

Office for  
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# Access and participation plans

Theory of change and setting  
an outcomes-focused raising  
attainment target

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# **A theory of change for strategic relationships with schools and raising attainment**

## **What is a theory of change?**

A theory of change model is a strategic planning tool which can be used across the planning, delivery and evaluation of activity to ensure that long-term goals are defined and understood.

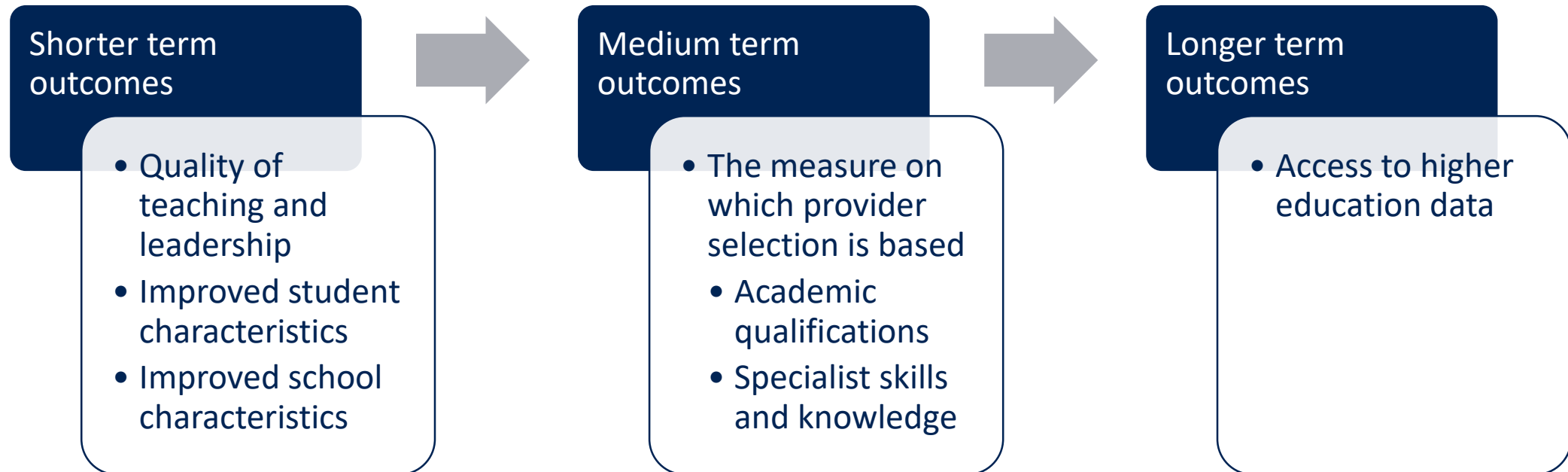
## **Why should we create one?**

All activity should be underpinned by evidence to create a positive impact and to ensure effective use of resources.

Using a theory of change model can provide a clear rationale for how short-term activities are connected to longer term improvements in access and participation, and the evidence practice which underpins them. By identifying the different intermediate outcomes that an intervention may produce, the activity can be designed to meet these outcomes.

# Developing a raising attainment target

- Include a written, evidence based theory of change or logic chain in the plan
- Any of the intermediate outcomes, or the longer term outcomes may form your target



**Example sources of evidence**  
Education Endowment Foundation  
Department for Education reports  
Academic evidence

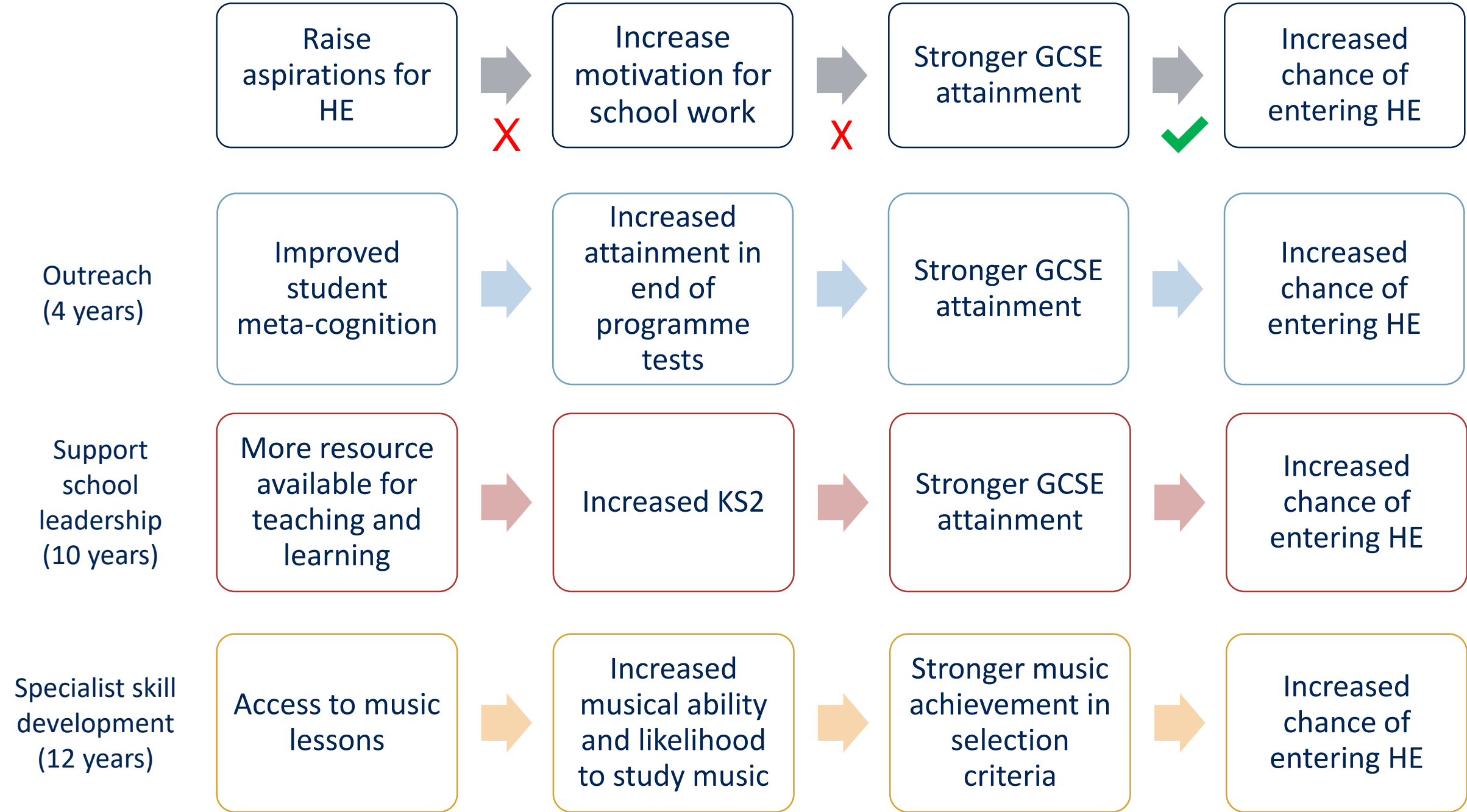
**Example sources of evidence**  
For GCSEs: BIS, Socioeconomic,  
ethnic and gender differences in HE  
participation (2015)

# Developing a raising attainment target (2)

The long-term outcome of activity to raise attainment in access and participation plans is to reduce gaps in access, success and progression for underrepresented groups.

Based on their context, providers should determine which intermediate outcomes they will focus on when setting targets and set a level of ambition that will meaningfully contribute to this long-term outcome.

The following slide shows a range of illustrative outcomes that might form the basis for a raising attainment target.



Please note these are diagrams for illustrative purposes only. Providers should research their own theory of change in their context when developing targets.