

# The Learning Trust

— A Model for School Improvement —

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This Paper provides a detailed account of the ten-year programme of school improvement in the London Borough of Hackney between 2002-2012. As a result of the then Labour government's intervention in Hackney, which followed a series of highly critical Ofsted reports, as well as long-term political and financial weaknesses in the Borough, The Learning Trust was established to manage education and improve standards of teaching and learning in the borough's schools for a decade, from 1 August 2002. During this time significant improvements were made in pupil attainment, and the quality of teaching. At the same time, Hackney secondary and primary schools received substantial investment for rebuilding and renovation, dramatically transforming the environment in which children and pupils learn. The example of The Learning Trust provides valuable lessons in how the quality of teaching and learning, pupil attainment and school standards can be improved and sustained.

Keywords: education; schools; The Learning Trust; London Borough of Hackney; England

## Introduction

From 1 August 2002 until 31 July 2012 the education services in the London Borough of Hackney were managed by The Learning Trust (TLT), a not-for-profit company, limited by guarantee and independent of Hackney Council. Before the creation of The Learning Trust there had been concerted efforts by both Conservative (from 1979-1997) and Labour (from 1997 onwards) governments to introduce private companies into the management of public services, including education. In these instances, a private company would take over particular aspects of a Local Education Authority's education responsibilities – more often than not those relating to school improvement. In Hackney, for example, the private company Nord Anglia was appointed to run school improvement services. The Learning Trust represented an altogether more ambitious scale of intervention, taking over the full range of Hackney LEA's education services. Whereas previous interventions had been through private, profit-making companies, the Trust was established as a not-for-profit company – a new model for delivering public services. The Trust would be independent of political influence and would be

able to reinvest any surpluses in education services.

This paper assesses the circumstances that contributed to the establishment of The Learning Trust, the political and financial crises that overtook Hackney in the mid-1990s and the systematic under-performance of schools in the borough, identified in a sequence of Ofsted inspection reports and resulting in headteachers making 'an unprecedented request' to be removed from the control of the LEA<sup>1</sup>. Having set out the local context, which persuaded the government to intervene, there follows an analysis of The Learning Trust model, outlining the ground-breaking aspects of this approach to public service improvement, and the strategic decisions taken that began the long-term programme of raising standards and improving attainment. How improvements were made to education in Hackney, what was implemented, and how, to ensure the borough went from being in the bottom ten LEAs in England to being one of the most improved in the country is then assessed. Finally, this paper reflects on the key successes and difficulties The Learning Trust experienced, drawing a number of conclusions that might be applied to other education systems as they seek to improve and develop to meet new challenges.

### The path to intervention

The Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) was established in 1965, when the Greater London Council (GLC) replaced the London County Council (LCC) as the principal administrative body for London's local government. The ILEA covered the same area as the County of London – twelve boroughs and the City of London Corporation.<sup>2</sup> It not only occupied the LCC's territory, it also inherited the LCC's educational responsibilities: nursery, primary, secondary and special schooling, technical, arts and training colleges and the awarding of grants and scholarships. While the Outer London boroughs each became a Local Education Authority in their own right, ILEA was the single education authority for all of the inner London boroughs. By the 1970s, particularly under the leadership of Ashley Bramall, ILEA had become a powerful bureaucracy. The Thatcher Government's abolition of the GLC in 1986 presaged the abolition of ILEA and this was carried out, via a backbench amendment, to the 1988 Education Reform Act. ILEA was disbanded in 1990 and the inner London boroughs became LEAs in their own right.

Hackney was one of the inner London boroughs that became a Local Education Authority in 1990. Hackney was, and remains, amongst the most ethnically diverse boroughs in London, with around 230,000 residents speaking more than 100 languages. There is a diversity of wealth and security in the borough too, with significant levels of poverty, unemployment and deprivation. The overall adult unemployment rate was 22.5% by March 1996 – the highest in London.<sup>3</sup> It was twice as high for people from ethnic minorities. Youth unemployment was a particular issue. For those young men and women in the 20-24 age group the unemployment rate was over 33%. A report from Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) in 1990 highlighted the economic deprivation in the borough at the point when it was taking responsibility for education. Noting the high rate of free school meals, sin-

gle-parent families and poor living conditions, HMI concluded: "Hackney is among the most disadvantaged boroughs not only in London but in the country as a whole".<sup>4</sup> This was the social context in which education was transferred from ILEA to Hackney Council in April 1990 and which prevailed throughout the decade.

Introducing the National Curriculum, which was established in the Education Reform Act 1988, and the transition of responsibility for education from ILEA posed a twin challenge for boroughs like Hackney. In their report to the Department of Education & Science, which assessed how well the new Local Education Authorities (LEAs) were proceeding with the transfer of responsibilities, HMI identified Hackney as being among the inner-London boroughs "in which the difficulties seemed to be most prevalent and persistent".<sup>5</sup> During the 1980s a number of secondary school amalgamations had been carried out, leading to the redeployment of teachers and provoking prolonged industrial action, damaging staff morale. There were significant numbers of pupils who arrived at or left a school midway through their schooling; with English as an additional language and with Special Educational Needs. Furthermore, the inspections identified a number of acute matters of concern in Hackney schools relating to the quality of teaching and learning, the recruitment and retention of teaching staff and an underlying disengagement of pupils with education.

In their inspections HMI assessed nearly 400 lessons in three-quarters of Hackney's 70 primary schools. They found that in 42% of these lessons "the quality of the work was less than satisfactory" (the national average was 30%) . HMI concluded that "none of the primary schools inspected was outstanding; most range from adequate to poor; about half a dozen give cause for concern".<sup>6</sup> Inspecting Hackney's 10 secondary schools, HMI found standards significantly below national averages, "half the science lessons, half the mathematics lessons and two fifths of the English lessons were unsatisfactory or poor".<sup>7</sup> There was good practice in teaching reading and writing, for example, and the priority given to teaching maths, but this was the exception and not the standard. More prevalent was the "very ordinary and tedious work" HMI identified, characterised by a lack of planning and "low expectations of what the pupils can achieve".<sup>8</sup> Accurate, meaningful pupil assessment was sporadic, with the result that pupil's progress frequently went unrecorded. While examples of quality teaching, even in some schools causing concern, existed, HMI concluded: "in a significant minority of classes effective learning has broken down".<sup>9</sup>

In addition, HMI found that the majority of Hackney schools were unable to recruit and retain sufficient teachers. Some schools were reduced to putting advertisements in local newsagent's windows; there were even cases where heads attempted to arrange accommodation for teachers to persuade them to work in their school. The situation in some schools had reached the point where it was possible for HMI to conclude: "Hackney entered the 1990s knowing that some children will not receive any teaching at all unless vacancies can be filled".<sup>10</sup> Pupils' experience of school, the curriculum they were being taught and the quality of that teaching was also identified by HMI as being far from satisfactory: "The work that pupils are given is inappropriate, they are expected to work in noisy, chaotic class-

rooms, or they are allowed to get away with doing little or no work. They often have to put up with fighting in corridors and degrading conditions in the toilets.”<sup>11</sup> Poor attendance, truancy, unacceptable behaviour were endemic features, as were the age and condition of the school buildings – many of which were built during the Victorian and Edwardian period and had been allowed to fall into disrepair. As early as 1990 it was argued that, given the scale of the difficulties existing in Hackney’s schools a “radically different approach” would be necessary “if the education of these pupils is ever to be more than second best”.<sup>12</sup> Unhappily for a generation of young people who had to experience these conditions, and worse, it would be another twelve years before that radically different approach was undertaken in Hackney, in the shape of The Learning Trust. The HMI report of 1990, it could be argued, provided a manifesto for The Learning Trust, identifying those issues that the Trust would have to address. In the meantime, however, the situation continued. Some schools were well-managed and gave pupils a sound education, but an increasing number became a cause for concern, with attainment declining and the LEA unable to provide a consistently high quality of support, sufficiently focussed resources or a clarity of expectation about standards of teaching and learning. The situation in Hackney’s schools became increasingly pronounced, as Hackney Council entered a protracted period of political instability and financial disorder.

### Inspections and intervention

By the end of the 1990s Hackney Council’s financial and corporate weaknesses were having a detrimental impact on education provision in the borough, as well as on other local services. The conditions identified in HMI’s report in 1990 had, in many cases, worsened, as was highlighted in a series of inspection reports by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) . The fact that, between 1997 and 2000, Ofsted was called upon to inspect Hackney LEA on three occasions indicates the degree of significant concern for the state of education in the borough, and the misgivings about the Council’s capacity to address the weaknesses identified. It is worth reflecting that Ofsted, which reconstituted HMI as a national body, was itself a response to address the variable quality of Local Authority inspections.<sup>13</sup> By 1997, with the election of the Blair Labour Government, raising school standards across the UK - in particular in inner-city areas - had become a priority, with Ofsted’s inspections playing a key role in establishing judgements about schools and LEAs effectiveness, and a government becoming increasingly determined to intervene where local councils were considered to be providing inadequate support.

The 1997 White Paper, *Excellence in Schools*<sup>14</sup> signalled the Blair Government’s intent to take a more interventionist approach to inadequate education provision. As the Education Secretary, David Blunkett wrote in the White Paper’s foreword:

We want to change attitudes towards education and foster a realisation that education matters to everyone... We must overcome the spiral of disadvantage, in which alienation from or failure

within the education system is passed from one generation to the next.<sup>15</sup>

This interventionist approach from central government was to expose failings, complacency and weakness in a number of inner-London LEAs, and nowhere more so than in Hackney, where financial mismanagement and political turbulence - combined with the continuing underperformance of schools - weakened the efficiency and effectiveness of local services.

### Political division and financial weakness

Hackney has been a traditionally Labour area since the 1930s; the deputy prime minister of Labour's post war government, Herbert Morrison was both Mayor of Hackney and a Member of Parliament in the Borough. That hegemony was briefly, but damagingly, broken in September 1996 when 16 Councillors resigned the whip and left the Labour Group, forming the Hackney New Labour Party. From that point none of the political parties - Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat or Hackney New Labour - had over all control of the Council. As Ofsted noted in its 1997 inspection report: "Just as the area is diverse, so too are the political groupings. The traditional party names cover a kaleidoscope of complex and shifting constituencies, reflecting a diversity of interests and multiplicity of ethnic and other minorities".<sup>16</sup> The fracturing of the Labour Party resulted in political paralysis for the council, at a time when leadership was increasingly important. Ofsted identified the need for "clear and coherent political will" if progress was to be made in resolving the increasingly pronounced problems in education and the Borough's increasingly weak financial position.

The severity of the situation in Hackney was demonstrated in a number of inspection reports, into both education and the Council's corporate governance, the conclusions of which were highly critical. These provide documentary evidence of a London borough that was, in the words of one journalist writing at the time: "a place that should serve as a warning to us all about what can happen when local government goes pitifully wrong".<sup>17</sup> This view was endorsed, in less colourful, more restrained language, by the official inspection reports carried out at this time. In his report on the council's Best Value Performance Plan in June 2000, the borough's District Auditor had recommended that the Audit Commission should carry out an inspection into Hackney Council's corporate governance arrangements. In the resulting report, the Audit Commission's conclusion was unambiguous in its judgement: "Hackney is not a well-run council and has not been for too long".<sup>18</sup> The Audit Commission's report was similar to HMI's ten years previously in so far as it found that while good services existed in Hackney and many staff were working hard and doing a good job, fundamental weaknesses outweighed these strengths. The protracted and disorganised attempts to close Hackney Downs School became an infamous example of the Council's inability to act decisively. The council's lack of leadership prompted Gillian Shepherd, the then Secretary of State for Education to intervene, sending in a team which, after several weeks of investigation, recommended the school be closed. Hackney Downs was the first school in England to be taken from an LEA's control and given to an Edu-

cation Association, which managed its closure.<sup>19</sup>

In 1997 Ofsted inspected Hackney LEA. It was to be the first of three inspections in three years and the report was sharply critical, claiming: "For the last 18 months the Authority has been in a state of disarray".<sup>20</sup> Ofsted concluded that the fundamental reason for this was a "failure of political will" where "Until perhaps the last few months, the Council has neither defined its key priorities nor ensured that major initiatives are implemented in an efficient and coherent manner".<sup>21</sup>

What needs to be done is, in fact, very clear. If Hackney children are to realise their potential, then the Authority must, above all else, act to raise standards in literacy and numeracy and focus on the needs of those pupils whose first language is not English and those who have learning difficulties. More generally, it must draw up a carefully thought through policy to raise expectations in schools and improve the quality of teaching. The LEA has failed to define and pursue these key objectives in a systematic and co-ordinated way...Over-all there are too many plans, for too many purposes. Statements about the Authority's aims for schools and pupils are over-laid with objectives concerned with its own internal functioning. It is impossible to be certain what weight is to be given to these different sets of priorities.<sup>22</sup>

Less than two years later, when Ofsted conducted a second inspection in Hackney, the report's conclusion was equally stark. Hackney was, "an LEA, which is failing, well over a year after a highly critical first inspection, to provide key elements of the help which schools need."<sup>23</sup> The report noted the "negative effects of the lack of a clear priority for education in the council's strategic planning and the poor service provided by the council's systems on finance, information and communication technology and in the management of central trading units". The first and second inspections by Ofsted reported that Hackney education department and the Borough's schools had suffered badly from the Council's political weaknesses and corporate management difficulties. Both reports noted how the lack of a clear priority for education in the council's strategic planning, combined with the poor service provided by the council's finance, information and communication technology systems had detrimentally affected schools. Ofsted also noted that, while improvements in the budget planning in education had been achieved, these were overshadowed by the daunting financial challenge facing the whole council.<sup>24</sup> An ominous prediction of what was to come.

The immediate result of the 1999 Ofsted Inspection, was the Education Secretary, David Blunkett, using, for the first time, the new powers of intervention in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 directing Hackney to enter into a contract with Nord Anglia to run the LEA's school improvement and ethnic minority achievement services. Hackney, therefore, became the first council in England to lose control of part of its education service.<sup>25</sup>

Ofsted identified the mounting disquiet of headteachers at what was happening in the Borough. The *Transforming Hackney* Programme, which the Council's Chief Executive, Tony Elliston, introduced

in 1997<sup>26</sup> resulted in the departure of key managers eroding further schools' confidence in the Council, which Ofsted noted in 1997: "The degree of consultation with schools over the new structure has been slight, and as a result they have little faith in the new arrangements."<sup>27</sup> Parents, headteachers and governing bodies wanted assurance, not further uncertainty. They wanted to be confident that the Borough's schools would continue to be supported to improve, that the services they relied upon to achieve this would be reliable and of a high quality. In the autumn of 2000, the Council was not in a position to provide this assurance; the financial crisis that had been building for years finally broke.

### 2000: The crisis of confidence

Jules Pipe, who has served as Mayor of Hackney from 2002, and who has given political leadership to the improvements in almost every Council service, has summarised the position in the years leading up to 2000:

In the late 1990s...the council was well into its six-year period of no-overall control, which was unique in local government history in having no political leadership appointed throughout that time. The whole council was in crisis and the fact that Hackney schools were failing badly was just one symptom of a malaise that affected every part of local services. The newly elected Labour government was keen to show its teeth when it came to failing councils, and in 1997, the then Education Secretary David Blunkett sent in inspectors who concluded that the council Insights on improving schools was failing to meet its responsibilities with regard to education, followed by a 'hit squad' charged with raising standards. By 1999, when an Audit Commission report found that Hackney had presided over the largest fall in GCSE results in the country, the government intervened, putting Hackney's LEA into special measures, and taking direct control of education services away from the council.<sup>28</sup>

The year 2000 saw the culmination of two corresponding crises: the crisis of confidence in education provision in the Borough, and the crisis in the Council's finances. One journalist described Hackney as "the Bates motel of local government"<sup>29</sup> Towards the end of 1999, the District Auditor recommended that the Audit Commission should carry out an inspection due to concerns about Hackney Council's ability to deliver best value. The Audit Commission identified serious financial and corporate problems. Hackney was facing a deficit of up to £40m in the financial year 2000/1. Hackney was among the highest spenders in local government, but many services were below acceptable standards; citizens in the Borough were not receiving some essential services.

- ▶ 17,000 housing benefit claims are awaiting assessment, with tenants facing eviction and social landlords facing financial losses.
- ▶ Waste collection and street cleansing services were not meeting basic standards, although they

were among the most expensive in the country.

- ▶ Despite improvements in the council's care for children at risk, the service remained below required standards.

There was “a culture of depressed cynicism amongst many of the council's management”, the Audit Commission concluded.<sup>30</sup> Repeated structural change and “uncoordinated innovation” had served to “undermine staff energy and enthusiasm and created suspicion about necessary change”.<sup>31</sup> As a result, the Borough was unable to maintain sound, prudent financial management or provide basic services.

One of the borough's strengths – its racial and cultural diversity – has been turned into a problem as the Council has failed to learn better ways of tackling racism and discrimination and become mired in the fall out from high profile disputes and past mistakes.<sup>32</sup>

The council could not meet its financial commitments without significant reductions in expenditure, yet, in the Audit Commission's judgement, resolving the borough's financial difficulties was not being given sufficient priority by local councillors. The process by which council decisions were made and challenged proved to be ineffective. As well as weaknesses in political leadership, the council lacked a strong team of experienced senior managers in place, the result of *Transforming Hackney*. The newly appointed Chief Executive of Hackney Council, Max Caller issued a report concluding that managers ignored orders and would hide the costs of their services. Efforts to rein in spending were subverted, Caller reported: “the various moratoriums that were imposed were either not understood, ignored or subverted”.<sup>33</sup>

Ofsted's third inspection, therefore, took place against the background of the rapid deterioration in Hackney's financial situation. The council's treasurer issued a notice under section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 on 17 October 2000 putting a stop to all uncommitted expenditure.<sup>34</sup> In their report, which was issued a month later, Ofsted commented “The council's spending was out of control and well beyond its financial resources”.<sup>35</sup> A specially called council meeting, held on 6 November 2000, agreed reductions to the council's budget and put in place controls on spending. Cuts were made indirectly to the education budget through reductions in expenditure for early years, the portage service and a moratorium on filling vacant posts within the education department until the beginning of the new financial year in April 2001.

In its 1999 Report, Ofsted had observed: “If the LEA can stabilise its management, recruit and retain good staff at all levels and secure its basic systems, then further progress is no doubt possible”. As Director of Education from 1998 to 2000, Elizabeth Reid brought much needed stability to education in Hackney and strengthened strategic focus on improving schools. Hackney's 1999 Education Development Plan was titled “Every School a Good School”. The GCSE results in 1999 and 2000 showed

improvements, although the attainment gap between Hackney and the national average continued to be significant.

**Table 1: Percentage of pupils achieving 5+A\*-C grades at GCSE, 1996-2000<sup>36</sup>**

|      | Hackney Average | England Average | Difference between Hackney and England Average |
|------|-----------------|-----------------|--|
| 1996 | 25.7%           | 44.5%           | - 18.8%  |
| 1997 | 30.4%           | 45.1%           | - 14.7%  |
| 1998 | 26.5%           | 46.3%           | - 19.8%  |
| 1999 | 27.8%           | 47.9%           | -20.8%   |
| 2000 | 32.2%           | 49.2%           | - 17%  |

The range of performance amongst secondary schools in the Borough also varied widely, indeed it increased over the years, evidence that whilst some schools were improving strongly others remained static.

**Table 2: Performance Range of Hackney Secondary Schools 1996-2000 - Pupils achieving 5+A\*-C Grades<sup>37</sup>**

|      | Result at highest achieving Hackney secondary school | Result at lowest achieving Hackney secondary school | Difference between the highest and lowest performing secondary school in Hackney |
|------|--|---|--|
| 1996 | 51%  | 11%   | -40%   |
| 1997 | 53%  | 13%   | -40%   |
| 1998 | 68%  | 16%   | -52%   |
| 1999 | 63%  | 12%   | -51%   |
| 2000 | 65%  | 16%   | -49%   |

Ultimately, the vision for education in Hackney was undermined by the political and financial realities in the Borough. In September 2000, Elizabeth Reid resigned in opposition to plans to restructure the Council's departments, including education.<sup>38</sup> The imminent departure of Elizabeth Reid and other key members of the Education Management team alarmed headteachers. As Ofsted noted, "They are seen as having made a great contribution to establishing confidence and their loss makes confidence in the service weaker".<sup>39</sup> Faced with a departing Education Director, a crisis in the Borough's finances and no assurance that the improvements that been achieved would continue to be supported, Hackney schools' expressed their fears for the future to Ofsted's inspection team. As Ofsted noted: "Headteachers and their representatives raised these concerns with the inspection team, made an unprecedented request to be removed from the control of the LEA".<sup>40</sup> Headteachers were voting No Confidence in Hackney Council and, in Ofsted's opinion their schools' concerns are entirely justified.

This is the third inspection which has reported that difficulties in the corporate context inhibit

improvements in schools. After a period of stability and improvement, this further crisis is one too many. Measures have been taken to secure interim management arrangements and a new permanent director, but we do not believe that a simple restoration of the status quo is either possible, or, looking to the future, desirable.<sup>41</sup>

The conclusion Ofsted reached was stark:

The resignation of the director of education and her senior colleagues is only the latest in a series of crises resulting from the continuing ineptitude of the corporate management of the council. We do not believe that Hackney LEA has the capacity to provide a secure, stable context for continuous educational improvement. The time has come for radical change.<sup>42</sup>

### Designing the radical change – The emergence of The Learning Trust

In addition to headteachers concerns there was also a mounting sense of frustration in government as Hackney came to be seen as an increasingly intractable problem, resistant to the measures it introduced. There were also differences in opinion about how to proceed, with the Head of Ofsted, Chris Woodhead challenging the Education Secretary, David Blunkett. Woodhead, an abrasive Chief Inspector of Schools who rarely sought to hide his disapproval of the Labour Government's approach to education, characterised the situation in Hackney as one where the Borough's schools "were making very good progress, but they are making progress in spite of, and not because of, the authority." He went on to challenge the government, "I urge the government to act, and act now, to rescue the education of some of Britain's most deprived children from the malign influence of Hackney council."<sup>43</sup> Woodhead advocated the full scale privatisation of education in Hackney. David Blunkett and Estelle Morris, the Minister of State for School Standards, adopted a more nuanced approach, exploring ways in which public and private sectors could work together.

I took up the post as Hackney's Director of Education in January 2001, when the Council's budget was in meltdown – the 114 Order was still in place - and there was no overall control in the Council. The position in the Education Department was equally turbulent. Members of staff were demoralised, by the repeated Ofsted reports, the widespread negative media coverage and the pervasive sense of crisis. This demoralisation was further exacerbated by the fact that the senior management team I inherited was in the process of effectively disassembling itself. Senior managers left, often to set up private consultancy firms, where they would cherry-pick other members of the Department's staff to come and work for them. At the same time the headteachers were angry, disenchanted and concerned for the future. They regarded the LEA as a hopeless case and had concluded that the contract with Nord Anglia was not working. Any new initiatives to improve education, or bring stability to Council services, would have to be credible in order to command their confidence and win their support. Given schools' collective previous experience this would not be easily achieved.

In addition, the future shape and structure of education in Hackney was the subject of concentrated discussion, and sometimes fractious dispute, within the Council and the wider community, with the prospect of “privatisation” causing consternation amongst Councillors, the Unions and sections of the public and Council employees. Leading the Education Department through this period of uncertainty, while contributing to and influencing the debate was central to the first eighteen months of my time in Hackney.

By the time I arrived in Hackney initial steps had been taken to address the Ofsted call for radical action, although what had been put in place – the Hackney Education Stakeholder’s Group (HESG) – was hardly designed to produce radical solutions to meet the urgency of the moment. The Stakeholders Group included headteachers, union representatives and Council officers and their conclusion was designed to minimise the extent of change in the Borough. Their key proposal was that Hackney should be supported by a successful Local Authority – Haringey was suggested. Advocating what amounted to a traditional LEA model was not a viable solution to Hackney’s long-term decline and financial weakness, as it refused to address the central issues consistently raised in the three Ofsted reports: how could education in Hackney be insulated from the Council’s corporate weaknesses and pupil attainment improved?

In my discussions with DfES officials it was agreed that the Education Stakeholder’s report required further development and a joint DfES/LBH team consisting of three excellent public servants, Anthea Millett, Peter Mitchell and David Albury was established to consider and report on the future of education services in Hackney. It was this report, published on 17 October 2001 that recommended to ministers that an independent, non-profit-making Trust be founded to deliver education services in Hackney. Minister’s enthusiastically accepted the creation of a new Trust. The then Minister for School Standards, Stephen Timms praised the fact that the Trust would maintain local accountability, ensure schools would have an influential role in strategic and operational decision-making and maintain and improve links with other services within and outside the local authority.<sup>44</sup> This was the first time that a government intervention had not passed a failing local government service directly to the private sector.

The contractual negotiations between Hackney Council’s Chief Executive and myself, were overseen by DfES officials. It was, rightly, agreed that local councillors should not be involved in the detailed negotiations, as this would have opened the process to an intolerable degree of political interference. These negotiations were tough. The Chief Executive was determined to concede the minimal amount of autonomy, particularly where finances were concerned, whilst I wanted to achieve the maximum freedom and flexibility for the Trust in order to give it every possible chance of success. At one point The Chief Executive argued in favour of the Trust being given just a two-year contract, and I countered with a proposal for 25 years – in the end we settled on 10 years! Ultimately, we reached an agreement that guaranteed the Trust’s operational independence and financial stability. It was crucial to the success of the Trust that the contract we entered into with the Council was

tight enough to focus on a small number of Key Performance Indicators, rather than a sprawling contract, with a multitude of incidental secondary measures against which we would have been held accountable and which would have been open to continued interference, uncertainty and disputation. This would have eroded the Trust's independence from the beginning, leading to a permanent state of attrition with the Council that would have poisoned relationships and weakened both of our efforts to improve services.

It was important to maintain a hard edge to the Trust's relations with Hackney Council for the first few years of the contract, not least because the ongoing financial problems meant the Council were eager to pass on to the Trust the so-called "debts accrued to education" - long-standing arrears that, given the Council's delicate financial circumstances, were deemed to require immediate resolution. The first quarter of the 2002/03 financial year was a particularly tough time for the Trust, as the Council attempted to force payment of these debts accrued in their totality. As a result, we had to maximise the available government grants to meet these additional burdens on the education budget, and exercise a ruthless efficiency in identifying inefficiencies in corporate services to ensure we could support frontline services. One of The Learning Trust's successes was our continual reduction in the layers of bureaucracy and pursuit of value for money, releasing increasingly large sums for school improvement initiatives, professional development and capital investment. The Learning Trust developed a good record for spending public money sensibly, and with restraint, in years when public spending was increasing.

Securing a viable contract was central to The Learning Trust's stability. The appointment of Mike Tomlinson as chair of The Learning Trust was a crucial factor in establishing our credibility. A DfES official, Sandy Adamson and I were given the task of identifying candidates to sit on our Board of Directors and finding someone to chair the Board. The Council advocated a number of worthy local people, some connected with local businesses, others with the wider community. It was important to secure a big figure who had access to central government, who could play an ambassadorial role for the Trust on a national stage, as well as inspiring confidence locally. Hackney's reputation worked against us, with few people of any calibre wanting to be associated with what was happening in the Borough.

For a time a former footballer and FA administrator, was considered as a candidate, but his responsibilities ultimately made his involvement impossible. In the end Mike Tomlinson chose us. Nearing the end of his time as Chief Inspector of Schools and head of Ofsted, Mike contacted Sandy and expressed a keen interest in playing a role in the Trust, as Chair of the Board. This was much more than we could ever have hoped for, and we accepted Mike's offer with enthusiasm. The formal announcement of his appointment came in January 2002, during a ministerial visit to one of Hackney's most successful secondary schools, Clapton School for Girls. Mike's passion for Hackney's schools, his unshakeable commitment to raising standards, his stature as an 'education statesman' and his shrewd intelligence in adapting to the nuances of Hackney politics made him a superb chair and

champion of The Learning Trust. As one headteacher commented, Sir Mike Tomlinson's appointment as Chair gave The Learning Trust "street credibility and professional respectability".<sup>45</sup> The Education Secretary who appointed Mike Tomlinson to chair The Learning Trust, Estelle Morris, has emphasised the fact that he came from Ofsted: "nobody could criticise him as being weak on evaluation or frightened to be tough on school".<sup>46</sup>

Mike Tomlinson and I quickly established a very strong partnership as Chair and Chief Executive of The Learning Trust, based on mutual respect, shared values and a passion for improving education. Together we worked harmoniously for the first half of the Trust's 10-year contract, anticipating developments in national policy, and understanding how these could benefit schools in Hackney. It was of inestimable value having someone of Mike's stature representing the Trust. He had direct access to Government ministers, and was in a position to ensure that Hackney was given due consideration for additional funding – through the London Challenge, for example. Our partnership brought the most striking results with the Building Schools for the Future programme, which is discussed in greater detail below.

The negotiations to create The Learning Trust were conducted against the backdrop of the Borough's continuing financial crisis. In October 2001, the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government & Regions, Stephen Byers, issued Hackney with "final statutory directions" instructing the Council to balance its budget and improve education, social services, waste management and housing benefits.<sup>47</sup> It was the first time intervention powers under the Local Government Act 1999 had been used. The prospect of the Government appointing managers, from the private sector or seconded from other local authorities, asking another council to take over services, or Whitehall-appointed Commissioners taking overall control of the Council were all widely discussed in the media and government at this time. Ultimately, this did not happen. Education was the only service to be taken out of the Council's operational control. The Secretary of State for Education & Skills, Estelle Morris, directed Hackney Council to enter into a contract with The Learning Trust, the responsibilities, duties and authority of the LEA transferring to The Learning Trust on 1 August 2002.

### The Learning Trust

It is important to understand the differences between the creation of The Learning Trust and the Government's previous interventions in LEAs. Establishing the length of the contract for ten years was an important feature. Previously, the Government had directed LEAs to enter into contracts with private companies lasting for three or five years; Nord Anglia's school improvement contract with Hackney was for three years. Ten years provided a sufficient period of time to bring stability to education in Hackney; to address the immediate underperformance in schools and also build a sustainable system with the capacity to support and challenge schools, promote the quality of leadership and address the underlying weaknesses in education provision in the borough. Previous interventions had seen parts of LEAs functions transferred to a private company. In the case of

Hackney, Nord Anglia had been appointed to run the school improvement service in 1999. The Learning Trust was given responsibility for the entirety of education services in Hackney providing strategic coherence to service improvement. As an organisation, TLT had a single focus - improving education across the board. Mike Tomlinson encapsulated the importance of having a ten-year contract when he said that the Trust had to be able to see a child through the every stage in the education system – from nursery to secondary school.

The Learning Trust was an innovation, a twenty-first century model for the delivery of public services: a not-for-profit company, administering the entirety of a Council's education services with a clearly defined remit to improve these, with the necessary freedom from local bureaucracy and political intrusion to achieve this goal. Although it was established as a private company, The Learning Trust did not operate in a commercial competitive market and it was not motivated by the need to make a profit or pay shareholders a dividend. Previous interventions in LEAs had aroused controversy due to the private company making a profit from the state education system. This was not the case with The Learning Trust. Financial stability, which had been a major cause of concern for headteachers in the context of the Council's financial difficulties, was provided through the contract TLT had with Hackney Council, which protected the established education budget by passing it over to the Trust to manage. Any surplus generated through the organisation's efficient financial management was recycled, invested to meet the education priorities in the borough.

As a company, The Learning Trust had a board of directors, the range and diversity of whose membership was designed to guarantee that the interests of key partners were represented in the decision-making process. With three headteachers and three chairs of school governing bodies, representation from the schools community formed the largest group on the Board. In addition, the Cabinet Lead Member for Children & Young People and the Chief Executive represented Hackney Council. In TLT's last years, the Mayor of Hackney occupied a seat on the Board. A number of independent Non-Executive directors were appointed, enabling the Trust to draw upon valuable experience from across education and government, business and the law, the police and the voluntary sector. Sir Mike Tomlinson, was later to observe:

The board was hugely representative of the local community...There was a synergy about it and in the end we got a board that was wide-ranging in its composition in terms of the community at large and also single-minded. The single-mindedness was that we were concerned with one thing and one thing only – education in Hackney from the cradle to the grave.<sup>48</sup>

During the ten years of The Learning Trust's contract, the Board evolved into a mature, confident decision-making body, providing strategic leadership, oversight and constructive challenge to the Trust's executives and senior leadership team. Jules Pipe, the Mayor of Hackney, has written: "The Learning Trust was seen to have a legitimacy of governance which would have been hard to

achieve with a profit-making company. The focus of the newly created trust was on school improvement and the creation of a new culture of achievement. There was an emphasis on pride, on supporting pupils and on making every child feel they were entitled to succeed".<sup>49</sup>

The Board was collectively responsible for promoting the success of the company, directing and supervising The Learning Trust's affairs. In setting the Trust's strategic aims, the Board took ultimate responsibility for holding to account the Trust's management, ensuring the necessary financial and human resources were in place to enable the organisation to meet its objectives. Throughout the ten years of the contract, the Board ensured that the organisation's obligations to parents and pupils, headteachers and staff were clearly understood and successfully met.

The Learning Trust was fortunate in both of the men who chaired our Board of Directors. Mike Tomlinson made us credible from the beginning. When Mike retired in 2007 he was succeeded by Richard Hardie, the Chair of UBS Ltd, who had served as a non-executive director on the Trust Board since 2003. It was during Richard's term as chair (2007-2012) that the Board grew in confidence and stature, providing valuable constructive challenge that informed the development of our improvement strategies. Both Mike and Richard contributed a lot to Hackney. As Mike Tomlinson once observed, Hackney is a place that "gets into your bloodstream". Endlessly fascinating in its diversity and the wealth of its creative talent, it is a compelling place to work and live in. I would say that Hackney was also very lucky in having people of Mike and Richard's quality championing their cause.

### Setting a vision for improvement

The vision for The Learning Trust was that it would be one of the most effective providers of education services in the country. Given the recent past in Hackney this was ambitious, yet this scale of ambition was necessary if the challenges that existed in 2002 were to be addressed. The philosopher RH Tawney once described the fundamental principle of education policy: "What a wise parent would wish for their children, so the state must wish for all its children". Hackney parents wanted the best education for their children and, if they were in a position to do so, would often place their sons and daughters in schools outside of Hackney. Four out of ten children in Year 6 of primary school either transferred to a private or non-Hackney secondary school.<sup>50</sup> They voted with their feet and it was a vote of no confidence in the borough. The Learning Trust's role was to ensure that all children in Hackney schools received high quality teaching. That every child could learn in first class buildings, using modern equipment. The vision TLT developed for education in Hackney was that the needs and aspirations of every learner would be met and that every school would be excellent.

There were seven objectives within this vision, which reflected the national demands placed on Local Education Authorities by central government, as well as local priorities.

- (i) To improve pupil achievement, which was measured year on year in Key Stage tests, and to do so be benchmarking our schools' performance against regional and national comparisons;

- (ii) To support our early years providers in delivering high quality teaching and learning, so children, from a young age, had the best possible start in life;
- (iii) To encourage and support engagement and inclusion in education to ensure that economic disadvantage or disability did not prevent children and young people from fulfilling their potential;
- (iv) To ensure that the Trust's investment in infrastructure promoted the delivery of high quality services to all education providers and across the Trust as an organisation;
- (v) To maximise the Trust's financial freedom in order to ensure appropriate levels of investment in education were maintained, and additional resources could be directed to meet priorities;
- (vi) To invest in the professional development of teaching staff and professionals working at The Learning Trust, in order to recruit and retain high quality, committed people;
- (vii) To promote the Trust's voice in education leadership through effective communication and consultation with all our stakeholders.

From the beginning I wanted to emphasise to headteachers, and the wider education community, the need for stability – not very easy when Heads regarded the Education Department as disintegrating and the Council was viewed as being financially and politically bankrupt! To begin with, I wanted to build an honest, constructive dialogue with schools, based on the view that they had the principal responsibility for pupils, but that we all share an obligation to ensure pupil wellbeing and academic success.<sup>51</sup> As Michael Barber has argued: “school improvement is a task for the schools”.<sup>52</sup> The task of TLT – as I saw it in 2002 - was to create a robust framework, combining support and challenge that increased the schools' chances of success and reduces the possibility of failure. My immediate priorities upon taking over as Director of Education were:

- ▶ Establish a permanent Senior Management Team.
- ▶ Develop a recruitment strategy to bring talented teachers into Hackney's schools.
- ▶ Improve the quality of communications between the LEA and parents, headteachers, governing bodies and the wider education community.
- ▶ Develop a strategy for improving our secondary schools.

As Chief Executive of The Learning Trust, I wanted to establish clarity around the organisation's key objectives. This required a careful analysis of the problems and also the confidence in judging what should be addressed straight away. Prioritising key issues was crucial. In 2002 there were a multitude of problems pressing for attention and to have attempted to address all of them at once would have ended in the Trust attempting to do everything at once and failing to achieve anything. I always believed that LEAs had a greater purpose than providing the relatively small number of

statutory services the Government believed should rest with Councils – Special Educational Needs; Pupil Transport; Improving Schools; Excluded Pupils and Strategic management. LEAs needed to add value to education, and this was most effectively achieved by creating a culture of high expectation around attainment and learning and an ethos that dismissed excuses and valued the contribution of staff and students. In March 2002, I set out what I believed were that main characteristics of a good LEA.<sup>53</sup>

- ▶ Advocacy – collaboration, representation, persuasion;
- ▶ Leadership – vision, expertise, quality;
- ▶ Transparency – accountability, supportive, engaged;
- ▶ Creativity – innovation, initiative, aspiration;
- ▶ Communication – consultation, responsiveness, delegation; and
- ▶ Values – inclusiveness, diversity, equity.

These became the characteristics that defined The Learning Trust. Michael Barber has described this approach as the “high challenge high support” performance management model. The principle of equality informed our interventions in schools that were failing to deliver the best possible quality of education for their pupils – every pupil deserved the best possible start in life. We also wanted to build and maintain the public’s confidence in the local education system, meeting parents’ higher expectations for their children, while reducing the discernible middle class trend towards private schools.<sup>54</sup>

### Rebuilding relationships with schools

Chris Woodhead articulated the feeling of many schools in Hackney when he observed that the schools that did well in Hackney did so despite Hackney Education Authority. It was important that this could not be said of The Learning Trust. Autonomy from Hackney Council allowed TLT and schools to work together without constraint. The Trust was independent of Hackney Council, which allowed us to develop our own identity and establish a new relationship with schools. Our autonomy also encouraged flexibility, creativity, greater speed of decision-making and responsiveness to schools and settings. What underpinned the Trust’s relationship with schools was a key guiding principle: What is right to improve pupil outcomes?

In his work on the Finnish education system, Pasi Sahlberg has noted:

The best performing educational systems have all built their change strategies on systemic approaches that rely on collective professional and institutional (or social capital) development, enhanced conditions for teaching and learning for all, and more equal educational opportunities within their education system.<sup>55</sup>

Effective school leadership is a crucial element in school improvement, however, in isolation, it is not

sufficient to ensure a school is successful. To ensure sustained improvement across Hackney, a strategy combining the promotion of effective leadership in schools, with high quality, sustained support was required.

School leaders play the key role in setting direction and creating a positive school culture, including the proactive school ethos, supporting and enhancing staff motivation and building the commitment needed to promote improvement and success for schools in challenging circumstances.<sup>56</sup> School leaders and local authorities can work collectively to ensure the following challenges are met:

- ▶ Ensuring consistently good teaching and learning,
- ▶ Strategically managing resources and ensuring the environment in which teachers work and pupils learn is suitable, and
- ▶ Developing partnerships beyond a single school to embrace a wider community, to encourage parental support and partnerships with other schools to provide new learning opportunities.

On becoming Hackney's Director of Education in 2001, I identified the key points where leadership from the LEA was required:

- ▶ The clear definition of a vision, values and purpose,
- ▶ Redesigning the organisation to ensure roles and responsibilities are aligned to the vision,
- ▶ Emphasising the common values around student welfare and learning and attainment,
- ▶ Supporting schools to raise the standard of teaching and learning,
- ▶ Improving the quality of teaching quality,
- ▶ Building a new relationship with our school community.

One of the key characteristics we sought to build at The Learning Trust was a strong shared sense of vocation, and the confidence that public service can improve people's lives. There is a strong body of literature that demonstrates that leaders with a strong sense of vocation are particularly effective.<sup>57</sup> In Hackney, at the Trust and in our schools, we sought to promote leadership with a strong moral and ethical purpose, a strong sense of social justice. You need people who were passionately committed to improving education for all groups of students – in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds – who can work with teachers, governors, students, parents and the wider community to promote a vibrant sense of collective responsibility for improving standards and higher attainment.

### Recruiting teachers

In their 2000 inspection report, Ofsted identified the need to attract more teachers to come and work in Hackney schools.<sup>58</sup>

The recruitment and retention of teachers are critical issues for the schools in Hackney. A recruit-

ment manager has been appointed and vacancies are monitored in schools. A strategy has been put in place which is beginning to have an impact on the quality of the newly qualified teachers appointed to the LEA's pool of teachers and recruitment is taking place actively in New Zealand. However, for a substantial number of schools this remains a crucial and unresolved problem.

Teacher recruitment was one of the priorities from the beginning of my time in Hackney. Attracting quality teachers to Hackney, or any inner-city area, remains a challenge to this day. The first advertising campaign TLT ran was to recruit teachers and we made use of advertising mediums that had not been used before. For example, we advertised using posters at railway stations that were designed to catch the attention of commuters. A prevailing view at the time insisted that no teachers would want to work in Hackney, in other words the Borough's reputation counted against us. This proved to be largely unfounded, particularly as we developed a model of continuing professional development as the core of our recruitment campaign.

In 2003, Ofsted acknowledged the efforts we had put into recruiting teachers:

The Learning Trust has tackled the recruitment of teachers determinedly, and this work is well received by schools...Positive recruitment strategies such as a marketing campaign to promote working in the borough, and support for additional training for teachers with overseas qualifications, are improving the situation.<sup>59</sup>

Mike Tomlinson championed continuing professional development. As part of the package we offered teachers coming to Hackney was the opportunity to do a Master's Degree in teaching or a related education subject, in partnership with institutions such as the Institute of Education (IoE) and universities with links to East London. "A successful urban school", Michael Barber has observed, "requires a learning staff".<sup>60</sup>

To achieve this requires a carefully planned professional development strategy which is related both to the school development plan and to the teacher appraisal scheme. A school also needs to ensure that staff have opportunities to take part in courses and conferences away from the school, and in some cases, in higher degree courses. Finally, it is a matter of encouraging staff to learn from events and policy initiatives and encouraging school staff to discuss issues in a collegiate fashion.

Mike was strongly of this view and he identified the need for a high quality, state of the art, professional development centre in Hackney, which would send a clear signal to teaching staff that their continuing professional development was a Trust priority. It was entirely fitting that the Professional Development Centre in Hackney has been named The Tomlinson Centre.

The building of the Tomlinson Centre also provides a striking example of how the Trust's responsibility for its own budget enabled innovation. This project was affordable because of the Trust's prudent, effective financial management – strict adherence to value for money efficiency savings has consistently freed up resources that have been invested in educational priorities. As a result the Trust was able to invest £4.5million in developing the Tomlinson Centre, which was built at no cost to Hackney Council and which will become a council asset when the Trust's contract expires.

## Ofsted Inspection 2003

Within a year of The Learning trust taking responsibility for education in Hackney Ofsted once again inspected the Borough. This time, however, the inspection findings were positive as Ofsted acknowledged the work we had already done to develop new strategies to support schools and raise pupil attainment. “These are”, Ofsted recorded, “well founded and likely to bear fruit, though some are at an early stage of development. In many cases they have yet to be supported by detailed operational plans, and in some instances, the speed with which they were prepared left some schools feeling overwhelmed by consultation procedures”.<sup>61</sup> The Trust was judged as having the capacity to improve the delivery of its services to meet the priorities in its strategies.

Ofsted’s conclusion was heartening, both for the confidence it showed in TLT’s approach and in its assertion that we should be left to get on with the job:

The Learning Trust has been providing Hackney’s educational services for just over one year and is making rapid progress. It has done much to establish itself as a force for good. It has sensibly concentrated first on the most important issues affecting schools and pupils. Educational decision-making is now achieved in a calm and considered context, far removed from the previous political and corporate turmoil that used to damage the delivery of services to schools...A new direction has been established clearly. It is not surprising that schools hope that the future will bring no further disruption. The Learning Trust, acting on behalf of the council, should now be allowed to continue its work.<sup>62</sup>

### Closing failing schools

The Learning Trust began by shaping a coherent strategy for improving secondary schools in Hackney. Within the first months of the Trust being established in 2002 a series of discussions with the heads of secondary schools were held where a vision for the future was articulated. It was agreed that there was a need for new schools, greater levels of investment and higher quality of teaching and attainment. These discussions informed the priorities that our secondary strategy set out to achieve:

- (i) Improving standards,
- (ii) Investing in our schools, and
- (iii) Increasing the number of school places

The decision to close two failing secondary schools, Kingsland and Homerton, were amongst the most decisive The Learning Trust made. In doing so, we sent a clear signal to parents that Hackney was no longer willing to accept a situation where their children would be expected to attend schools

that had fallen into an irreversible spiral of decline.

Both Kingland and Homerton were schools whose decline had become deeply ingrained. Their GCSE exam results were consistently poor – well below the Borough average, and well beyond touching distance of the National Average. Over the eight years from 1996 to 2003, Kingsland pupils averaged only 21% achieving 5+A\*C grades. From 1996 to 2005, Homerton's pupils averaged 23% achieving 5+A\*C grades.<sup>63</sup> Pupil numbers were declining, which had a detrimental impact on both schools' finances. A significant number of permanent teachers had left, which meant as many as half the lessons being taught were by temporary teaching staff.

Kingsland Secondary School was closed in 2003. Less than a decade previously, Kingland had been one of the most popular and successful schools in Hackney, but its performance had deteriorated over a number of years and the number of pupils attending the school had declined dramatically. Kingsland had been placed in special measures following an OFSTED inspection in November 1999, which had found that it was failing its pupils badly. Despite extensive support, the school had made only limited progress during the period of over two years it had been on special measures. Pupils from middle class backgrounds had moved to other schools, leaving those from underprivileged backgrounds and those with Special Educational Needs. In 2001 it received only 45 applications from parents for their children to enrol there.<sup>64</sup>

From the beginning we were clear that, if The Learning Trust could close Kingsland efficiently, it would stand as a marked contrast with the failure to act decisively over Hackney Downs. In order to do so we developed a comprehensive closure plan encompassing the following priorities:

- ▶ The appointment of a new headteacher to provide stability whilst the school closed,
- ▶ A commitment to continuing to improve the education of those pupils at the school throughout the closure period,
- ▶ The relocation of *all* Kingsland pupils in Hackney secondary schools.

Recognising that at three Year Groups would have had their education disrupted, we also undertook to monitor all of the former Kingsland pupils in their new schools and would have been ready to intervene with remedial support in the event of them falling behind. Thankfully, this was not necessary. Homerton College of Technology was closed in 2006. Following the closure of Hackney Downs in the late 1990s, Homerton was the only Boys' School in Hackney. Its results were consistently poor, leading to an effort to "Fresh Start" the school as a Technology College, which had been of limited success. As a school, Homerton had a poor reputation within the local area. It had been associated with low standards and challenging behavior on the part of pupils for a long time. In this Homerton contrasted with Hackney Downs and Kingsland, both previously successful schools whose decline was of relatively recent origin. Tellingly, there was a lack of interest, either from the schools governing body or the local community, in keeping the school open.<sup>65</sup> We followed the model of

closure that had proved successful with Kingsland.

#### Building schools for Hackney's future

The renewal of Hackney's existing secondary schools was a key part of achieving the Trust's objectives of improving the quality of education and persuading parents not to withdraw their children from the Borough at the point of transition from primary to secondary school. The Learning Trust developed a pragmatic approach to increasing the number of places available, revitalising

Based on the following principles

- ▶ Providing parents with a choice of quality secondary education for their children;
- ▶ Establishing schools as the hub of their local community; and
- ▶ Ensuring people from all backgrounds, ethnicities and languages had equal access to the resources in the Borough's schools

Modernisation of the education estate is central to this vision. There is an urgent need for extensive capital investment, epitomised by our Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme.

Building Schools for the Future was the Labour government's strategic approach to capital investment in secondary school buildings. It complemented the drive to improve standards in education, by creating the modern environment in which pupils could learn, meeting the requirements of the twenty-first century, not consigning them to Victorian and Edwardian buildings that, a century on, needed frequent repair. The scale of the BSF programme was one of the most ambitious undertaken by the Labour government, with capital funding available for investment in school buildings rising sharply from £683 million in 1996-97 to £5.1 billion in 2005-06.<sup>66</sup> It provided the selected LEAs with the opportunity of moving beyond the regular round of patching and mending, which was carried out on individual school buildings, usually in the school holidays, and taking a strategic approach to investing in the LEA estate as a whole, whilst addressing the need for future school places. BSF would ensure that the secondary schools in Hackney would have high quality academic, sporting and recreational facilities, with integrated information technology.

Under the BSF programme The Learning Trust successfully secured more than £175 million from the Department for Education & Skills to rebuild or renovate each of the secondary schools in the borough. The BSF Programme actively involved teachers, pupils and parents in shaping a vision for their new school, which helped to personalise the aims of BSF, which were to:

- ▶ Raise education standards through well-designed, multipurpose buildings, with up-to-date facilities,
- ▶ Provide easy-to-use information and communication technology to transform teaching and learning,
- ▶ Create schools that offer facilities to the wider Hackney community.

From 2005 onwards, each of Hackney's nine Secondary Schools were renovated or entirely rebuilt.

TLT not only provided support for the schools in terms of liaising with The BSF programme in Hackney was completed in 2014, with the re-building or modernisation of Hackney's special schools and pupil referral units. The Hackney BSF programme exemplifies the benefits created for children and young people in the Borough through the constructive working partnership between The Learning Trust and skilled finance officers in Hackney Council, such as Ian Williams, the director of finance, and Jackie Moylan, assistant director. Together we maximised the advantage of unprecedented investment by central government in renovating school buildings. In doing so, a lasting legacy of first class, modern facilities has been secured for future generations of children and young people.

Primary schools were initially not included in BSF. In March 2006 the Government announced a parallel programme - the Primary Capital Programme (PCP) - would begin in 2007 for primary schools and schools for primary-age special needs pupils. The Primary Capital Programme was introduced by the Labour government, with the intention of investing in the rebuilding or upgrading of primary school buildings or facilities. The programme provided Hackney with the funding to refurbish, renovate and expand primary schools. As a result, Hackney is now home to some of the most interesting, cutting-edge schools and children's centres in England. In July 2011, Lauriston Primary School, and the architects, Meadowcroft Griffin won the British Council for School Environment Award for *Excellence in Design for Teaching and Learning*.

By 2015 all of Hackney's secondary and special schools have been rebuilt, or substantially renovated through Building Schools for the Future or the Academies programme.

Academies have been a controversial development in English education. In Hackney we adopted a realistic, pragmatic approach, which resulted in a substantial number of new secondary school places being created through the government's Academies Programme. We understood the opposition that the Academies Programme aroused in neighbouring inner London boroughs and sought to shape the Academies to reflect the Borough's requirements and characteristics. The Learning Trust, working in partnership with Hackney Council, developed a set of conditions that prospective academy sponsors would have to agree to meet; these would help root each Academy firmly within the community it would serve:

- ▶ Each Academy would have to be non-selective, non-denominational and mixed;
- ▶ In order to ensure a smooth assimilation into the existing network of schools, every Academy would begin with a Year 7 cohort and take in a new cohort each year, building schools numbers over time.
- ▶ The Academy sponsor would have a clear, existing connection with the borough.
- ▶ Every Academy would be independent and autonomous. In return, the academy would play an active role in the borough's education, building partnerships with primary and secondary schools.

Between 2005 and 2012, four Academies were created in Hackney under the government's pro-

gramme:

- ▶ Mossbourne, specialising in music, which was built on the site of the old Hackney Downs School,
- ▶ Petchey, specialising in health, care and medical science, which was built on the site of Kingsland Secondary School,
- ▶ City, sponsored by KPMG, specialising in business and finance, which was built on the site of Homerton College of Technology, and
- ▶ Bridge, sponsored by UBS Ltd specialising in music and mathematics, which was built on the site of Laburnum Primary school.

A fifth academy, Skinners' Company's School, was created when the Skinners' Company's School for Girls closed. A new, mixed academy, sponsored by The Skinners' Company opened in 2010. Clapton Girls Technology College became the borough's sixth academy in 2011 (Clapton Girls' Academy) under the Coalition Government's "convertor academy" programme. Hackney's seventh academy opened in September 2014 run by Mossbourne – the first academy built in the Borough.

The academies programme has played a substantial role in raising expectations and increasing the aspirations of Hackney's young people. From the beginning of The Learning Trust's contract, secondary schools were identified as the catalysts for change, meeting the high expectations parents had for their children's education. The strategy for improving secondary schools had two priorities:

- ▶ Addressing the educational underachievement in a number of secondary schools,
- ▶ Reversing the trend of 11 year olds opting to go to secondary schools outside Hackney.

As a result, there has been a significant increase in the number of Hackney families putting a Hackney school as their first preference at secondary school transfer; correspondingly, the number of families giving schools outside Hackney their first preference has declined. In 2012 almost 83% of Hackney parents expressed a preference for schools in the borough, compared with 70% in 2005.

**Table 3: The Number and Percentage of Hackney Parents Putting a Hackney School as Their First Preference at Secondary Transfer, 2005 - 2012**

|  | 2005 | 2006 | 2007  | 2008  | 2009  | 2010  | 2011 | 2012  |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|
| Percentage of Hackney parents that express a first-choice preference for a school in Hackney | 70%  | 72%  | 76.5% | 77.7% | 78.5% | 80.5% | 81%  | 82.7% |

The result of the opening of new schools, the expansion of existing schools and of Post-16 provision, and the closure of failing schools has been the fulfilment of Sir Mike Tomlinson's ambition: Hackney is now a place where parents want to get their children into the borough's schools.

Jules Pipe has emphasised the success of rebuilding and renovating our school and settings:

Our education estate is now one of which we can be very proud, with new spaces to learn and play alongside first-class facilities to inspire students and teachers alike. Through our stewardship of BSF we have seen six schools completely renewed, and four new schools built from scratch. In addition, we commissioned 19 new children's centres to the highest design standards, and five new youth centres. We have renewed the fabric of almost every educational building in the borough to an exceptionally high standard, and this has undoubtedly had a big impact on the morale and performance of teachers and students, as well as the desirability of our schools to parents.<sup>67</sup>

### Maximising the impact of national policies

The Learning Trust was not created in a policy vacuum. We were, in many respects, a manifestation of central government's resolve to improve attainment and standards and its willingness to implement new methods for delivering improvement. As such, it is important to regard The Learning Trust within the broader context of national policy development through the first decade of the Twenty-First Century. In terms of the delivery of public services in the United Kingdom, these were years when traditional methods or systems of delivering services underwent a prolonged process of adjustment and reform. A greater measure of private enterprise was applied to the delivery of NHS services, for example. In English education, the increasing measure of autonomy granted to schools – particularly in terms of greater financial freedom – had a direct impact on the powers of Local Authorities. From the early 2000s the relationship between schools and LAs has been reconfigured and this has required a much greater level of creativity and flexibility if an LA is to continue to exert any meaningful influence over standards of teaching and learning in schools.

The Trust became adept at maximising national policy developments – particularly funding streams – to deliver further improvements to education in Hackney. The Building Schools for the Future and Academies programmes – assessed above – have had the most striking material and educational impact on Hackney.

Michael Barber has described the Blair government's approach in their first term (1997-2001) as both centralist and devolutionary: centralist in the strengthening of the powers of the Department for Education; devolutionary in the extension of schools autonomy.<sup>68</sup> In changing the culture in previously underperforming schools, our focus was on assisting the school in the following areas:

- ▶ Developing a strong sense of purpose and identifying the direction in which to take the school,
- ▶ Encouraging a culture of high expectation and ambition for staff and pupils,
- ▶ Promoting a climate of constructive challenge and self-evaluation, and
- ▶ Establishing high standards of teaching and learning as the central focus.

As Michael Fullan has argued, the successful implementation of any policy requires support for those implementing the changes and also pressure.<sup>69</sup> Support in terms of stability around funding, greater investment in teacher's professional development and school-level innovation. Pressure in terms of targets, the publication of performance data and independent inspection. The challenge for the Trust was to make sure we were well positioned to support and pressure schools into delivering increasing standards.

Improving education was one of the key priorities of the Labour government elected in May 1997. Indeed, before the general election that made Tony Blair Prime Minister, he had stated that his priorities for a Labour government would be: "Education, education, education".<sup>70</sup> The first term of the Labour Government (May 1997-June 2001) saw what has been described as "a myriad of national initiatives", all designed to address standards in school.<sup>71</sup> Amongst the key initiatives introduced were:

- ▶ Beacon schools – which aimed to identify high performing schools, in order to help them form partnerships with each other and to provide examples of effective practice for other schools.
- ▶ Specialist schools – a new type of secondary school which taught the full range of National Curriculum subjects, whilst specialising in particular areas, for example: business studies, information technology, music, the sciences. These schools are allowed to select 10% of their pupils.
- ▶ Education Action Zones - which were designed to enable deprived areas to improve local schools, through an action forum comprising parents, teachers, local councillors and residents.
- ▶ Excellence in Cities - which aimed to tackle underachievement and promote inclusion in inner city schools, through the development of Learning Mentors, and Learning Support Units, and provision for Gifted and Talented pupils and the construction of City Learning Centres.<sup>72</sup>

Beginning Labour's second term, ministers acknowledged that, while improvements had been made, in areas like London, the gap between schools rated in Ofsted inspections as *outstanding* and those that were underperforming had widened rather than narrowed. The London Challenge (2003 – 2011) was the Government's response to this. A new set of policies were developed for London secondary schools with the following objectives:

- ▶ To raise standards in the poorest-performing schools;
- ▶ To narrow the attainment gap between pupils in London;
- ▶ To create more good and outstanding schools.<sup>73</sup>

Initially, London Challenge was a programme for secondary school improvement. In 2008 it was expanded to include primary schools. At its peak, the London Challenge programme had a budget of

£40 million a year, funding ‘in-kind’ packages of support for underperforming schools, jointly brokered by an expert adviser and officials in the Department for Education. It also invested heavily in school leadership, including development programmes and consultant heads to support leaders of struggling schools, and worked with key boroughs to ensure robust local planning and support for school improvement. During the period of the London Challenge, secondary school performance in London saw a dramatic improvement, and local authorities in inner London went from the worst performing to the best performing nationally. Hackney was one of the Boroughs to benefit from the London Challenge, along with Lambeth and Southwark in South London and Haringey and Islington in North London.<sup>74</sup>

### Every Child Matters

One national policy development had a significant impact on The Learning Trust work. The Children Act 2004, which established a new statutory duty for local authorities to take the lead in instituting a single strategic plan for all services affecting the health, safety and success of children and young people. The *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* programme contained five outcomes for children and young people, around which services were to be reconfigured. The national outcomes were that children and young people should:

- ▶ Be healthy;
- ▶ Stay safe;
- ▶ Enjoy and achieve;
- ▶ Make a positive contribution; and,
- ▶ Achieve economic well-being.

The statutory position of Director of Children’s Services was established to oversee the implementation of the Every Child Matters agenda in each LA. With Sir Mike Tomlinson’s agreement, I took the role of Director of Children’s Services in Hackney. Given the success of the Trust, and the fact that education accounted for significant parts of the Every Child Matters agenda it was sensible for us to take the lead on the joint development of Children’s Services. Although I remained Chief Executive of The Learning Trust, Steve Belk, the Executive Director of Standards & School Improvement took responsibility for the day-to-day operations of The Learning Trust. It was essential to maintain an unremitting focus on education improvement, and avoid being distracted by the other aspects of the Every Child Matters agenda, particularly safeguarding. Michael Barber has drawn attention to this. Noting that newly appointed Directors of Children’s Services “inevitably spent more time on their new responsibilities than on the school performance agenda”, he also detected “an underlying bureaucratic logic” that drove this shift of focus away from education improvement.

Because schools were largely autonomous, whereas children's services remained a central part of the overall local authority, directors of children's services had a bureaucratic incentive to focus their attention on the latter... Outstanding directors, such as Alan Wood in Hackney, could of course, succeed across the entire agenda, but the mere mortals who held most of these posts found it challenging and sometimes overwhelming. The job had become too large and too diffuse.<sup>75</sup>

The Trust's leadership role in the local partnership included the production of the Children and Young People's Plan, which established the manner in which local partner agencies focussed on meeting the needs of local children, young people, their parents, carers and families through the integration and improvement of services. In this I was very ably supported by a leadership team that became known, colloquially, as "the three Steve's" - Steve Belk, my deputy, Steve Goodman, Head of Children's Social Care and Steve Rowlands, Head of Children's Health. We were able to initiate a period of innovation in Children's Social Care, where senior leaders such as Isabelle Trowler - who is now the Chief Social Worker for Children and Families in England - were able to introduce *Reclaiming Social Work*, a new model for delivering children's services.

The Trust successfully co-ordinated the Ofsted Joint Area Review of Hackney's Children's Services in August 2006. The report reflected the strong working relationship which characterised the children's partnership arrangements: "The council and its partners have put firm foundation[s] in place for improving children's services further but recognise that improving outcomes from a low base in an area with significant deprivation is a long term task".<sup>76</sup> Conducted close to the mid-point of the Trust's contract, the JAR report also provided a useful interim assessment of the progress of education in Hackney:

Standards are improving from a historically low level. Although the achievement of many children is below that found in similar areas at seven, 11 and 14, it is in line with these areas by age 16. High rates of pupil mobility and a much higher than average number of children with English as a second language affect on achievements in national tests in the borough. Despite this challenging context, progress made by many groups is good and many young people believe they do quite well or better at school. Children and young people from minority ethnic groups identified as underachieving receive targeted support and they make good progress. Children looked after by the council achieve higher standards by the age of 16 than found elsewhere. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress against targets set for them. Attendance levels are improving and in the secondary schools attendance is now above the national average. More children and young people are excluded from school than elsewhere, but the number of permanent exclusions from primary and secondary schools is reducing. Not all young people moving into the area during Key Stage 4 achieve as well as they could as they do not have sufficient access to appropriate learning opportunities.<sup>77</sup>

The JAR report further identified The Learning Trust's "important role in raising the aspirations of the young people of Hackney" and the fact that improvements in the leadership and management had resulted in "almost all services being good with effective performance management arrangements".<sup>78</sup> The report concluded by observing:

The capacity to improve is good based on The Learning Trust's clarity about what needs to be done, the strengthened leadership and management in place and improvements achieved from a low base in many areas.<sup>79</sup>

Put simply, important improvements had been achieved, but more had to be done.

### Improving schools and raising the quality of leadership

We invested resources in recruiting first class teachers and nurturing talent within Hackney. We made sure the BSF programme transformed our schools for teaching and learning in the 21st Century. We shaped Academies to best meet the needs of the communities they would serve. We built trust and capacity with schools, whilst encouraging the widest possible range of partnerships, with parents, community groups and governing bodies. All of these achievements fed into the central purpose of The Learning, improving Hackney schools. Our approach to school improvement was based on providing leadership with high aspirations and ambitious expectations and challenging under performance - not being satisfied with being satisfactory.

This required a relentless drive to raise standards both in schools and the services supporting them. Over time we established a culture of clear planning, robust, relevant targets and benchmarking local performance against the best. One of the few services to be rated highly in the 2000 Ofsted inspection report was the Research, Statistics & Evaluation team. Our monitoring, challenge, support and intervention was predicated on Hackney schools being provided with high quality, sophisticated contextual and benchmarked data to complement DfE performance tables and Ofsted inspection reports.

### Schools requiring additional support

The Learning Trust supported school improvement through the Schools Requiring Additional Support process (SRAS) . The focus on English and Maths, increasing the quality of teaching and learning and monitoring pupils' progress were all of paramount importance in raising standards. The intelligent application of support from National Strategy, London Challenge and the 14-19 Partnership has enabled The Learning Trust to build upon and expand local good practice.

The approach that Steve Belk, Tricia Okoruwa, Deputy Director for School Improvement & Performance and the Learning & Standards team refined over the years was based on developing the talent of teaching staff in Hackney schools, with a focus on pedagogic skill, sound subject knowledge,

managerial competence and critical self-review.

The Trust's 2008 *Improving Standards Strategy* encouraged schools to make use of their increased autonomy. Supporting school-led improvement, through strategic networks for headteachers. Developing school leadership, and improved teaching and learning, was central to the improvements in primary and secondary schools over the last four years of the Trust's contract.

The SRAS process was designed to analyse school performance, assessing standards of teaching and learning, evaluating a school's capacity for making sustained progress and identifying declining trends. The method by which this is achieved is drawing intelligence from across the widest possible range of sources: admissions and attendance, behaviour and exclusions, finance and governor services, health and safety, HR and ICT, School Improvement Partners and Special Educational Needs, safeguarding and research and statistics.

Based on the collective judgements across all these service areas, schools were categorised as to the level of support they required:

- ▶ Core Support – the standard level of support for high performing schools,
- ▶ Enhanced Support – additional support focussing support on identified areas of weakness, and
- ▶ Intensive Support - support for those schools likely to be judged as failing by Ofsted.

SRAS became the method by which The Learning Trust evaluated schools' performance, supported them to address identified weakness and challenged them to increase their ambition for their pupils. It proved the central means by which we sought to improve the quality and range of education provided to Hackney's children and young people. There gradually emerged a trend whereby our SRAS process was found to be more rigorous than Ofsted's inspection findings! Over the period 2002 – 2012 increasing numbers of children and young people in Hackney have achieved as well as– and in some cases better than– the best elsewhere in England.

### Ofsted's judgement

Ofsted's annual children's services assessment in November 2011 concluded that "Children's services in the London Borough of Hackney perform well", with "the large majority of services, settings and institutions for children and young people are good or better and help children stay safe and enjoy their learning".<sup>80</sup>

Ofsted highlighted the following factors:

- ▶ A large majority of nursery and Early Years Foundation Stage provision in primary schools was rated good or better by Ofsted.
- ▶ Test results for 11-year-olds had improved each year from 2007 and the rate of improvement had been much faster pace than in similar LAs and nationally. In 2011 Hackney's Key Stage 2

results were above the national average for the first time.

- ▶ The majority of secondary schools academies were good or better. The proportion of 16-year-olds gaining five A\*-C GCSE grades, including English and maths, had improved year on year and at a faster pace than in similar LAs and nationally.

Ofsted also noted that attainment was above the national average for young people from low-income families. For example, the attainment of 16-year-olds from families with low income has improved significantly over the last four years and performance is above both national and similar area averages.<sup>81</sup>

What are the characteristics of successful schools?

- ▶ Consistently high performance across all of the teaching staff, who are ambitious for their pupils to be successful.
- ▶ Refusal to accept the view that social, economic or physical disadvantage is a barrier to achievement.
- ▶ Relentless focus on improving teaching and learning accompanied by effective professional development opportunities for all staff.
- ▶ Use of high quality data in the assessment and tracking of pupil progress, enabling focussed, informed support and intervention for individual pupils.
- ▶ An approach that is highly inclusive, having complete regard for the progress and personal development of every pupil.
- ▶ Individual students are developed through rich and varied opportunities for learning inside and outside the classroom.
- ▶ The cultivation of partnerships with parents, businesses and the wider community to support and develop pupil's learning.
- ▶ Robust and rigorous self-evaluation with data analysis informing improvement strategies.

It requires an excellent headteacher, supported by a first class team to build a school exhibiting these characteristics. That is why The Learning Trust invested significantly in raising the quality of school leadership.

### Raising the quality of school leadership

Michael Barber has, correctly, stated that: "the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers".<sup>82</sup>

A comparative analysis of Ofsted school inspection judgements demonstrates the effectiveness of our focus on raising the quality of teaching and learning, combined with the priority we gave to strengthening schools' leadership proved highly effective. There was a marked improvement between the first two years of TLT and the last two years.

- ▶ Between 2002 – 2004 Ofsted inspected thirty-one Hackney primary schools. Of these just over half (52%) were rated either good or outstanding in both the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of school leadership and management. Two schools – 7% of those schools inspected- were judged to be outstanding on these two measures.<sup>83</sup>
- ▶ Between 2010 - 2012, Ofsted inspected thirty-nine Hackney primary schools. Of these nearly four-fifths (79%) were rated either good or outstanding in both the quality of teaching and effectiveness of school leadership and management. Twelve schools – 31% of those inspected - were judged to be outstanding on these two measures.<sup>84</sup>

As the Ofsted data implies, raising the quality of teaching and learning, and school leadership can only be done over time – another reason why the Trust’s 10-year contract was invaluable. Schools knew that the Trust was there for the long-term, and that our central focus on improving standards was not going to be cut short or diverted. We were their partner in making progress, and championing a moral purpose for every child in the Borough. Where a headteacher or the governing body of a school were found to be inadequate to the task of improving their school TLT took decisive action. We became increasingly confident in using our statutory powers, for example, suspending delegation or insisting that a headteacher leave the school. These were not easy decisions, in some cases they aroused controversy with school staff, parents, governors and the unions, but they were the correct decisions to ensure that pupils were not condemned to years of inadequate teaching.

As Director of Education, Chief Executive of The Learning Trust and Director of Children’s Services, I maintained a close involvement in the appointment of new Headteachers, particularly where the Trust, or Ofsted had identified weaknesses in the school. In some instances we had to intervene to prevent a governing body appointing a new headteacher who we thought would not be able to lead their school to success. These were not always easy decisions, in some instances they strained the Trust’s relationship with the school in question, but the relationship never broke down. The quality of Headteacher leadership became increasingly evident through Ofsted inspections and the wider education community recognised that this was one of the major factors in the sustained improvement of Hackney’s schools. We had the further advantage of being a small borough, which enabled us to develop both a one-to-one relationship with each school and setting, as well as encouraging schools to work together to share good practice, pool resources and develop mentoring arrangements.

Developing intellectual capacity and encouraging openness to fresh ideas was a key to the Trust’s success. The ideas of Michael Fullen, Michael Barber, Andy Hargreaves, and others have informed our thinking as we sought to apply fresh perspectives to the challenges of raising attainment. It was also something we promoted for schools, as part of the professional development offer for Headteachers. Groups of Hackney headteachers had the opportunity to visit Ontario, Helsinki, Shanghai, and Phoenix, Arizona to learn from the experiences of other education systems, visiting schools, meeting

school leaders and attending conferences and seminars. In addition, educators and researchers – from Sweden, Turkey, Finland, Japan, China, the United States and Vietnam – have been invited to Hackney, to visit schools and discuss innovations in education. This exposure to international ideas and the opportunity to learn from other perspectives

As well as input through the school improvement service directly there are a range of officers who have everyday dealings with schools related to particular services such as finance, ICT, attendance, behaviour and special needs. This allowed us to share intelligence about schools across the widest possible range of service areas, which informed the Trust to target support where it was most required and deliver appropriate challenge.

Supporting teaching and learning, leadership and management through continuous professional development. In part this has been done through the work of the Professional Development Centre and specialist consultants as well as advisers but sometimes through the brokerage and commissioning of expert services and the dissemination of best practice.

### The Learning Trust's record in raising standards and improving outcomes

How effective was The Learning Trust's sustained support and challenge to schools in Hackney? At the end of ten years had we improved the outcomes for children and young people at all levels of education? Against the historical background of low educational attainment in an economically deprived inner London borough, the Trust succeeded spectacularly in raising attainment, improving standards and widening choices for the children and young people in Hackney. The improvement in results at all of the Key Stages were striking, with the dramatic improvement in primary education and the transformation of secondary education, the strengthening and the extension of Early Years provision.

#### Building the best start in life: Early Years

High quality early years provision is essential if children are to fulfil their potential. In his 2010 report, Frank Field MP concluded that the best period in which to significantly improve children's life chances was the Foundation Stage – 0 to 5 years. Pre-schooling, therefore, must be of the highest possible quality if it was to have a sustainable, long-term impact.<sup>85</sup>

The Learning Trust worked to ensure every young child in Hackney was able to develop as a confident, capable learner across the Early Years curriculum. In 2006 the Childcare Act placed a duty on Local Authorities and their partner agencies to improve outcomes for all young children and reduce inequalities between them. This enabled us to take the lead in developing a strategy for improving services for young children that developed the active participation of parents, whilst reducing inequalities. Parental involvement was a key factor in improving childcare and Early Years education. Strategies such as *Every Child a Talker*, and a focus on the social and emotional aspects of development supported those young children most at risk of low outcomes.

By 2012, as measured by the Foundation Stage Profile, the outcomes for 5 year olds in Hackney had

dramatically improved. The attainment gap between high and low achievers had narrowed significantly, while Hackney's young children were within 1 percentage point of the National Average.

Table 4: Percentage of Foundation Stage Pupils Reaching a Good Level of Development 2006 - 2012<sup>86</sup>

|                | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 |
|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Hackney        | 33%  | 41%  | 40%  | 35%  | 48%  | 54%  | 63%  |
| England        | 45%  | 46%  | 49%  | 52%  | 56%  | 59%  | 64%  |
| Attainment Gap | 12%  | 5%   | 9%   | 17%  | 8%   | 5%   | 1%   |

- ▶ The percentage of children reaching a good level of development at the Foundation Stage<sup>87</sup> in Hackney schools and settings increased by 15 percentage points over three years, from 48% in 2010 to 54% in 2011 and to 63% in 2012. Over the same three year period, the National Average increased by 8 percentage points, from 56% in 2010 to 59% in 2011 and to 64% in 2012.
- ▶ In 2006, the percentage of children reaching a good level of development at the Foundation Stage, in Hackney schools and settings was 12 percentage points below the national level. By 2012, the percentage of children reaching a good level of development in Hackney had increased by 30 percentage points and the gap to the national level had closed to just one percentage point.

There have been far-reaching changes to Early Years provision during the Trust's ten years. Increasingly, the emphasis has been on integrating service delivery, in order to meet the varied and multiple needs of children and families, in particular those who are most vulnerable. Hackney now has 21 Children's Centres, which evolved from the seven Sure Start Local Programmes. These were developed to ensure:

All children in Hackney...have opportunities to grow up in a stable environment that supports them achieving their potential and enables them to make positive contributions to our diverse society.<sup>88</sup>

### Improving teaching and learning: Primary Education

Before a long-term strategy could be put in place to deliver sustainable improvement in all schools in Hackney, The Learning Trust's immediate priority in 2002 was to assist the poorest performing schools, particularly those that were in special measures.

The Learning Trust has supported schools to make long-term improvements, to help them reach the best possible position from which they can continue to succeed. In 2012, Hackney has more good primary schools than ever before, with almost a third of primary schools (30%) judged to be outstanding. Furthermore, there are now no primary schools in an Ofsted category.

In terms of the management and structure of primary schools, The Learning Trust met the challenges posed by a nationwide shortage of talented headteachers by encouraging federations – where

a small number of underperforming primary schools were placed under the leadership of an executive headteacher, with a proven track record of success, and a single governing body.

Federations have been the subject of some controversy, the quality of teaching and learning in those schools that comprise the Best Start and Primary Advantage federations, however, has been significantly improved in a short space of time.

## Key Stage 1

The Key Stage 1 attainment gap between Hackney and the National Average more than halved as a result of The Learning Trust's emphasis on reading, writing and numeracy.

- ▶ The percentage of pupils achieving Level 2+ in Key Stage 1 Reading increased from 72% in 2003 to 86% in 2012. Hackney was within 1 percentage point of the National Average.
- ▶ The percentage of pupils achieving Level 2+ in Key Stage 1 Writing has increased from 69% in 2003 to 82% in 2012. Hackney was within 1 percentage point of the National Average.
- ▶ The percentage of pupils achieving Level 2+ in KS1 Maths has increased from 78% in 2003 to 89% in 2012. Hackney was within 2 percentage points of the National Average.

## Key Stage 2

Raising attainment at Key Stage 2 has been a priority for The Learning Trust since 2002. The progress made in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the improvements in reading, writing and numeracy at Key Stage 1 contributed to significant improvements in Key Stage 2 results.

School improvement and raising attainment has been a sustained process across all three stages of primary education.

- ▶ In 2012 81% of 11 year olds in Hackney achieved Level 4+ in both English and Mathematics, which put the borough 2 percentage points *above* the National Average.
- ▶ Hackney's rate of improvement was been significantly faster than the National Average, from 57% in 2006 to 81% in 2012 – 24 percentage points in six years. The England Average, by comparison, has risen from 70% to 79% over the same period of time.
- ▶ Hackney is the most improved borough in England over the 5-year period from 2007 – 2012.

Table 5: Percentage of Pupils Achieving Level 4 and Above in Key Stage 2 English and Maths<sup>89</sup>

|                | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 |
|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Hackney        | 57%  | 59%  | 65%  | 64%  | 71%  | 76%  | 81%  |
| England        | 70%  | 71%  | 73%  | 72%  | 73%  | 74%  | 79%  |
| Attainment Gap | -13% | -12% | -8%  | -8%  | -2%  | 2%   | 2%   |

### A sustained upwards trajectory: Secondary Education

In August 2002, 31% of Hackney's Year 11 pupils gained 5+A\*-C grades at GCSE. The attainment gap between Hackney and the National Average was more than 20 percentage points. There were only three other Local Education Authorities in England with lower results.

By 2006 – the year in which the Government adjusted the national benchmark to 5+A\*-C grades *including* English and Maths – Hackney had narrowed the attainment gap significantly.

Table 6: Percentage of Pupils Achieving 5+A\*-C GCSEs

|                | 2002  | 2003   | 2004  | 2005  | 2006  |
|----------------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| Hackney        | 31.1% | 39.2%  | 45.1% | 47.3% | 50.9% |
| England        | 51.6% | 52.9%  | 53.7% | 57.1% | 45.2% |
| Attainment Gap | -20.5 | -13.17 | - 8.6 | -9.8  | - 5.7 |

The progress in Hackney secondary schools has been excellent:

- ▶ The percentage of pupils achieving 5+A\*-C grades (including English and Maths) has risen consistently from 2006, reflecting a significant rate of improvement of 23 percentage points (from 37% in 2006 to 60% in 2012) .
- ▶ The percentage of pupils achieving 5+A\*-C grades has risen from 31% in 2002 to 79% in 2012, an improvement of 48 percentage points over ten years.

Table 7: Percentage of Pupils Achieving 5+ A\*-C GCSEs Including English and Maths<sup>90</sup>

|                | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009  | 2010  | 2011 | 2012  |
|----------------|------|------|------|-------|-------|------|-------|
| Hackney        | 37%  | 42%  | 43%  | 52.2% | 55.3% | 57%  | 60.2% |
| England        | 46%  | 46%  | 48%  | 50.7% | 53%   | 59%  | 59%   |
| Attainment Gap | -9%  | -4%  | -5%  | 2.2%  | 2.3%  | -2%  | 1%    |

In a speech delivered in February 2010, the then Prime Minister, Gordon Brown recognised the fact that Hackney had seen “the largest improvement in secondary school standards of any local authority in the country since 1998”.<sup>91</sup>

### Aiming higher, going further: Post-16 Education

The Learning Trust worked to develop Post-16 education provision in Hackney, decisively addressing the previous position of single-sex 11-16 schools and limited opportunities for pursuing further education, which resulted in the majority of students taking sixth form places outside the borough.

Significantly, most secondary schools and Academies now provide 11-19 education; B6, the sixth form

college is over-subscribed. From September 2012, Hackney will host one of the first University Technical Colleges (UTC) which will provide an alternative environment for 14-19 education, with a curriculum that balances specialist technical and professional study with GCSE-level English, Maths, Science and IT qualifications.

### Getting Hackney Reading

The Trust concentrated significant resources on schools, focussing on promoting talented leadership in our schools. We also became increasingly adept at identifying what were the most successful strategies for raising attainment. We were able to use our understanding of our community to adapt national strategies to suit our local purposes, for example the National Strategy for Literacy, which we adapted to Words Unite – Get Hackney Reading. Launched in 2008, the campaign Words Unite – Get Hackney Reading engaged the whole Hackney community through workshops, homework clubs, reading groups, and utilising local library services for storytelling and reading challenges. While primarily focussed on encouraging children and young people to read, it also addressed adult literacy. In a borough with a high proportion of adults with English as an additional language, literacy is often a barrier to employment opportunities.

The positive benefits of the Words Unite campaign have contributed to raising the attainment of pupils in Key Stage 1 Reading and Key Stage 2 English and are reflected in the borough's rate of improvement.

- In Hackney, the percentage of pupils achieving Level 2+ in Reading at Key Stage 1 increased by nine percentage points between 2008 (the year of the Words Unite campaign) and 2012. Over the same period, the National Average increased by just two percentage points.

**Table 8: Percentage of Pupils Achieving Level 2+ in Key Stage 1 Reading**

|         | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 |
|---------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Hackney | 77%  | 79%  | 81%  | 83%  | 86%  |
| England | 84%  | 84%  | 85%  | 85%  | 87%  |

- In Hackney, the percentage of pupils achieving Level 4+ in English at Key Stage 2 increased by eighteen percentage points between 2008 and 2012. Over the same period, the National Average increased by eight percentage points.

**Table 9: Percentage of Pupils Achieving Level 4+in Key Stage 2 English**

|         | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 |
|---------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Hackney | 75%  | 74%  | 78%  | 82%  | 93%  |
| England | 81%  | 80%  | 80%  | 81%  | 89%  |

## The end of The Learning Trust's Contract

On 31 July 2012 The Learning Trust's contract with Hackney Council ended and responsibility for education services transferred to the borough. As Director of Children's Services, I led the transition process which created Hackney Learning Trust, a new department of the council and a new model for the delivery of LA services. Hackney Learning Trust was designed to maintain the flexibility and culture of The Learning Trust, whilst becoming part of the wider local authority. The new department maintained the Learning Trust brand, which had become well-known and highly regarded across the education world. This high reputation has enabled HLT to trade its services both inside and outside Hackney.

In 2015, every state school in Hackney, including academies and free schools - purchases services from Hackney Learning Trust. This not only allows us to generate income - in 2014/15 around £7 million - but also to maintain the concept of a connected and mutually supportive local family of schools. Hackney Learning Trust provides a model for an LEA for the 21st century - entrepreneurial, ambitious and self-sustaining. The HLT model allows us to continue providing a robust, effective schools improvement service that supports Hackney schools and enables us to discharge our responsibilities to the young people in the borough. We are now selling services to Local Authorities and schools across the country.

The end of The Learning Trust's contract in July 2012 provided an opportunity to define the future shape and vision for education in Hackney.

*Education Excellence* has established the role a high-quality education service, working in close and constructive partnership with other council services, can play to improve the outcomes and broaden the life chances of children, young people and adult learners in Hackney.<sup>92</sup>

- ▶ Ensuring children get the best possible start through the commissioning and provision of high quality Early Years education and services;
- ▶ Championing the borough's vulnerable children; those excluded, or at risk of exclusion, from school, looked after children and those from deprived backgrounds;
- ▶ Advocating on behalf of children and young people with SEN and disabilities to secure high quality services that ensures they and their parents receive the advice and support necessary for a positive education experience;
- ▶ Leading an admissions service that ensures all families in Hackney have an equal opportunity to get a place at a successful school; and
- ▶ Championing excellent education provision and support school improvement throughout the borough.

The work of improving education in Hackney continues.

## Lessons to be drawn from The Learning Trust's experience

What are the lessons that can be drawn from the ten years in which The Learning Trust was responsible for education in Hackney?

### Having a clear vision.

The vision for The Learning Trust was to be one of the most effective providers of education services in the country. The Learning Trust's vision for education was that all children and young people in Hackney should receive high quality teaching, allowing them to achieve their full potential.

The Learning Trust's achievement was not to secure improvement in some of the schools in Hackney, but in raising achievement across all schools in the Borough. This could only have been achieved by securing the trust of schools – and encouraging them to raise their ambition – and winning the confidence of Hackney's political leadership and the wider community. Our vision for improving schools and raising pupil attainment contributed to building that trust. In their 2003 inspection report, Ofsted recorded: "The support for school improvement is now driven by a clear vision and appropriate priorities that are understood by the staff of the Learning Trust and by schools".<sup>93</sup>

The Trust's vision for education in Hackney set the direction of the organization, guiding our decisions and strategy. Achieving the sustained improvements in education required in Hackney wasn't straightforward. There were setbacks during the ten years, and disappointments, but we never lost our focus on what we wanted to achieve. Our vision was realistic, but it was also ambitious. As Michelangelo is said to have observed, "The greatest danger is not that our aim is too high – but that it is too low and we reach it".

### The importance of stability

It takes a long time to create a system that can bring about sustained improvement in schools. Medium to long-term planning is necessary if the progress is to be enduring. Short-term fixes can produce quick results, but they only rarely address the fundamental weaknesses that cause a system to fail or underperform. A long-term approach to education improvement requires patience and confidence in the strategy being implemented. That confidence comes from knowing that the vision is right. It can be assisted by the removal of undue political influence and intervention. In The Learning Trust's case the length of its contract (ten years) give it a reasonable opportunity to implement the measures required to bring about the necessary improvements.

The contract between Hackney Council and the Learning Trust underpinned our stability. The contract specified 28 key performance indicators against which the Trust was measured. In negotiating the contract I was mindful of the lessons of the contracts between LAs and private improvement providers, many of which bristled with KPIs running into the hundreds. Indeed, in the contract between Hackney and Nord Anglia was a performance indicator stipulating that the phone must be

answered within six rings<sup>94</sup> The KPIs in the Trust's concerned schools' and pupils' performance, and the effectiveness of the support given by the Trust to schools. The Council monitored the Trust's performance against these. It also had to consider and approve the Trust's annual plan.

### Appointing first class leaders

Appointing leaders who have had a positive impact on the services they are responsible for was a real success for The Learning Trust. Nowhere is this more evident than in a number of senior appointments.

Annie Kent was TLT's first director of finance, from 2002-2006. She inherited a highly challenging financial position in 2002 – at one point in the first year of the contract there was a severe risk of the Trust not having sufficient funds to operate effectively. Her skill in managing the budget and assiduous focus on raising income ensured TLT was not just financially secure but able to generate year-on-year surpluses to additionally fund our school improvement priorities.

In school improvement, we focussed on appointing leaders with a substantial track record of effective leadership. After an initial false start, which required the Trust's first director of school improvement to be removed, we appointed Steve Belk as Executive Director for Standards & School Improvement. Steve brought to the role a depth and weight of experience and knowledge from his time as a Hackney Headteacher and head of school improvement in Lewisham. His understanding of how schools operate meant that he was able to provide excellent advice and guidance to headteachers, his experience of raising standards meant that he provided very strong challenge to them. Aware of the impact failing to improve the quality of education a school provides, Steve was a powerful advocate of the moral purpose of leadership in education.

In raising school standards, improving teaching, learning and leadership, Steve was very ably supported by Tricia Okoruwa. When I first came to Hackney in January 2001, Tricia was the Headteacher of Kingsmead Primary School, one of only three primaries at that time rated by Ofsted as Outstanding. The Ofsted inspection team identified the qualities that made Tricia a superb leader: "The headteacher has high expectations and vision that inspires a dedicated team of teachers and support staff...The headteacher has refused to accept that the early language difficulties and ethnic diversity of the pupils should be any barrier to high achievement. She has built around her a team of senior staff members who are committed to the same vision and are imbued with the same strong sense of purpose. The school has won School Achievement Awards for the last two years and is a dynamic, well-integrated, multi-racial community."<sup>95</sup> We appointed Tricia to lead our efforts to improve primary schools. In this role she brought to bear her vast experience of primary school leadership, and her detailed knowledge of pedagogy and strategies for leadership ensured a dramatic turnaround in performance amongst our primary schools. Tricia's leadership took our primaries from being consistently ranked in the bottom 10 LAs in England to being in the best performing 25 per cent. It was a profound tragedy when Tricia passed away in late 2014 at the age of only 50, but her contribution to

Hackney over two decades was a great example of public service.

### Making tough decisions

One of the characteristics that exemplified The Learning Trust's effectiveness, in contrast to the Council, was in our decision-making. The trust operated efficiently because, once a policy or resources decision had been made, we got on with the work of implementing it. There were no second thoughts, or last minute lurches motivated by short-term political expediency. As has been noted above, this was particularly the case in respect of schools organisation – the closing of failing schools and changes to leadership.

The Trust made a number of mistakes in the appointment of key senior staff at the beginning of our contract. Once we identified these weaknesses staff were removed from the organisation quickly. In 2006, I closed down HLT's Human Resources department at the end of one week – following a lengthy period of underperformance and dysfunction – removing a number of staff. We set about creating a new HR service at the beginning of the next week.

Removing underperforming leaders in school was also critical to improving standards and raising the quality of teaching and learning. In order to achieve this effectively, HLT has to demonstrate its resolve to remove underperforming headteachers. Between 2002 and 2007, I met with over twenty school leaders specifically to discuss their performance and, as a consequence – through one mechanism or another – they left the school where they were headteacher. The leader of the local Headteacher's Association, Sean Flood observed at a meeting of Heads in 2014: "Alan was never willing to keep quiet about underperforming leaders. There was one period when I spent more time with him defending heads than I did with my staff".<sup>96</sup>

### Continuing to be relevant

Over the years of The Learning Trust's contract a number of national policy changes were implemented that influenced our work. Changes to the Key Stage 2 and GCSE measures in 2006 adjusted the expectations of what pupils were expected to achieve. The Every Child Matters agenda brought education into closer working partnership with social care for children and safeguarding. The steadily increasing autonomy for schools from LA control has required a new relationship to be forged between the two. These developments required innovation in order to retain a meaningful and influential role in school improvement. The Hackney Learning Trust which was established in 2012 was designed to meet the challenges presented by increasing school autonomy and substantial reductions in public spending.

The Trust's independence from Hackney Council proved to be a significant factor in the organisation's ability to innovate. What guided that innovation was the principle of improving outcomes for children and young people. Encouraging creativity empowered Trust staff to adopt fresh ways of thinking. New ideas and innovation, together with autonomy and the opportunity to take calculated

risks, resulted in a number of borough-wide initiatives, of which Words Unite – Get Hackney Reading was one of the most successful.

### Not letting economic deprivation become an excuse for underachievement

In 2004, the government's Indices of Deprivation placed Hackney as the most deprived borough in England.<sup>97</sup> In 2010, in spite of significant improvements, including higher levels of employment, Hackney remained the most deprived part of London.<sup>98</sup> The link between poverty and low educational outcomes has been analysed in a variety of academic research in a number of countries. The Learning Trust proved that economically deprived neighbourhoods can't be simply written off as places where aspirations are always low, and will always remain low, where pupils from poor families will not fulfil their potential. Any credible policy to increase social mobility must engage with young people's high aspirations providing them and their families, with the support and knowledge to find the pathways through education and employment to realise these ambitions.<sup>99</sup>

In addition to the significant improvements in attainment from Early Years to GCSE, Hackney has substantially expanded Further Education. In 2002, no Hackney secondary school had a sixth form college offering Post-16 education. In 2015, every secondary school and Academy in the Borough has a sixth form, providing Hackney students with a diverse range of A-Levels and apprenticeships, equipping young people with the skills for work.

### Conclusion

We are now well into the Twenty-first century and the education landscape in England has been dramatically altered. Increasing decentralisation and greater autonomy are changing both the shape and requirements of schooling and the responsibilities of schools. Schools now have a greater accountability for their pupils' results, but also their wellbeing; preparing them for jobs and careers of the future and how they contribute to and interact with society. Education must be understood at both its micro-level: the attainment of results, the building of knowledge and development of life skills, and at its macro-level: how education contributes to building social responsibility and contributes to the strength of communities. English local councils have a duty to support schools as their responsibilities are redefined and become broader. Part of this is about improving incentives to make headship in particular more attractive for existing heads and developing the opportunities for those who will become school leaders in the future. There is also a role for councils to use what Theodore Roosevelt termed "the Bully-Pulpit", to take the opportunity to speak out, argue for an improvement agenda: champion the moral purpose of education.

UNESCO has defined *The Knowledge Society* as requiring,

Skills such as problem solving, communication, collaboration, experimentation, critical thinking and creative expression. These skills become curricular goals in themselves and the objects of

new assessment methods. Perhaps the most significant aim is for students to be able to create their own learning goals and plans – to establish what they already know, assess their strengths and weaknesses, design a learning plan, stay on-task, track their own progress, build on successes and adjust to failures. These are skills that can be used throughout a lifetime to participate in a learning society.

To be truly successful an education system must be ambitious: to improve outcomes and raise standards of learning and attainment for all children and young people, and it must have a clear moral purpose. The characteristics of an education system that has at its heart a clear moral purpose are:

- ▶ Ambition for the all-round development of each child, including academic success, social development and strength of character;
- ▶ Aspiration for all of a community's children by each and every one of the schools, settings and colleges in the area;
- ▶ Investment in education should be promoted throughout the wider community, including encouraging parental aspiration, children's and young people's desire to do well and respect for and celebration of achievement within communities;

Opportunity is expanded by high quality education as children and young people learn skills that enable them to grasp opportunities, leading to better employment opportunities and the gratification that comes from fulfilling their potential. Social Justice is strengthened by education as it helps to build a society that challenges prejudice, opposes oppression, rejects intolerance and overcomes inequality.

The focus of The Learning Trust, as an organisation, was entirely on education and children's services, providing support services – for example, special educational needs, admissions, exclusions, pupil benefits- leadership and governance. Unlike the Council, we did not have any additional corporate responsibilities, so there was nothing to distract us from improving education in Hackney. Having an independent body, charged with a single purpose – in the Trust's case, improving education – is an important decision to make. It can involve challenging vested interests, dismantling established structures. In some instances it will require the acknowledgement that previous efforts, however well intentioned, have not been successful. It will be necessary for bold, decisive action to be taken, to cut through inertia and opposition to establish something new that can lead to successful results. For such a body to be successful it must have stability. Strategic, operational and financial independence are essential, and it must be given a sufficient period of time to introduce necessary changes and implement these. These were the key characteristics of The Learning Trust: independence, stability and a clear sense of purpose.

The Learning Trust re-created an education community in Hackney. Before the Trust was set up

there was a saying in the borough that schools did well in Hackney *despite* the LEA. The relationship between schools and the LEA was characterised by suspicion and a measure of hostility. It was, after all, headteachers of Hackney schools who told Ofsted that education services should be removed from the Local Authority. The Trust's partnership with schools was based on a clear strategy: we would not tolerate low standards. The Learning Trust was able to exercise a moral authority. We proved we had the capacity and the competence to identify what needed to be improved. We worked with schools, encouraging them to be ambitious for their pupils and challenging them on their performance. When it was necessary, we acted decisively to intervene in those schools that consistently underperformed and support those that were struggling. A community is only as strong as those who participate within it. The Trust encouraged collaboration between schools - strengthening links and encouraging competition - to improve standards and build a sense of collective responsibility for improvement.

The Learning Trust restored public confidence in education in Hackney. We created an education service that people felt proud to work for and which earned the respect of the community - headteachers and teaching staff, governors and parents, and the pupils themselves. We were not imprisoned by history, or weighed down by the baggage of what had gone before. The Learning Trust marked a fresh start for schools in Hackney. From the beginning we emphasised the importance of good quality education and we created a service where there were no excuses for poor attainment or low ambition. We proved that schools in Hackney could perform as well as schools in any other part of England. I am proud of The Learning Trust's record, it was the achievement of a team I was proud and privileged to lead. Together we improved the opportunities - the life chances - of children and young people in Hackney. To have contributed to the revival of education in the borough, to have played a part in revitalising teaching and learning and to have had the chance to renovate school buildings so that future generations can learn in modern settings has been the most gratifying part of my career in public service.

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Over the last fifteen years I have been very fortunate to work with very talented, motivated people at the Trust and in our schools and settings. We would never have achieved what we did without their passionate commitment to education in Hackney. I hope this paper is a fitting tribute to their efforts.

### 〈Glossary of terms〉

BSF : Building Schools for the Future / DfES : Department for Education & Skills / HMI : Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools / ILEA : Inner London Education Authority / LBH : London Borough of Hackney / LEA : Local Education Authority / Ofsted : Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills / SEN : Special Educational Needs / TLT : The Learning Trust

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- 91 Prime minister’s Speech on Education by Rt Hon Gordon Brown, MP 23 February 2010, delivered at Woodberry Down Primary School, London Borough of Hackney <<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130109092234/>> <<http://number10.gov.uk/news/speeches-and-transcripts/2010/02/transcript-of-pms-speech-on-education-22580>>
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- 93 Ofsted Inspection of Hackney Local Education Authority, September 2003.
- 94 *A Revolution in a Decade: 10 out of 10*, Alan Boyle and Salli Humphreys, October 2011.
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- 96 Introductory Remarks by Sean Flood, headteacher of Our Lady & St Joseph’s Primary School at the Hackney Headteachers Conference, 2014.
- 97 The English Indices of Deprivation use 38 separate indicators, organised across seven distinct domains. These are Income, Employment, Health and Disability, Education Skills and Training, Barriers to Housing and Other Services, Crime and Living Environment.
- 98 <[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/6871/1871208.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6871/1871208.pdf)>
- 99 See, for example the report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation ‘The influence of parents, places and poverty on educational attitudes and aspirations’ by Ralf St Clair, Keith Kintrea and Muir Houston, of the College of Social Sciences, University of Glasgow <<http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/young-people-education-attitudes-summary.pdf>>