develop their expertise, which resulted in them becoming more ambitious in their teaching. Learning Away residentials became sustainable, because schools encouraged and facilitated training for their staff to lead residentials. Having become aware of the difference residentials can make to student outcomes, schools developed their own funding strategies to continue their involvement.
47. We have seen the impact of residential experiences on individual students and their teachers: the impact of Learning Away was much wider than the residential experiences themselves. Where Learning Away was successful, it went beyond the residential and impacted on teaching and learning back in school and on schools' approaches to delivering learning, for example, developing a more thematic approach to delivering the curriculum and being more willing to take risks back in school.
48. As a result of Learning Away, residential learning (particularly at the primary level) became embedded within the curriculum, but also shaped how the curriculum was delivered. The importance of staff being able to integrate and embed residential learning back in school should be emphasised. However, at the secondary level in particular, staff noted the challenges they faced in doing this.
49. Schools also went beyond residential learning to developing more opportunities for student co-construction and leadership opportunities back in school. Learning Away resulted in the development of opportunities for Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) and group based and peer-led learning back in school, because staff saw the impact on students' engagement with their learning.
50. Schools involved in Learning Away delivered a wide range of residentials with a broad spectrum of aims and ambitions focused on a range of outcomes (e.g. behaviour, relationships and attainment) taking place in a variety of settings, but what was common to them all was that the residentials provided the opportunity to develop a strong sense of community and belonging away from the normal distractions of daily life. The evaluation identified how the residential experience facilitated achievement of these positive outcomes.
51. We were also able to evidence the key aspects of Learning Away residentials that made a 'brilliant' residential and led to improved outcomes. It was clear that when residential learning was integrated within the curriculum it had the potential to provide much greater impact and many more learning opportunities:
  - residentials were most successful when they formed an integral part of long-term curriculum planning and were closely linked to classroom activities. Brilliant residentials were not seen as 'one-off' special events but an integral part of the school, fully integrated within the curriculum and life of the school for all students;
  - residentials are more likely to have a long-term impact on students, (especially in secondary schools) and on attainment in particular, when they are followed up on students' return to school.
52. The findings in this report highlighted the value of providing progressive residentials, which help to develop and embed student learning, skills acquisition and confidence year on year. The evaluation showed that staff and student ownership of the residential experience (in terms of design and delivery) was a crucial factor in making a difference. Involving students in designing, planning and leading residential



experiences had a positive impact, both on the students involved and the learning of their peers.

53. Staff involvement in design and delivery meant that residential were designed to meet the specific needs and learning objectives of students within their own school. This learning can then be reinforced and built on back in school, which also facilitated the integration of the residential experience within the school curriculum. Brilliant residential also provided the opportunity for staff to develop their practice, share good practice and learn from colleagues, both within their own and other schools.
54. The commitment of senior management to residential learning was key to successfully embedding residential within schools. Once headteachers were on board, opportunities for successfully embedding the programme were much more likely.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

55. The following recommendations are provided for schools, providers, policy and research:

### Schools

56. Learning Away has shown that a residential learning experience provides opportunities and benefits/impacts that cannot be achieved in any other educational context or setting. The impact is greater when residential are fully integrated with a school's curriculum and ethos. Schools should try to provide a wide range of residential experiences integrated with other class-based and learning outside the classroom activities (through themes/projects/ subjects).
57. Learning Away has demonstrated that residential have greater impact when teachers are clear about their learning objectives, these are shared with providers, and evaluation processes are in place to find out whether they have been achieved. Residential work best when schools plan their programmes using a planning system that means that residential are needs-led.
58. Learning Away has identified the value of action research as a model for planning, developing, improving, understanding and evaluating the impact of residential programmes.
59. Learning Away has shown residential are also more effective when there is active teacher and student involvement in their planning, delivery and evaluation. The more buy-in from participants at the planning stage, the greater the learning on the residential.
60. If using a residential provider, schools should work closely with them during the planning process to get the right mix of activities, whether these are school- or centre-staff led, or student-led. Schools should feel confident to ask providers for planning and delivery flexibility.
61. Schools should plan for evaluation as an essential part of the residential planning process, and evaluate rigorously using both quantitative and qualitative data. Schools should be encouraged to develop action research and theory of change approaches to

evaluation in order to understand, develop and confirm the value of their practices. It is good CPD, good reflective practice and good for Ofsted/governors/parents.

62. Residential can provide significant opportunities for teachers to trial, develop and practise different teaching styles, approaches and pedagogies and to recognise their effectiveness. Many Learning Away schools are also recognising that these successful approaches can be replicated back in school, for example experiential learning, co-construction and project-based learning.
63. Schools could develop a climate that encourages healthy risk-taking in terms of pedagogy, to both support staff willing to run residential and to support changes to pedagogy when staff return from residential.
64. Residential have greater longer-term benefits when the learning is embedded and reinforced on the return to school, especially in terms of achievement, attainment and engagement. Schools should, therefore, ensure that this is part of the residential planning process.
65. Schools should recognise and plan for the value of the informal/social/non-teaching time during residential. The transformational impact of the relationships developed during this time is crucial to the outcomes of a residential experience (for young people and teachers).
66. Learning Away has shown that residential are an excellent way of supporting students through transition points and using them to prepare young people for change is an excellent use of time and effort.
67. Learning Away showed that the support of headteachers and SMT was critical to running an effective and sustainable residential programme, and should be seen as a critical factor in successfully embedding residential learning. Schools should try to develop a staffing structure to support staff taking on responsibility for residential. This role should promote and support teaching and learning, as well as logistics and health and safety management.
68. Learning Away provided invaluable staff development opportunities: there is a need for schools to continue to take advantage of the CPD opportunities presented by residential learning, as well as providing opportunities for staff to come together to share their learning. Schools should try to provide relevant CPD for staff running residential to support curriculum integration, learning outside the classroom approaches to learning and specific skills to run lower-cost residential e.g. camping.
69. Learning Away showed the value of schools working in partnerships to plan and deliver residential programmes, provide mutual support and training, come up with creative solutions, share equipment and resources, and combine purchasing power.
70. Schools should look within the wider school community for the expertise they might need on a residential and, when appropriate, for volunteer adults (or older student leaders) to relieve the pressure on staff cover.
71. Learning Away schools have demonstrated that residential do not need to be expensive and that lower-cost models can provide as good, or often better, outcomes. Schools should therefore investigate lower-cost residential e.g. camping, shorter times away, more activities run by staff (or all three).

72. Learning Away schools have shown that Pupil Premium funding can be used successfully to part fund the cost residentials and have been able to demonstrate their impact on raising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and helping to 'narrow the gap' between them and their peers.
73. There was evidence in some local authorities and partnerships that residential learning was becoming embedded and more schools were joining the programme at the end of the Learning Away programme. There is a need to publicise these successes and show others how residential programmes have been embedded across schools and local authorities. Schools should make greater use of their local networks to spread good practice.

## **Providers**

74. There is a need to publicise the benefits of residential programmes to a wider audience: providing customised promotional packs to schools to demonstrate the benefits and the ease of getting started would facilitate this. Providers should direct schools to the Learning Away findings and website.
75. In addition, providing a schools' funding guide outlining the low cost sustainable models of residential delivery developed as part of Learning Away would help the engagement of more schools. In this way, providers could publicise the funding opportunities available to schools so that cost does not appear to be prohibitive and/or prevent residential experiences from being available to all young people. In particular providers should highlight the possible use of Pupil Premium and help schools evaluate its use for this purpose.
76. Providers could do more to promote and support the development of curriculum integrated, inclusive and progressive residential programmes. Providers could encourage schools to recognise that residentials should be seen as an entitlement for all young people and not an enrichment activity.
77. Learning Away has shown the value of partnership approaches, using staff from both schools and residential providers to plan and deliver programmes that are tailored to the needs of individual students and their schools. Residentials are more effective when there is active teacher and student involvement in their planning, delivery and evaluation. Promoting further opportunities for partnership working should be encouraged, as well as publicising examples of successful collaborative approaches. There is a need to make both providers and schools more aware of what can be offered via residential learning experiences and LOTC more widely.
78. Providers could do more to highlight the wide range of opportunities provided by residential programmes, including impact on achievement (e.g. GCSE attainment, literacy, maths), student leadership, key stage 2 to 3 transition, training, key stage 1 residentials, family residentials and vertical age subject groups.
79. Providers could do more to encourage and support lower-cost models such as provide camping opportunities (sites, equipment and support), shorter residential stays (e.g. two day/one night), more teacher and student-led activities and less centre staff input.
80. Learning Away has highlighted the value of informal/social/non-teaching time during residentials. Providers could do more to publicise the uniqueness of this element of the

residential experience and help schools make better use of this aspect of their programme.

81. Providers need to do more to evaluate the impact of their residential programmes and activities, to involve schools in the evaluation process and to share their data/evidence with schools.
82. There is more potential for providers to work collaboratively with schools in action learning clusters to help them develop residential programmes. This could enable providers to increase their usage or be an enhanced role in promoting the wider use of residential when centres are already at capacity.

## **Policy**

83. Learning Away has shown that residential learning opportunities can impact on how the curriculum is delivered back in school and help shape the delivery of a more meaningful curriculum. Going forward these impacts need to continue to be promoted.
84. Learning Away has shown that residential programmes can help to develop a learning community for a wide range of educational outcomes and that they can make a significant contribution to achieving such communities across a whole school when the Learning Away principles of inclusion, progression and integration are followed.
85. There are clear links between Learning Away and the Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland and changes to the primary curriculum in England. These links provide a strong case for using residential programmes to help deliver the curriculum more effectively and reinforce students' learning.
86. Learning Away has highlighted the power of family residential: linking these to the family support agenda and promoting the benefits of residential to family support programmes more widely would be beneficial.
87. The impact of residential experiences on students' resilience, confidence and wellbeing, clearly fits well with the current focus on supporting schools to develop 'character' and resilience in students in order to prepare them better for adult life. The clear links to character education should be highlighted.

## **Research**

88. This evaluation has provided a wide range of quantitative and qualitative data. However, the quantitative attainment data that schools were able to provide was more limited. A key priority for future research is a purpose designed action research attainment tracking project with comparator groups. This work needs to be undertaken in partnership with schools.
89. It would be valuable for future research to explore further: the longer-term impacts of residential experiences; effective strategies for reinforcing and embedding learning; the impact on students' health and emotional wellbeing; and the benefits of residential experiences in the non-formal youth sector.