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the local authority contribution to improved educational outcomes

phase one report

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Local Government Association



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



All quotations used in this report are taken direct from the research interviews and case studies, unless otherwise specified.

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Executive summary

Introduction

- In July 2002, central and local government agreed a set of shared priorities in key areas of public service delivery. The focus of the education shared priority is on the wider local authority (not just the education department) contribution to raising educational achievement. Investigating this broad remit is the subject of the current study.
- Previous research has highlighted the effect that family background can have on children's success at school and their subsequent attainment. There has also been increasing recognition that schools cannot solve such problems on their own. Recent government policy and legislation (the Green Paper *Every Child Matters*, and the Children Bill (2004)) has emphasised the value of a holistic approach through increased partnership working by services, in order to address these problems, acknowledging that children's needs are often complex and multi-faceted and thus do not fit neatly within the remit of one service or agency.
- The present report aims to provide an overarching perspective of the educational outcomes achieved, or aspired to, in the new local authority landscape, and how a range of local authorities perceive their contribution to such outcomes. It also looks at what local authorities can do to support children and young people in achieving the best possible educational outcomes.
- There are two phases to the research: firstly, documentary analysis and telephone interviews with key personnel from a range of local authorities (undertaken between July and September 2004); and case-study work in eight of these local authorities (to take place between October and December 2004). This report is based on phase one of the study.

Definitions of educational outcomes

- The first objective of the study was 'to relay definitions of "educational outcomes" apparent in the discourse and documentation of different local authorities'. For this, two data sources were used: documentation mainly in the form of Best Value Performance Plans (BVPPs) of the 46 local authorities receiving an 'excellent' Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) judgement, and data from telephone interviews with key personnel from 18 local authorities.
- The agreed starting point was the five overarching principles or outcomes for children and young people, as outlined in *Every Child Matters* and the Children Bill. These are: being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution and economic well-being.
- In the documentation, references to 'enjoying and achieving' and 'staying safe' were most prevalent. Outcomes that could be categorised under 'making a positive contribution' featured least often (in just over half of the 46 BVPPs). Exactly half of the BVPPs contained references to all five principles.
- Telephone interviewees collectively also mentioned all five principles. However, themes and outcomes relating to 'economic well-being' and 'making a positive contribution' were least often referenced. 'Enjoying and achieving' outcomes were most often mentioned.
- There was a notable absence of explicit references to 'enjoyment' (as distinct from achievement) in either the documentation or the telephone interviews.
- There was variation in emphasis within the definitions of educational outcomes offered by the interview sample. Distinct categories were evident in their responses, namely, 'traditional measures' (that is, attainment-type performance indicators and the school improvement and standards agenda); the

reiteration of the five Green Paper and Children Bill principles; wider holistic outcomes similar to, but importantly pre-dating, the Bill; outcomes taking into account local contexts; and finally that the concept was currently 'under review' or 'embryonic'.

- Interviewees usually highlighted more than one of these categories. Some suggested 'traditional' outcomes measures and Children Bill principles were equally embedded in strategic thinking. Where traditional outcomes measures were alone highlighted, these also usually focused on specific groups such as vulnerable children (for example, those in care and Travellers) and underachievers, or there was additional reference to vocational attainment and the whole 14–19 education agenda.
- Overall, responses from the sample clearly demonstrated a move away from a sole focus on aggregated attainment measures as a viable definition of educational outcomes.

Strategies to achieve improved educational outcomes

- A wide range of strategies was evident within local authorities' documentation that could be categorised according to the five Green Paper principles. Recurrent themes also emerged within each of these overarching principles: partnerships or groups; local authority-level strategies or plans; forums and councils; and services.
- When asked to comment on strategies to improve educational outcomes for children and young people generally, interviewees referred to the collaboration and partnership that existed between the local authority services and schools. The benefits of children's centres which operated as 'one-stop shops' for families, offering a range of services were highlighted, as were extended schools in providing a single base for joined-up community services.
- The monitoring and leadership role of the local authority in terms of its contribution to school improvement was stressed. New organisational structures, evaluation frameworks and information sharing systems were identified as beneficial in improving educational outcomes. For vulnerable groups, effective monitoring to enable earlier

identification and to implement appropriate support was also noted as a key strategy to improve outcomes.

- A holistic approach to meeting the needs of looked after children through increased multi-agency partnership working was particularly reported.
- Children living in deprived areas were highlighted as an issue in the majority of the local authorities in the sample. Strategies to achieve improved outcomes for such children included the Sure Start programme, especially children's centres. Other local authority strategies noted were initiatives to improve local housing; regenerate local areas of significant deprivation; improve before- and after-school care; increase lifelong learning opportunities; and improve leisure and sporting opportunities. The need for targeted funding towards the areas of most need was identified.

Key factors in achieving educational outcomes

- A number of key factors for efficient councils and/or effective service delivery were evident. Six major themes emerged: partnership working; key principles underpinning service delivery; funding; staffing; community engagement and awareness of local circumstances.
- Partnership working was recognised as a major component of improving educational outcomes. The value of effective partnerships both between and within agencies was highlighted, as was the need to extend the range of partners, in recognition of the complexity of children's needs which rarely fit within the realm of just one service or agency.
- A number of elements of partnership working were referenced in both data sources, namely: shared values about what the partnership was trying to achieve; common aims and objectives reinforced by shared targets; leadership (with the role of the local authority in this confirmed); clarity of roles and responsibilities; good communication and information sharing systems; contiguity (in terms of co-terminus boundaries); and monitoring (including sharing best practice in order to learn from and build on the experience of others).

- Key principles underpinning effective service delivery included: flexibility (in terms of the changing needs of the local community, service delivery, and the deployment of resources); commitment to ensuring improvements in the quality of service of delivery; and accountability for actions taken. Interviewees also highlighted strategic vision, 'putting children at the heart of the local authority's thinking'.
- The importance of managing resources effectively in order to achieve the local authority vision, whilst ensuring value for money, was identified. Interviewees stressed the need for funding to be sustained in order to achieve improved educational outcomes. Short-term, targeted funding created difficulties for local authorities in terms of meeting needs effectively and mainstreaming effective projects.
- Proposals to consider a move towards three-year settlements in the 2004 Spending Review were welcomed by interviewees who felt this would match more with requirements for three-year plans and go some way towards alleviating problems imposed by short-term funding cycles. Geographical and national differences also emerged as an issue with regards to funding in some authorities.
- The documentation and interviewee comments recognised the need for the recruitment and retention of a high quality, well managed, well trained and motivated workforce, committed to the community vision. Interviewees also noted the need for greater balance within the skills base of the workforce, with increased numbers who could work across boundaries, and a concomitant need for professional development opportunities.
- The importance of active community involvement in local decision making was referenced in the documentation, particularly highlighting the need for consultation and ensuring access to relevant information for all. Several authorities' documentation noted an investment in new technology in order to improve information sharing and democratic decision making. Engaging the local community, particularly young people, was also identified. Interviewees stressed the importance of the community leadership role of the local authority in this respect.

Barriers and challenges to achieving educational outcomes

- Evidence of barriers or challenges to achieving better educational outcomes was much less evident within local authority documentation. However, a number of issues did emerge: staffing; funding/budgetary constraints; rurality; balancing national and local priorities; increasing numbers of individuals (including young people) with complex care needs which puts pressure on support services; and deprivation. Most of these were reiterated by the interview sample.
- Interviewees were asked to comment on specific challenges for their authority. Low aspiration (and a culture of non-learning where education was not valued) was perceived to be a continuing problem. The importance of family background and the changing context of the local area were also highlighted, the latter often leading to significant population mobility. Projects to raise young people's confidence and self-esteem, increasing the range of opportunities for young learners, and helping parents to become more effective in supporting their children's learning were highlighted as ways of addressing this.
- Some variation in opinion surfaced amongst interviewees as to the extent of cultural differences between professionals working with children and young people. It was not seen as a problem where much dialogue occurred, particularly in small authorities, but in others, the 'minutiae' (for example, differences in pay structures, holidays, and so on) was perceived to be intrusive at operational level.
- From the interviews, local authorities appeared to be at different stages along the route to restructuring services, with some described as 'well along' and others making progress. Greater integration of services was seen in terms of 'how' it would take place rather than when. Accountability through joint inspections was identified as potentially problematic for restructuring, with the need for clear performance management systems and clear corporate priorities highlighted.
- The recruitment and retention of high quality staff, (a key factor in achieving better educational outcomes),

was also identified as a challenge by interviewees. Particularly noted was the challenge to ensure balance within the skills base of the workforce as partnership working increased and roles changed. Interviewees warned that reform was not a cheap option and called for appropriate resourcing in order to develop workforce reform and encourage greater partnership working.

- Ensuring targeted and sustained funding was identified as a challenge to, as well as a key factor in, achieving better educational outcomes (also underlined in recent key policy documents).
- The rural nature of some local authorities was raised as a particular challenge in two large county local authorities, with transport a significant issue.
- Greater autonomy for schools (a key focus of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) five-year strategy) was not universally welcomed by interviewees. The majority stressed the importance of the relationship that existed between local authorities and their schools, as well as between schools themselves. Local authorities were still felt to have a key role in monitoring and improving performance, as well as providing strategic leadership. Once again, the need for effective partnership working was identified.
- Overwhelmingly, interviewees felt that an increased neighbourhood renewal and community leadership role for the local authority would enhance rather than impede its contribution to improving educational outcomes. Again, this was linked to an awareness of the interrelationship of the issues that affected young people's lives. However, a minority noted that local authority priorities, in terms of education, were not always compatible with a regeneration agenda.

The continuing role of the local authority

- The DfES five-year strategy for children and learners has placed a duty on local authorities to work in partnership to ensure better outcomes for children and young people, with children's trusts as the central vehicle in integrating the planning and commissioning of services. It has emphasised the

traditional leadership and quality assurance role of local authorities.

- Perceptions of interviewees in the current study reflected this. The local authority role was variously portrayed as: a facilitator, 'enabler' and 'galvaniser'; a proactive leadership (or key driver) function; a critical friend (to schools) and watchdog, with the capacity to challenge when what was taking place was not good enough; a moral leadership role (promoting value systems with a strong sense of purpose and a commitment to equality); and a local orientation (being in touch with local communities and promoting local culture and pride).
- The most common response from interviewees was to describe the local authority in its facilitating role, sometimes noted as an irreplaceable function. Also noted was the need for local authorities to: invest further in citizenship and leisure; be 'smarter' at partnership working; be more flexible; think 'more creatively and innovatively'; and, finally, to be the vehicle to ensure that everyone was working together, with 'a vested interest' to achieve better outcomes for children and young people.

Conclusion

- From the telephone sample and local authority documentation, it is clear that most authorities are already embracing the new agenda, involving reconfigured services, revisions to the curriculum, rethinking around the role of schools and local communities, and a reconsideration of the contribution of the community, including young people themselves.
- The associated language of the Children Bill and its five principles, as well as that of partnership, flexibility, holistic support for young people, innovation, and the local authority as a 'facilitator' reverberated throughout the data. 'Education outcomes' are clearly generally perceived to mean far more than aggregated attainment measures, and there was a recognition that addressing other outcomes inherent in the five principles are vital components of – and indeed precursors to – educational achievement. However, with regard to these principles, the data did show least reference to 'enjoyment' (as opposed to achievement), 'making a

positive contribution' and also 'economic well-being', and these may be areas in need of further attention.

- Overall, the key messages to emerge from this present phase suggest the role of the local authority, albeit changing, is perceived to be no less vital in achieving educational outcomes. Terminology such as 'enabler', 'key driver', 'critical friend' perhaps

highlight a new and more subtle leadership function, yet one that local authority interviewees still noted as unique and irreplaceable.

- Further exploration of factors, barriers and strategies to achieving educational outcomes, and specifically how local contexts might influence or impinge on them in practice, is a feature of the next phase of the research.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

In July 2002, central and local government agreed a set of shared priorities in key areas of public service delivery. The focus of the education shared priority is on the wider local authority (not just the education department) contribution to raising educational achievement. This shared priority aims to relay the ways in which a local authority, in its broadest definition, can play a part in improving educational outcomes for children and young people. Early documentation from the Local Government Association (LGA) on this educational achievement objective has frequently referenced a local authority's 'local strategic leadership in education'. Different arenas for this leadership are identified, such as:

- providing an overview of and joining up services
- being the key drivers to children and young people's strategic partnerships (including collaboration in the 14–19 education sector)
- the local authority role in school improvement and supporting schools
- developing educational opportunities to meet the needs of local communities.

These can be seen to mirror major arenas within the national agenda and other LGA priorities, namely the reform of children's services (as laid out in the government Green Paper *Every Child Matters*), systematically improving education provision for 14–19 year-olds, for example, *14–19: Extending Opportunities, Raising Standards* (DfES, 2002), and raising standards across schools (as identified by Ofsted).

Every Child Matters (HM Treasury, 2003) was introduced in response to the inquiry led by Lord Laming into Victoria Climbié's death. It set out a framework for improving outcomes for children, young people and their families and led to much debate about the future of children's services. It outlined five key outcomes for children and young people that services should work towards: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and

achieving, making a positive contribution and economic well-being. Following consultation on this Green Paper, the DfES published an accompanying document *Every Child Matters: Next Steps* (DfES, 2004) which laid out the government's plans for reforming children's services in order to achieve the aims and objectives of the Green Paper.

In conjunction with this, the Children Bill (2004) was introduced as a first step in a planned programme of change. The Bill placed a duty on all agencies to work together to deliver common outcomes and created a statutory basis for partnership working and the involvement of all partners, including the voluntary and community sectors. It also introduced the creation of the position of Director of Children's Services and a Lead Council Member for children, in order to ensure accountability across, as well as greater integration of, children's services. The Children Bill also encouraged the development of children's trusts, the main purpose of which is intended to be the securing of integrated commissioning to ensure more integrated service delivery and improved outcomes for children and young people. Trusts will be based in local government but will bring together health, education and social care, involving a wide range of partners, including both the voluntary and community sectors. The importance of children's trusts was underlined in the DfES five-year strategy for improving outcomes for children and learners, which was based on five key principles of reform:

- greater personalisation and choice
- increased diversity of provision and providers
- greater freedom and autonomy for schools
- a major commitment to staff development
- effective partnerships (GB. Parliament, House of Commons (HoC), 2004).

Previous research (Feinstein, 2003) has highlighted the effect that family background can have on children's

success at school and their subsequent attainment. In recent years, schools within the UK have found themselves increasingly having to cope with problems resulting from the multiple disadvantages experienced by pupils and their families living in deprived areas. There has been growing recognition that schools cannot solve the problems associated with social exclusion on their own (Tett, 2000; Dowling and Osborne, 1994; LGA, 2004). As already shown, recent government policy and legislation has emphasised the value of a holistic approach through increased partnership working in order to address these problems. One response has been the development of extended schools that provide a range of services to the community on a single site. Local authorities will have to consider the organisational and structural changes that might be necessary in order to address the need to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families in a more holistic way. Some authorities will have decided to adopt an incremental approach that minimises structural change, whilst others will have made a conscious decision to bring all key children's services together to form a single department. *Every Child Matters* advocated the latter, reiterating that children's needs are often complex and multi-faceted and, therefore, do not fit neatly within organisational boundaries.

Every Child Matters suggested that bringing services together within one children's department would break down these boundaries and avoid children and families being subjected to a whole range of bureaucratic processes in order to have their needs met. What is also clear, however, is that bringing together traditionally separate departments, for example, education and social services, will also require a degree of cultural change. *From Vision to Reality* (LGA, 2004) indicated that, whether an incremental or more immediate approach is adopted, achieving change is 'inevitably time-consuming and complex' and, as such, should not be rushed. Equally, the document noted that 'whole system change' could only be brought about by ensuring the involvement of the whole community in the collective pursuit of improving outcomes for children and young people. Recent legislation and policy documentation has confirmed the role of the local authority as the accountable body for children's services across agencies, as well as underlining its key community leadership role and its ability to stimulate and support greater partnership working in order to achieve improved outcomes for children and young people.

Evaluation and research in each of the arenas of local authority leadership highlighted at the beginning of this section (for example, the reform of children's services; improved education provision for 14–19 year-olds; and raising standards across schools) is currently being undertaken by NFER for the LGA (*Evaluation of Serving Children Well pathfinders, Mapping the 14-19 Learning Landscape* and *Evaluation of Shared Priority: Raising Standards across all Schools*), focusing importantly on processes and procedures. The present study, whilst taking account of these contiguous NFER studies, aimed to provide an overarching perspective on the educational outcomes achieved, or aspired to, in the new local authority landscape. It explored issues of what different definitions of educational outcomes are currently evident in local authorities' discourse and documentation and how a range of local authority services and partnerships perceive their contribution to such outcomes. The study also addressed the LGA's wish to ascertain what more local authorities can do to support children and young people to achieve the best possible educational outcomes.

1.2 Aims

The overarching aim of the study was to explore the local authority contribution to improving educational outcomes for children and young people. Commensurate with this aim, the study had seven objectives:

1. to relay definitions of 'educational outcomes' apparent within the discourse and documentation of different local authorities
2. to collect (from local policies/plans and interviewees) evidence of strategies to achieve those educational outcomes
3. to extract examples of perceived good practice from the documentation
4. to audit perceptions of key factors or components in achieving educational outcomes (from both interview and documentation sources)
5. to collect (through interviews with key local authority personnel, other partners and stakeholders) many perspectives of what local authorities are doing in order to achieve those educational outcomes identified in objective (i)

6. to highlight the perceived barriers and challenges to achieving better educational outcomes
7. to relay perceptions of what further contribution local authorities can make to improving educational outcomes for children and young people.

1.3 Methodology

There were two phases to the research.

Phase one: a mapping and 'scoping' exercise

This phase included desk-based research on relevant policy and strategy papers (at both national and local levels), discussion documents and existing research and evaluation reports (including NFER's work for the LGA). Where relevant, the websites of relevant organisations and networks (for example, Ofsted, the Audit Commission, government departments) were accessed to find relevant information.

Telephone interviews were conducted as part of this phase with a sample of LGA task group members and representatives from a sample of local authorities currently involved in strategies and initiatives to support children and young people in achieving better educational outcomes.

Phase two: case studies

The second phase of the research will be conducted between October and December 2004. It will involve case-study work in eight local authorities in order to conduct a more detailed exploration of what local authorities are doing to improve educational outcomes for children and young people, as well as the perceived barriers or challenges they face and what more can be done. The authorities will be chosen to represent a range of different types (for example, rural or urban, level of socio-economic disadvantage, variety of approach) as well as to reflect effective and interesting practice. Interviews will be conducted with key local authority personnel including, for example, chief executives, children's trust managers, chairs of children and young people partnerships and, where already appointed, directors of children's services, as well as other partners and stakeholders.

The present report outlines the findings from phase one of the study, drawing on the data from the documentary analysis and the telephone interviews.

1.4 The sample

In order to provide a framework for the documentary analysis, NFER librarians collated documentation (in particular CPAs, BVPPs, and Local Public Service Agreements (LPSAs)) from each of the 46 local authorities given an 'excellent' CPA judgment. Documents were then summarised using a template which described the information presented according to:

- definitions of educational outcomes
- evidence of strategies to achieve those outcomes
- key factors or components in achieving educational outcomes
- perceived barriers or challenges to achieving such outcomes
- perceptions of further contributions local authorities could make to improving educational outcomes.

Eighteen telephone interviews were conducted with four LGA Education Shared Priority task group members and representatives from 14 local authorities currently involved in strategies/initiatives to support children and young people to achieve better educational outcomes, in order to ascertain their views on the above issues. Interviewees included personnel from education (for example, director or assistant director, assistant chief education officer, head of school improvement) as well as from other departments or services, such as cultural services, Community Service Volunteers (CSV) and an Arts Zone.

A detailed table of the 18 local authorities in terms of type of authority (for example, metropolitan or London borough, county, and so on), region, political control, levels of deprivation and attainment levels (in terms of key stage or GCSE scores) can be found in the Appendix to this report.

As a quick summary, the sample included:

- five unitary authorities (two of which were mainly rural, two mainly urban and one mixed)
- five metropolitan boroughs (four northern authorities and one in the Midlands)
- four rural county authorities

- two London boroughs
- one small unitary Welsh authority
- one new town (part of a large county authority).

In terms of political control: seven councils were mainly Labour held, four mainly Liberal Democrat held, and two mainly Conservative held. In four, no party had overall political control, while the remaining one was under joint Labour or Liberal Democrat control.

In terms of the attainment levels, the following is noted:

- At key stage 2, levels within the sample varied from below the national average of 27.4 at 26.4 to above it at 28.3.
- At key stage 3, levels varied from below the national average of 34.3 at 31.5 to above it at 37.0.
- The percentage of GCSEs at grades A* to C varied from 39.6 to 67.0 per cent.
- The percentage of GCSEs at grades A* to G varied from 79.0 to 92.2 per cent.

1.5 The report

This report is based on phase one of the study, drawing on the data from the documentary analysis and the telephone interviews with a sample of LGA Education Shared Priority task group members and representatives from the sample of 18 local authorities.

Chapter 2 focuses on the definitions of educational outcomes evident in the thinking and documentation of local authorities, looking particularly beyond attendance, achievement and inclusion or exclusion.

Chapter 3 audits the strategies put in place by local authorities in order to achieve those educational outcomes identified in the previous chapter.

Chapter 4 then outlines the key factors in local authorities achieving positive educational outcomes, including, for example, effective partnership working (shared value systems, leadership, clarity of roles), funding, staffing, and so on.

Chapter 5 identifies the barriers or challenges that local authorities might face in achieving better educational outcomes, including, for example, staffing, funding, low aspirations, council restructuring, and so on.

Chapter 6 ends the report by considering the continuing role of the local authority in achieving better educational outcomes for children and young people.

2 Definitions of educational outcomes

2.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the first objective of the study, namely 'to relay definitions of "educational outcomes" apparent in the discourse and documentation of different local authorities'. It is based on analysis of key documents (primarily BVPPs) from the sample of 46 local authorities that received an 'excellent' CPA judgement and on data from telephone interviews with the sample that comprised 18 key personnel from local authorities including LGA Education Shared Priority Task Group members and other organisations.

Following discussions with LGA, the starting point of the inquiry was the five overarching principles or outcomes for children and young people, as outlined in the Green Paper *Every Child Matters* and the Children Bill (2004). These are:

- A being healthy
- B staying safe (from harm and neglect)
- C enjoying and achieving
- D making a positive contribution
- E economic well-being.

It is important to note that this phase of the study was intended as a preliminary scoping exercise. In taking such a broad interpretation of what constitutes an 'educational outcome', the research was attempting to gauge how far local authorities were keeping pace with (or indeed, might be ahead of) the national agenda, as outlined in the introduction to this report. Such a spectrum being given the nomenclature 'educational outcomes' is premised on an acknowledgement that children and young people are unlikely to achieve their educational optimum whenever other basic aspects of their lives are absent. Hence, addressing outcomes associated with safety, health and economic well-being could be seen as vital components of – and precursors to – educational achievement. Thus, it may be possible to see such principles as constituting a 'Maslow's

triangle' type of hierarchy, with educational achievement resting upon the pre-existence of these other factors.

2.2 The five principles: documentary analysis

Documentation from 46 local authorities was analysed, and all references to any aspect of the five Green Paper principles were categorised accordingly. Table 2.1 overleaf shows the outcomes audited within each of these categories. Key themes emerged under each principle.

It is important to note that, in undertaking such an audit, some degree of overlap was inevitable. For example, improvements in housing (classified under principle B) could also be said to contribute to a healthier community (principle A), as well as a safer one where young people are protected from harm or neglect. Equally, not engaging in antisocial or offending behaviour could be a feature of making a positive contribution to the community, as well as an outcome for a safer neighbourhood, while a reduction in drug misuse might be said to be an element of being healthy as well as being safe.

With this caveat, the themes to emerge are outlined below, and additional analysis on how far these featured in the interview sample's responses is presented.

Firstly, under the principle 'being healthy' (principle A), the documentation showed a range of references to:

- improved and modernised health care and social services (for example, reductions in waiting times, quicker emergency response, improved mental health services)
- reductions in unhealthy pursuits and their corollary (for example, smoking and drug taking; reduction in rates of strokes, cancer, and respiratory disease)
- active promotion and support for healthier lifestyles and healthier communities (for example, increase in

consumption of fruit and vegetables, promoting exercise or, more generally, narrowing of health inequalities)

- improvements in the workforce's health or longevity (for example, improvements in work/life balance, reduction in number of working days lost to illness).

The widest range of outcomes related to the promotion and achievement of healthier lifestyles and communities. While all such outcomes might be seen to affect children and young people, the latter were directly mentioned in relation to such issues as: reductions of teenage conception and pregnancy, improvements in school meal quality and reduction in infant mortality and low birth weight.

Less than half of the 18 interviewees (seven) made any reference to this principle in recounting how educational outcomes were currently defined in their local authority or organisation. One referred to 're-educating people about the government's plans for physical education'. Raising awareness in schools about issues such as 'healthy eating, diet and nutrition' was also noted. Another interviewee nominated his local authority's monitoring of children's health, using indicators that 'focus on physical countable things like the number of children who've had a health assessment in the preceding year'. This 'proxy measure' was underpinned by 'an assumption that if children are being assessed and getting treatment, they are going to be more healthy and that would lead into their education'.

Within the second principle 'staying safe', there were again distinctive themes, including:

- a reduction in crime, youth-related offending and antisocial behaviour, and also fear of crime
- creating a safer, cleaner environment in terms of reducing pollution, fire risk and traffic-related environmental problems, as well as nature preservation
- better and increased housing in terms of affordability and quality, as well as availability for vulnerable groups like the homeless, those in temporary accommodation and those requiring domestic refuge
- improvements directly around child neglect and abuse or discrimination.

Again, children and young people were specifically referenced within some of these themes. Table 2.1 B includes 'provision of safer routes to school', 'increased play areas' 'improved standards of playground equipment' within the environment theme, while youth-related references under the theme of crime cover aspects such as: 'juvenile nuisance calls' and 'reduction in re-offending through education, training and employment'. In addition, specific references to child protection issues were evident.

From the interview sample, six of the 18 made a specific reference to this principle. One noted that reductions in 'adverse outcomes' such as 'children as victims of crime' was one way of measuring a local authority's success, another referred to an outcome of children and young people's 'right to having facilities and opportunities to play safely, [and] live in a safe place'. A third highlighted how 'bad outcomes', such as involvement in crime and drugs, would accrue from exclusion and too rigid a focus on traditional attainment measures.

Principle C, 'enjoying and achieving' is clearly that most directly associated with children and young people's educational outcomes, but again, references ranged across a number of themes, covering:

- the standards and attainment agendas (for example, outcomes measured by key stage or GCSE results or equivalent)
- the inclusion agenda: addressing truancy, exclusion and concomitant reintegration
- lifelong learning
- curriculum diversification, (including the 14–19 curriculum agenda and increased cultural and leisure opportunities)
- parental involvement and aspiration
- improved educational services for young people (for example, during early years and youth service provision)
- school diversity, including extended schools and also meeting the needs of different pupil groups such as the gifted and talented or those with special educational needs (SEN)

- increased expenditure and investment in schooling, including building programmes and per pupil capita spending.

Table 2.1 C may notably show the absence of any explicit references to 'enjoyment', (even though this theme has been defined as 'every child's birthright' by the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (DfES, 2003)). However, at the same time, the audit does confirm how achievement has a much wider definition than just the 'traditional' standards and attainment agenda. The range of measurement for educational attainment is also noteworthy.

From the interview sample, perhaps not surprisingly, this principle received most references. The attainment agenda and curriculum diversification were particularly referenced (see section 2.2 in this chapter) while improved services, school diversification and increased expenditure were noted by fewer interviewees. Nevertheless, all these themes did surface in at least one or two commentaries on definitions of educational outcomes. Thus, several interviewees noted they had 'indicators for high levels of inclusion', 'an inclusion quality framework' or that 'softer indicators re inclusion are very important to us'. There were references to local authorities having 'measures of parental satisfaction' or a focus on 'parenting and support for parents'. Improved educational services were noted in relation to 'outreach education' and 'increasing money into youth services'. One interviewee highlighted his local authority's 'attainment-raising activity in the context of the school community', and another noted that the local authority was 'about to look at budgets'.

As Table 2.1 D shows, the fourth principle, 'making a positive contribution', covered themes such as:

- involvement in local democracy and decision making, with general references to dialogue and consultation
- participation in specific areas such as service planning, voluntary organisations and community safety
- young people's participation in the above, with consultation through forums and young people's partnerships
- the promotion of citizenship
- the extended school agenda: schools' offering services on a single site to the wider community.

Here, obviously, the last three themes had particular and direct resonance in relation to educational outcomes for children and young people. It was notable, however, that only three local authority personnel in the interview sample referenced any of these themes. One highlighted their authority's 'range of engagements with young people directly through youth forums' and another referred to young people's 'right to a say in any development'. One interviewee noted 'broader social outcomes ... citizenship-type of outcomes' as part of 'the wide range' being used in their authority.

Outcomes relating to the final principle 'economic well-being' showed a number of themes emerging. These included:

- reductions in poverty, deprivation, low income households and concomitantly improved standards of living
- achieving economic prosperity, a local economy that is 'diverse, competitive and dynamic', as well as general references to regeneration and revitalisation
- directly addressing unemployment, including 'removing barriers', provision for training and enskilling the local workforce, and 'narrowing the unemployment gap' within a local authority area.

Here, again, outcomes specifically for young people were often implicit. Providing training (and a commitment to enskilling the workforce) would clearly be very relevant, and Table 2.1 E does show a particular reference to a 'reduction in the percentage of under 16s living in low income households'.

From the interview sample, only two local authority representatives mentioned this principle. Indeed, one interviewee admitted that this was an omission in the outcomes developed through consultation with young people in the local communities. Nevertheless, another did highlight how their local authority was aware of the need to address a big increase in the local construction industry and the need to train up the local workforce, and a second reference emerged when a 14–19 coordinator spoke of the importance of the 'whole regeneration and skills agenda'.

Looking specifically at the documentation, it was notable that, overall, references to the second and third principles, 'enjoying and achieving' (mentioned in all 46

cases), and 'staying safe' (in 43 BVPPs) emerged as the most prevalent, with 'economic well-being' a close third (in 41 instances). Outcomes which could be categorised under the principle 'making a positive contribution' featured the least often (in just over half of the 46 local

authorities' BVPPs), while outcomes associated with 'being healthy' featured in about three-quarters. Exactly half of the local authorities' documentation (23) could be seen to have references to outcomes which could be categorised under all five principles.

Table 2.1 Educational outcomes for children and young people identified within the documentation

A.	Being healthy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Healthier communities and a narrowing of health inequalities - Improved access to good health and social care advice and facilities - Modernised social and health care services - Improved mental health services - People supported to live independent, healthy and fulfilled lives - Maximised opportunities and life chances of children in care - Increased educational qualifications for children leaving care - Increase in the number of foster placements and adoptions - Reduced rates of teenage conception and pregnancy - Causes of ill health addressed - Improvements in the work/life balance across the community - Reduction in number of working days lost to illness - Reduction in number of people retiring early due to ill health - Increase in percentage of economically active disabled people - Reduction in infant mortality rates and incidences of low birth weight - Reduction in gaps in life expectancy - Increase in proportion of drug misusers participating in treatment programmes - Increase in people's consumption of fruit and vegetables - Improvements in quality of school meals - Reduction in waiting times for assessments - Improved speed of emergency response - Promotion of exercise - Reduction in smoking - Reduction in rates of coronary disease, strokes, cancer and respiratory diseases
B.	Staying safe (from harm and neglect)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduction in discrimination - Protection of vulnerable adults and children from harm and neglect - Strengthened protection of children at risk of abuse - Increased percentage of children on child protection register whose cases are reviewed <p><i>Crime</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduction in crime and the fear of crime, and antisocial behaviour (particularly youth offending) - Reduction in drug and alcohol-related crime - Reduction in re-offending (particularly amongst 10–17 year-olds) through education, training and access to employment - Reduction in juvenile nuisance calls - Reduction in racist incidents <p><i>Environment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A safe, clean and green borough - Reduced pollution

B. Staying safe (from harm and neglect) contd

- Reduction in waste, litter and fly tipping
- Increase in recycling
- Increase in energy efficiency
- Reduction in traffic congestion
- Improved roads and cycleways
- Reduction in number of accidents on roads
- Raised awareness of fire safety
- Reduction in accidental fire and fire-related deaths
- Improved transport systems
- Improvements in car parking and park & ride facilities
- Provision of safer routes to school
- Increased play areas
- Improved street lighting
- Variety and quality of the built environment enhanced
- Improved public conveniences
- Improved access to countryside and public open spaces
- Improved cleanliness of public spaces, reduction in graffiti, abandoned vehicles etc.
- Increased CCTV coverage in public areas
- Community warden schemes introduced
- Increased opportunities for wildlife to thrive in open spaces
- Protecting tree reserves
- Improved standards of playground equipment
- Increased percentage of pedestrian crossings with facilities for disabled people

Housing

- Provision of affordable housing
- Increased number of empty homes brought back into use
- Increased number of unfit homes made fit or demolished
- Improved quality of housing
- Housing needs of the vulnerable or those with special housing requirements met
- Reduction in length of stay of families in B&Bs and hostels
- Increase in number of domestic refuge places
- Prevention of homelessness and reduction in numbers sleeping rough

C. Enjoying and achieving

- Raised standards across schools
- Raised parental and pupil aspirations
- Increased quality and availability of early years support services in education and childcare, for example, children's centres
- Improved educational outcomes as measured by key stage or GCSE results or their equivalent'
- All children to benefit from the diversity of schools
- Parents and carers enabled to support children's learning
- Enhanced provision for gifted and talented (G&T) pupils in and out of school
- Enhancement of holiday provision and activities
- Promotion of learning by tackling problems with behaviour
- Young people helped to prepare for adult life
- Improved overall attendance and reduction in truancy
- Reduction in numbers of pupils excluded from school

Table 2.1 Educational outcomes for children and young people identified within the documentation *contd*

C.	Enjoying and achieving <i>contd</i>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Access for young people to a curriculum that is best suited to their needs, ambitions and abilities– Provision of an effective and coherent admissions system– New school building programmes supported– Increased spending in schools– Increased expenditure per pupil in schools– Reduction in percentage of schools subject to special measures– Improved services for young people– Improved support to schools to increase attendance and reintegration following alternative tuition– Reduction in number of 16–19 year-olds not in education, training or employment– Increased percentage of 19 year olds with level 2 qualification (that is, 5 GCSEs A*–C or equivalent)– Increased contact of young people with youth workers and participation in youth service activities– Needs of pupils with special educational needs met– Review of the 14–19 curriculum– The demand for a skilled workforce met– Widened participation in good quality lifelong learning– Increased participation (particularly of young people) in a wide range of good quality, affordable and accessible leisure and cultural opportunities
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D.	Making a positive contribution
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Residents involved in decision making and the design of services– People to be empowered through participative models of service planning and delivery, for example, greater information, enhanced access to IT, contact centres, and so on– Opportunities created for young people's participation in council services and processes, strengthened consultation through forums (for example, youth forums, young people's partnerships)– Decrease in number of young people participating in crime, antisocial behaviour and drug misuse– Enhancement of local democracy– Promotion of citizenship– Increased dialogue and consultation, and recruiting of people to forums– Increased involvement of local people in community and voluntary organisations– Greater local involvement in community safety issues– Increased number of schools offering services to the wider community– Increased public access for disabled people
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E.	Economic well-being
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Reduction in poverty– Reduction in levels of deprivation– Economic prosperity achieved– Existing jobs preserved and new ones created– Barriers to employment tackled– Narrowing unemployment gaps between areas within the authority– Increased level of skills within individuals and the workforce– Provision of training for local people to enable them to secure work– Improved standards of living– Businesses helped to succeed– Conditions for growth created and economic prosperity maintained
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E. Economic well-being *contd*

- Revitalised town centres
 - Regeneration of deprived areas
 - Maximising of availability of new sites for commercial development
 - Diverse, dynamic, competitive and successful economy
 - Promotion of tourism and local cultural assets
 - Increased percentage of local people of working age in employment, including those with disabilities
 - Improved house price or earnings affordability ratio
 - Reduction in the percentage of under 16s living in low income households
 - Maximisation of external funding
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Source: Local authority documentation in phase one of the NFER study, 2004

[†] In the majority of cases, 'improved educational outcomes as measured by key stage or GCSE results or their equivalent' was further broken down to include, for example:

- key stage 1: percentage of seven-year-olds attaining level 2 and above in reading, writing and maths
- key stage 2: percentage of 11-year-olds attaining level 4 and above in English, maths and science
- key stage 2: percentage of 11-year-olds attaining level 5 and above in English and maths
- key stage 3: percentage of pupils attaining level 5 and above in English, maths and science
- Percentage of pupils achieving one or more GCSE or equivalent at A* to G
- Percentage of pupils achieving five or more GCSEs or equivalent at A* to G
- Percentage of pupils achieving five or more GCSEs or equivalent at A* to G (including English and maths)
- Percentage of pupils achieving five or more GCSE passes or equivalent at A* to C
- Average GCSE points score.

2.3 Interviews with local authority personnel

This section moves on from reporting how each of the key themes and principles emerged from the interviews with the representatives of 18 local authorities. Instead, it now focuses more holistically on responses to the direct question: 'What definitions of "educational outcomes" are now evident within the discourse and thinking of your local authority?'. Not surprisingly, there was considerable variation in thinking and emphasis evident between interviewees, no doubt reflecting their different roles, responsibilities and local contexts. Nevertheless, the responses did fall into several distinct categories: interviewees interpreted the question – and concomitantly the concept – of 'educational outcomes' as:

- 'traditional' measures, that is, attainment-type performance indicators, school improvement and standards agenda
- the *Every Child Matters*/Children Bill principles
- wider holistic outcomes, similar to (but perhaps importantly pre-dating) the Children Bill
- outcomes specifically taking account of the local context

- a concept currently inchoate: 'under review' or 'embryonic'.

It is important to note that in almost all instances, interviewees' responses highlighted more than one of these categories. For instance, a number suggested that 'traditional' measures and the Children Bill principles were equally 'embedded in our strategic thinking', reflecting the reorganisation of services underway.

These changes have significantly affected our thinking about educational outcomes. ... We are thinking in a more focused way about our children as a core customer group, establishing a single multi-disciplinary service with a holistic approach. We've identified some commitments, medium term aims, such as the five key themes (staying safe, being healthy etc.). We haven't lost sight of school improvement issues, where we need to raise standards, and the priorities there. It's about looking at things in a broader way, and in some ways, a more focused way.

Equally, where traditional outcomes measures alone were referenced, these invariably also focused on specific groups such as vulnerable children, (for example, those in public care, Travellers); underachievers or the gifted and talented; the needs of the individual child; or reconsidering vocational attainment. Other interviewees stressed how their

broad interpretation of educational outcomes was actually in place before the Children Bill. In this way, it would seem the local authority sample represented a move away from a sole focus on aggregated attainment measures as a viable definition of educational outcomes.

2.3.1 'Traditional' outcome measures.

Several interviewees did include in their responses 'traditional' outcome measures focusing on attainment, (for example, key stage assessments, the 5 A*–C and A*–G GCSE grades, as well as exclusion and truancy rates). These measures were also described by one interviewee as the type of outcome that, 'if we are being honest, are what makes sense to most parents'.

Nevertheless, where such measures were nominated as educational outcomes, as noted above, it was usually recognised that the local authority was developing and extending them to reach specific target groups.

The Department is looking for improved educational outcomes in terms of "blunt" performance attainments – key stage 2 or 3, GCSE results and the headline figures. But the emphasis is also now on improved outcomes for vulnerable groups – children who are looked after by the local authority, black and minority ethnic communities within the borough, children with SEN, and Travellers. We spend a lot of effort and time working with that community. They are measured in the same way – educational outcomes, but also measures like reduced number of absences, fixed term and permanent exclusions.

Also, as noted above, others pinpointed the reconsideration of individual achievement within educational outcome definition, 'having the capacity to look at children as individual learners ... from children with quite severe learning difficulties up to the high flyers'. One local authority representative highlighted their desire to 'develop practice and indicators of performance for pupils that lie between the 20th and 50th percentile, those who experience a negative profile of performance as they move through the key stages ... the dishevelled learner'.

Some interviewees' comments suggested that the standards agenda was also being addressed through initiatives such as community learning partnerships, increasing funding for youth and community services, the 14–19 curriculum or the extended school. In addition,

there were references to including measures such as overall participation post 16, and progression to higher education as a definition of educational outcomes.

2.3.2 The Every Child Matters/Children Bill principles

In this category of response, the Children Bill emerged as a specific reference in interviewees' responses. However, as the two comments below indicate, there was some notable difference in nuance between those responses suggesting attainment and the five principles were both being given consideration and those highlighting a crucial inter-relationship.

Attainment at key stages is one way of measuring whether we've been successful or not. Another way may be in terms of the adverse outcomes the Children's Bill talks about – teenage pregnancies, children taken into care, children who're the victims of crime. Those sorts of measures we would obviously look at as well as pure attainment figures.

With the recent development of the Children's Bill agenda, we recognise (and have for some time) that you can't do [raising standards, school improvement and improving outcomes for children of all ages and abilities] unless you pay attention to all the other important outcomes for children in terms of their well being, support for their self-esteem and motivation for school. And support for parents. The sorts of outcomes we are after in this authority are very broad ones for children's development and well being.

It was also noted that expanding the interpretation of these 'traditional' education outcomes required awareness raising and support for educational professionals. Children's Trust pilots and the new joint inspection framework were referenced as ways that indicators of success for the new broader definitions would be developed and disseminated.

We are working to ensure that what we mean by outcomes when we talk to headteachers, advisors, practitioners are genuine outcomes rather than arbitrary examination results.

What's missing [currently] is the need for local authorities to work very quickly to translate [the Children's Bill] to support schools in taking an outcomes-focused approach.

2.3.3 Definitions pre-dating the Children Bill

Some of the responses indicated that definitions of educational outcomes were broadly congruent with those principles within the Children Bill, but actually pre-dated it. For instance, in one local authority, it was noted:

The local authority had been working towards the development of 'eight' outcomes over the last 18 months to two years. Those eight outcomes were developed through consultation with young people in the local communities. We pre-empted the Children's Bill and developed outcomes. They are not totally aligned with the five outcomes set out in Children's Bill, and we're now looking at how to better align those and retain a local flavour for outcomes for young people in this city. We've already been in discussion with DfES now the concept of single education plan has disappeared as to how we develop our strategic plans for the future in terms of children and young people plan and build in the five outcomes. The [local authority] eight outcomes are:

- *the right to an active say in any development,*
- *being healthy,*
- *being emotionally secure and confident ,*
- *having succeeded at school as far as they can,*
- *having facilities and opportunities to play safely,*
- *having stayed out of trouble,*
- *living in a safe place*
- *having opportunities to achieve their dreams.*

So there is some overlap. But there is nothing in the [local authority] eight that links to economic well-being and making a positive contribution etc.

In this instance the need for some 'realignment' with the five principles was noted. It is noteworthy that this example focused on the absence of 'economic well-being' that is, the principle least referenced in local authority documentation.

Other respondents' comments indicated their organisation's pre-existing focus (for example, on citizenship, sports or arts) were also closely consistent with the Children Bill outcomes. Thus, an arts zone with projects aimed at 'partnership beyond education ... placing attainment-raising activity within the context of the school in the community' was seen 'to fit very nicely' with the Bill. Another interviewee referenced a target 'produced two years ago' to have 70 per cent of the population 'doing five sessions of exercise per week by 2020'. The congruence of the citizenship agenda and 'the whole drive of Children's Bill legislation to put young people at the centre of the picture ... involve them fully in decision-making processes in their lives' was also noted. In this view, 'a sea change' in the way schools and LEAs perceived pupils, with a 'much closer focus' on partnership and involvement of young people in the learning process, was seen to underpin the Bill. Again, it was noted that there was 'still a long way to go' before most schools were 'on board with these underlying principles and practices'.

2.3.4 Outcomes taking account of the local context and local need

Some interviewees chose to highlight the fact that local context and local need should influence the definition of educational outcomes. Here, socio-economic change and the urban/rural question were particularly highlighted.

Our concerns about outcomes are becoming muddled, if you like, in terms of how we would adapt our education system in this rural area to what seems to be in the mind of the politicians. One always had this feeling that when these things come out, the big urban situations have been looked at much harder than rural situations have. That's where there are big problems but we have problems of a different nature. And when you try to apply some of the criteria that's set now to a rural area, it's quite difficult.

The LEA has tried to link the outcomes we want from the educational system to the overall strategy for the city – the Council Strategy – and even wider into the various partnership arrangements. A key issue becoming apparent within the city is a big increase in construction industry within the city. The risk is that we don't have enough 'indigenous' people trained and qualified to gain the benefits of the jobs available. So we are trying to tweak part of the system to train

people up in those sorts of things- GNVQs, more vocational type qualifications. [We] secured a lot – millions – of Objective One and European monies to develop the curriculum in that way.

2.3.5 Education Outcomes: a concept currently under review

A small number of interviewees also responded to the question by indicating that definitions in the light of the Children Bill were currently inchoate. Terms such as 'a lot is in embryo' or 'under review' surfaced.

We're still getting our heads round the implications of the Bill and how we structure ourselves as an authority in response to that. So, we're still looking at outcomes at key stages. We haven't got our heads into the new mindset yet. We're in a transition stage.

Interviewees were asked specifically about references to educational outcomes within their authority's Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), and also their Community Strategy and LPSA. Through the responses, it was again evident that there was variation in the substantive interpretation of what was seen as an 'educational outcome'. For instance, one respondent said of his LPSA 'it's still very attainment based', while another highlighted that in their LPSA 'attendance and absence in primary schools' was a target. In contrast, a third interviewee chose to note a wide range of outcomes:

[Our LPSA has] four or five education-related targets: children's early development and learning – targets promoting the physical emotional and intellectual development of young children so that they flourish when they get to school. There's a proposed target around the quality of teaching in the primary school; for children in care; improving school attendance; increasing the numbers of young people obtaining skills and vocational qualifications for work. So, [there are] a number of targets which contribute to improving educational outcomes and economic regeneration as well. Also, there's health targets regarding children's mental health ... in the awareness that if we can improve children's emotional and behavioural stability, they will do better in their education, [and] training and employment post-16.

In addition, there was some variation in the accounts of how much emphasis was placed on education outcomes in the various partnerships and agreements. For

instance, while some indicated that they felt educational outcomes were a 'priority' of the LSP (for example, one comment noted 'we had a planning day with the LSP, and education was at the core of our visioning activities'), another stated 'the LSPs are more focused on a range of issues other than education'. Similarly, when asked about the community strategy, one interviewee stated education outcomes were considered 'only fairly briefly', while in another instance, the interviewee noted it as 'one of the major areas' considered. Such variability may again reflect differing interpretations and definitions of what the concept actually means.

Key points

- The first objective of the study was 'to relay definitions of "educational outcomes" apparent in the discourse and documentation of different local authorities'. For this, two data sources were used; documentation mainly in the form of BVPPs of the 46 local authorities receiving an 'excellent' CPA judgement, and data from telephone interviews with key personnel from 18 local authorities.
- Intended as an initial scoping exercise, its agreed starting point was the five overarching principles or outcomes for children and young people, as outlined in the Green Paper *Every Child Matters* and the Children Bill (2004). These are: being healthy; staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and economic well-being.
- In the documentation, references to 'enjoying and achieving' and 'staying safe' were most prevalent. Outcomes which could be categorised under 'making a positive contribution' featured least often (in just over half of the 46 BVPPs). Exactly half of the BVPPs contained references to all five principles.
- Telephone interviewees collectively also mentioned all five principles. However, least often referenced were themes and outcomes relating to 'economic well-being' and 'making a positive contribution'. 'Enjoying and achieving' outcomes were most often mentioned.
- There was a notable absence of explicit references to 'enjoyment' (as distinct from achievement) in either the documentation or the telephone interviews.

- There was considerable variation in emphasis within the definitions of educational outcomes offered by the interview sample. Several distinct categories were evident in their responses, namely, 'traditional measures' (that is, attainment-type performance indicators, the school improvement and standards agenda); the reiteration of the five Green Paper and Children Bill principles; wider holistic outcomes similar to – but importantly pre-dating – the Bill; outcomes taking into account local contexts; and finally that the concept was currently 'under review' or 'embryonic'.
- Interviewees usually highlighted more than one of these categories. Some suggested 'traditional' outcomes measures and Children Bill principles were equally embedded in strategic thinking. Where traditional outcomes measures were alone highlighted, these also usually focused on specific groups such as vulnerable children (for example, those in care, Travellers) and underachievers, or there was additional reference to vocational attainment and the whole 14–19 agenda.
- Overall, responses from the sample clearly demonstrated a move away from a sole focus on aggregated attainment measures as a viable definition of educational outcomes.

3 Strategies to achieve educational outcomes

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the strategies put in place by local authorities in order to achieve those educational outcomes identified in Chapter 2 of the report. It draws on both the documentation (primarily BVPPs) from the sample of 46 local authorities and the views of the 18 interviewees from the telephone sample.

The first section focuses on the documentary analysis, which categorised strategies evident within local authority plans that directly affected young people, or impinging on their lives in some way, according to each of the five overarching principles of *Every Child Matters* and the Children Bill. Strategies were then further categorised within each principle as: partnerships or groups, local authority-level strategies or plans, forums and councils, and services.

The chapter then moves on to consider the views of local authority interviewees on how their authority is currently contributing to improved educational outcomes for specific groups of children and young people. Where categories evident in the documentary analysis were reflected in interviewees' perceptions, this is highlighted.

3.2 Strategies evident within local authority documentation

Evidence of strategies to achieve improved educational outcomes was sought in local authorities' documentation. Analysis of the local plans and policies of the 46 local authorities revealed a vast array of different strategies which were then categorised, allowing for some overlap, according to the five Green Paper principles:

- A being healthy
- B staying safe (from harm and neglect)
- C enjoying and achieving
- D making a positive contribution

E economic well-being.

However, a set of themes emerged within each of the overarching principles. Strategies could be further categorised as:

- partnerships or groups
- local authority-level strategies or plans
- forums and councils
- services.

Clearly, a number of local authority strategies cut across all five Green Paper principles. Thus, there were 'partnerships or groups' (for example, LSP, Children and Young People's Partnership, Community Partnership, Multi-Agency Children's Planning Management Board), 'local authority-level strategies or plans' (for example, Community Strategy, Supporting People Strategy, Children and Young People's or Youth Strategy), 'forums and councils' (for example Area Committees, Local Community Forums, Local Partnership Forums), and 'services' (for example, Children and Young People's Service, Children, Families and Schools Service or Unit, Under-10s Family Support Service), which were focused on being healthy, staying safe, and enjoying and achieving, as well as on making a positive contribution and economic well-being.

Table 3.1 overleaf presents an audit of strategies evident in the documentation of the sample of 46 local authorities, according to each of the Green Paper principles and under each of the themes within those principles. By comparing this table with Table 2.1 in the previous chapter, it is possible to see the extent to which local authorities are implementing strategies in order to achieve the educational outcomes defined in their current thinking and documentation. For example, a school building strategy within the category 'enjoying and achieving' could be linked to the identified outcome within that category of supporting new school building programmes (one of the eight reforms highlighted in the DfES five-year strategy for children and learners through

the Building Schools for the Future programme (GB. Parliament, HoC, 2004). Similarly, strategies within the category 'staying safe', such as a local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, partnered with a Crime and

Disorder Reduction Strategy and a Youth Crime Reduction Action Plan, would most likely be intended to address the outcome of a reduction in crime (and the fear of crime) and antisocial behaviour, particularly youth offending.

Table 3.1 Authority-wide strategies to achieve improved educational outcomes, as identified within the documentation

A.	Being healthy
	<p><i>Partnerships/Groups</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Health and Social Care Partnership <p><i>Local Authority Strategies/Plans</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local Teenage Pregnancy Strategy - Intermediate Care Strategy - Revised Care Strategy for LAC - Foster Carers' Retention and Skills Strategy - Parenting Strategy <p><i>Forums/Councils</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Corporate Parent Forum
B.	Staying safe (from harm and neglect)
	<p><i>Partnerships/Groups</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community Safety Partnership - Local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership - Community Incident Action Group - Community Cohesion and Social Inclusion Group - Positive Inclusion Partnership - Energy Partnership - Quality Bus Partnership - Rail Partnership <p><i>Local Authority Strategies/Plans</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community Safety Strategy - Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy - Youth Crime Reduction Action Plan - Hate Crime Partnership Reduction Agreement - Anti-Social Behaviour Protocol - Anti-Bullying Strategy - Social Inclusion Strategy - Community Cohesion Strategy - Child Protection Strategy - Multi-Agency Preventative Strategy for Vulnerable Children - Domestic Abuse Strategy - Housing Strategy/ Accommodation Strategy/Housing Renewal Policy - Homelessness Strategy - Affordable Warmth Strategy - Waste Management Strategy - Air Quality Strategy - Climate Change Strategy - Local Transport Plan

Table 3.1 Authority-wide strategies to achieve improved educational outcomes, as identified within the documentation *contd*

B.	Staying safe (from harm and neglect) <i>contd</i>
	<p><i>Forums/Councils</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Community Safety Forum – Young Inclusion and Support Panels – Equalities Forum – Flood Forum <p><i>Services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Community Warden Service – District Safety Unit – Youth Offending Service – Drug Action Team – Streetcare Service – Flexibus Service/Away-Days Demand Responsive Bus Service
C.	Enjoying and achieving
	<p><i>Partnerships/Groups</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership – Local Learning Consortium – Local ICT Partnership – Strategic Cultural Partnership – Sports Partnership <p><i>Local Authority Strategies/Plans</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ICT Strategy – School Building Strategy – Specialist School Strategy – Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities Contract – Action Against Bullying Strategy in local schools – Cultural Strategy – Leisure Strategy – Playground Strategy – Enhancement Plan for Parks and Open Spaces – Sports Strategy – Playing Pitch/Fields Strategy <p><i>Services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Parent Partnership Service (re children with SEN)
D.	Making a positive contribution
	<p><i>Partnerships/groups</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Youth Partnership – Youth Action Group – Residents' Group <p><i>Local Authority Strategies/Plans</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Local Community Engagement Strategy – Customer Access Strategy – Customer Service Charter <p><i>Forums/Councils</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Youth Council/Forum

- Rural Youth Forum
- Youth Assembly
- Youth Parliament
- Youth County Council
- 4UM (Forum for LAC)
- Community Action Network
- Citizens'/People's Panel
- Tenants' Forum
- Voluntary and Community Sector Forum

Services

- Youth Information and Counselling Unit
- Children's Information Service (one-stop shop)

E. Economic well being

Partnerships/Groups

- Local Partnership Against Poverty
- Local Business Partnership
- Community Enterprise Development Trust
- Regeneration Partnership
- Neighbourhood Renewal Group
- City Action for Community Development Partnership
- Rural Economy Group

Local Authority Strategies/Plans

- Economic Development Strategy
- Human Resource Strategy
- Local Agenda 21 Plan
- Regeneration Strategy
- Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy
- Town Centre Strategy
- Urban Design Strategy
- Rural Strategy
- Local Distinctiveness Strategy
- Corporate Sustainable Development Strategy
- Regional Sustainable Environmental Tourism Strategy

Forums/Councils

- Business Forum
- Connexions District Forum

Services

- Business Service

Source: Local authority documentation in phase one of the NFER study, 2004

In addition to the authority-level strategies outlined above, a number of operational-level programmes or projects/schemes were highlighted within local authority plans which it was also possible to categorise according to the five Green Paper principles and these are shown in Table 3.2 overleaf. Equally, a number of these could be said to cut across all five principles, (for example, children's centres, extended schools initiatives, multi-agency family support teams, early

intervention projects, and elected member training). Once again, a direct link between these and the outcomes identified in Chapter 2 is evident in the majority of cases, for example, a restorative justice project, a youth inclusion project and/or the appointment of an antisocial behaviour coordinator within the category 'staying safe' could be linked to the outcome of reducing crime and antisocial behaviour (particularly youth offending).

Table 3.2 Operational-level projects or schemes to improve outcomes, as identified within the documentation

A.	Being healthy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Health Improvement Programme – Health Action Zone – Health Referral scheme – Children’s Fund projects for vulnerable children – Healthy Eating campaign – Food Safety Award scheme – Drug and alcohol project – One-door access to mental health care and support – Young women’s projects – Young men’s clinic – Young fathers’ projects – Active sports activities – Heartsmart walks – Walking bus
B.	Staying safe (from harm and neglect)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Burglar awareness campaign – Property marking – Public reassurance project/civic watch – Restorative justice project – Fire-setters intervention programme – Town drinking ban – Taxi Marshall scheme – Drug awareness campaigns (including rural drug misuse project) – Sharp Bins – safe disposal of discarded drug needles – Mobile ‘cop shop’/local patrollers – Police community support officers – Anti-social behaviour coordinator – CCTV systems – Schemes to remove abandoned vehicles (for example, ‘The Hub’, ‘Crackdown’, ‘Operation Cubit’) – Safety and Me (SAM) event for primary children – Race Equality scheme – Community cohesion conference – Youth Inclusion project – Safe journeys to school scheme – School frontage initiative (road safety outside schools) – Affordable housing schemes – Warm homes on prescription scheme – Private landlords’ pilot/community landlord scheme – Homes partnership agreement – Housing enabling project – FLASH (flats above shops) initiative bringing unused accommodation into use – Tenancy support worker – Homeless families play and learning project – Rapid response litter squads – Recycling schemes (for example, ‘Purple Box’, ‘Kerb-it’) – Waste removal/awareness schemes (including in the countryside) – Environmental projects (particularly for young people)

C. Enjoying and achieving

- Increased opportunities for students (for example, summer schools, master classes, challenge days)
- On-line resource packs for school
- FISH (fun in the holidays) scheme
- Leadership and innovation centre (continued professional development)
- Lifelong Learning programme/coordinator
- Grid for learning
- Adult learners week
- Three-day festival of skills
- Learn Direct centres
- Aim High centres
- ICT community learning centres
- Additional leisure facilities for young people (for example, skateboard park – ‘Bikers, Bladers and Boarders’)
- Enhancement of existing play areas
- Use of text messaging to promote cultural and leisure services to young people
- Mobile outreach café for young people
- New builds (for example, school, leisure, sports and community facilities)
- S4SA projects – space for sports and the arts
- Disability sports officer
- Sports coordinator/development officer
- Concession schemes for community facilities, including transport
- Public art website (to promote art in the community)
- Museum activities (to encourage young people to visit)

D. Making a positive contribution

- Citizenship programme
- Young people’s democracy project
- Advocacy and self-help groups for LAC
- One-stop customer contact centre
- Customer service centres
- Children’s information system
- Information campaign
- Website access/e-government activity (re local authorities and the services provided e.g. community information database, enabling local people to contribute to decision making)
- Language Line (to enable communication with ethnic minorities)
- ‘Breakthru’ – young people’s newsletter
- Dedicated youth issues page in local news magazine
- Surveys of young people’s needs

E. Economic well being

- ‘Get-set’ business start-up programme
- Business trainee scheme
- Business employment support scheme
- Partners credit union (‘living and working’ credit union)
- Development programmes for town centres (for example, ‘Boulevard’ project to improve the street scene)
- Buy local scheme
- ‘Quids for Kids’ campaign (focused on youth poverty)
- SRB4 Building a Brighter Future programme aimed at young people
- Initiatives aimed at promoting the local area (for example, archaeology projects, amphitheatre project)

Source: Local authority documentation in phase one of the NFER study, 2004

3.3 Strategies evident within the interviews with local authority personnel

This section moves on to discuss the views of representatives from the 18 local authorities that participated in the telephone interviews. Interviewees were asked for their perceptions of how their local authority was currently contributing to improved educational outcomes for:

- children and young people generally
- vulnerable groups for example, looked-after children, Travellers, children in deprived areas
- more able children.

As might be expected, strategies focused on the first group (that is, children and young people generally) that were highlighted by interviewees which cut across most, if not all, of the five Green Paper principles. Strategies aimed at improving outcomes for vulnerable groups tended to be focused mostly within the 'being healthy', 'staying safe' and 'enjoying and achieving' categories, while those aimed at more able children tended to fall predominantly within the latter category, 'enjoying and achieving'.

3.3.1 Children and young people generally

Overwhelmingly, interviewees referred to the collaboration and partnership that existed between the local authority, services and schools in terms of how their authority was contributing towards improving educational outcomes for children and young people. Effective partnerships feature as a major theme of the DfES five-year strategy for children and learners, with children's trusts as important 'engines for reform' in joining together education, health and social care (GB. Parliament, HoC, 2004). The strategy recommended that most areas have a children's trust by 2006, with all areas having one by 2008. Chapter 4 of the present report notes that partnership working emerged (from analysis of local authority documentation and interviews) as the highest ranking key factor or component of local services and strategies in achieving improved educational outcomes. References were made to Sure Start children's centres which operate as 'one-stop shops' for families, offering a range of services on one site. Similarly, the

benefits of extended schools were highlighted, which provide a single base for joined-up community services, including services for children.

For some larger authorities in the sample, their size was identified as sometimes being a limiting factor in terms of the strategies that could be offered to young people, when quite long travelling distances were involved. In one large local authority, networking schools through video conferencing was being introduced as a strategy to counteract this problem. One network of rural primary schools was currently operating with support from local donors, which was working 'remarkably well'. The plan now was to secure more funding to extend the development.

When discussing the local authority contribution to improving educational outcomes for children and young people generally, interviewees tended to refer to this in terms of improving academic performance. Within this, interviewees stressed the 'fundamental' monitoring and leadership role of the local authority in terms of its contribution to school improvement. One interviewee referred to the work of the local authority as creating opportunities for providers to create pathways to learning – 'the learner at the heart of the system'. For a number of interviewees, local authority intervention to improve educational outcomes took the form of targeted support to schools wherever need was identified, a role emphasised in the DfES five-year strategy.

The main thrust is ensuring that there is a very clear definition of responsibility, building the capacity of schools to meet the responsibility for raising standards that they have, and sharing with schools a very strong vision of improvement.

It is schools that are the main people involved in delivering improved educational outcomes. They are semi-autonomous bodies in relation to LEAs, so our job is to exercise leadership. Where there are concerns about particular schools, e.g. a school with low attainment, support is put in for them.

The following were variously referenced in respect of local authority support to improve outcomes: 'rigorous' school improvement programmes, the work of advisory and inspection services, multi-disciplinary teams and service level agreements (SLAs) between schools and the local authority as to the extent of support schools could expect from the authority. One interviewee

highlighted the role of the DfES Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) data in facilitating the identification of children needing support and avoiding duplication of effort amongst the services subsequently involved. The DfES five-year strategy for children and learners called for improvements in information sharing and more integrated ICT systems. In another local authority within the sample, new organisational structures, for example introducing school cluster arrangements and the proposed integration of children's services were perceived as being of benefit in improving educational outcomes. One authority had developed with schools a self-evaluation framework focusing on issues of inclusion, an electronic system that enabled the central aggregation of schools' self-evaluations and the identification of areas where further support was required. It was believed to ensure that the sense of responsibility for social inclusion 'rests very clearly within schools'.

A number of interviewees referred to the contribution of the local authority to improved educational outcomes in relation to the support it provided in recruiting and retaining staff, particularly referring to its initial training and continuing professional development (CPD) role and the need to extend the range of adults working with children in schools. Workforce development and building workforce capacity have been highlighted in recent key policy documents such as *Every Child Matters* (HM Treasury, 2003) and *From Vision to Reality* (LGA, 2004), as well as being a focus for the DfES five-year strategy for children and learners.

One interviewee from a local arts zone highlighted a creative education project as a specific example of a local authority strategy aimed at improving educational outcomes for children (see Illustration 1).

Illustration 1: Creative education project

Under one local authority's LPSA, a creative education project was set up in order to raise attainment in core areas at key stage 2. Fourteen schools were involved in the project, self-selected from a group of 27 that had been originally identified by the LEA. Funding was used to buy equipment and resources to form a creative 'hub'. Seven artists representing a variety of art forms (for example, textiles, music, dance, drama and moving image) were brought in to work for up to three days in each school.

An initial whole-initiative planning day was held. Primarily focused on year 6, each school project included:

- a training or activity day for the class teacher
- time for the artist and class at the 'hub'
- two half-day visits to the school by one or more artists
- a planned number of days' delivery by the teacher in class.

Although it would be difficult to isolate the effects of one short-term initiative on overall attainment, nevertheless an external evaluation concluded that the project had been successful in achieving its aims and had been particularly innovative in its use of ICT. Teachers and pupils reported being 'energised' and 'enthused' by the experience, particularly highlighting the active style of teaching and the more practical nature of the activities.

Source: Local authority documentation and telephone interviews in phase one of the NFER study, 2004

3.3.2 Vulnerable groups

A number of interviewees referred to the effective monitoring of performance data in order to identify vulnerable groups. Once again, DfES PLASC data was highlighted as being very useful in this respect. One interviewee suggested that not all vulnerable children necessarily required extra support, and thus the PLASC data allowed those more at risk within vulnerable groups to be identified and supported most appropriately, reflecting the Green Paper principle 'staying safe', that is, being protected from harm and neglect. Indeed, *Every Child Matters* and the DfES five-year strategy for children and learners highlighted a statutory and multi-agency framework to protect vulnerable children and young people through earlier identification of need and the implementation of the necessary multi-agency support for them and their families, including the establishment of local safeguarding children boards in order to coordinate this.

Interviewees discussed a variety of different groups of children and young people within the category 'vulnerable groups' and these are now considered in turn.

Children with SEN

In terms of children with SEN, once again, interviewees particularly noted the need for early identification and improved information sharing. When pupils transferred from the primary to the secondary phase, it was important that relevant information was shared with the receiving secondary school in order to assess the level of support required for individual children's needs. The new secondary strategy for teaching and learning (which builds on the key stage 3 strategy), highlighted in the DfES five-year strategy, recommended putting extra support in place for pupils with SEN, through the development of dedicated materials and training for key staff (including SEN coordinators (SENCOs)), working with such pupils. Interviewees in the present study stressed the need for appropriate and targeted funding for schools to support the learning of children with SEN. In one county authority, an audit method of financing SEN in schools had been introduced, which allowed schools a 'degree of certainty' about the additional funding they would require to meet the needs. Another interviewee highlighted the 'flexibilities' that had been put in place to provide learning support units (LSUs) on each secondary school campus. LSUs, one of the strands within the government's Excellence in Cities (EiC) initiative, aims to provide short-term teaching and support programmes geared to the individual needs of pupils experiencing difficulties in school and/or at risk of exclusion. A small number of interviewees chose to highlight specific local authority strategies or initiatives to support children with SEN, as Illustrations 2 and 3 show.

Illustration 2: Library special needs corner

In this local authority, a part-time librarian with a child with special needs wanted to make a special needs corner in the library for parents and schools, including special schools, to use. This proved to be such a big success at very little cost, winning national recognition, that similar corners were subsequently funded across all the local authority's main libraries. Of greater significance was felt to be the fact that it represented an important resource for children with special needs outside of schools. The librarian received a national award as public servant of the year, in the inclusion section. This was believed to be an example of the local authority looking at ways in which another part of its service could be enhanced to add to the educational experience of particular groups of children.

Source: Local authority telephone interviews in phase one of the NFER study, 2004

Illustration 3: Forum meetings for SENCOs

In one small Welsh authority, forum meetings for SENCOs had been introduced. SENCOs from both the primary and secondary phases met at least twice a term in order to discuss policies and strategies. Meetings took the form of a workshop approach, with the aim of developing a 'SENCO handbook' containing all the procedures that related to SEN, including the Code of Practice for Wales. This 'close liaison' between primary and secondary SENCOs was believed to facilitate 'continuity and progression in catering appropriately for pupils with SEN'.

Source: Local authority documentation and telephone interviews in phase one of the NFER study, 2004

Looked-after children

Given the existence of government targets to improve the life chances of looked-after children and reduce the attainment gap between them and their peers, as well as the local authority's corporate parenting role, it is perhaps not surprising that all interviewees described work with this particular group of vulnerable children as a significant focus for their local authority. Interviewees emphasised a holistic approach to meeting needs through increased partnership working, particularly referencing the work of multi-agency partnerships involving, for example, education, social services and health, as well as multi-agency teams working across local schools, thus recognising the multi-faceted nature of the problems experienced by this group of young people. This approach can be seen to cut across a number of the categories identified in the documentation (see section 3.1), for example a revised care strategy for looked-after children within 'being healthy'.

In one local authority, the interviewee referred to recent restructuring which had taken place within the education department as a result of a best value review, but also in anticipation of the proposals for restructuring in *Every Child Matters*. The rationale behind this restructuring had been to empower schools to form clusters at a local level with a concomitant thrust to devolve resources to schools. However, not everything had been devolved to schools, some staff with key areas of responsibility, particularly in relation to looked-after children, had been retained centrally. Thus a team of educational advisors for looked-after children worked

with schools 'to support and challenge them to make sure they are meeting the needs of those particular pupils', for example, by offering support and training to the designated teacher for looked after children in each of the authority's schools. A particular problem for this large, rural authority was the number of children being placed in its care by other local authorities. This had led to a drive to invest greater resources in recruiting more foster carers and improving the quality of placements to make them more stable. Key to this approach was support and training for foster carers from a 'very strong' multi-agency team involving support workers, educational psychologists and child psychiatrists. This was also identified within the local authority documentation in section 3.1, for example, through a foster carers' retention and skills strategy within the category 'being healthy'. In addition, the DfES five-year strategy for children and learners required local authorities to provide improved and more consistent planning and support for young people leaving care.

An example of an arts-based strategy to improve outcomes for looked-after children which was highlighted by one interviewee is given in Illustration 4.

Illustration 4: Drama project

A theatre-in-education project had taken place in one authority through the local arts zone. This had involved a group of young people in public care putting on a drama production for members of the county council about the problems of being in care. The young people had written the play with a professional guide and had been able to eloquently put forward their views on what the council should do to support them. The production was believed to have been very influential in terms of decisions about funding. As a result of the success of this production, others with different foci had been developed, for example, a play by young people in local schools focusing on behaviour on school buses.

Source: Local authority telephone interviews in phase one of the NFER study, 2004.

Travellers

The extent to which Traveller children featured as a significant issue for local authorities varied. Of those interviewees that identified these children as a 'vulnerable' group, the majority referenced the positive work of the Traveller Education Service in raising achievement. Transferring from primary to secondary

schools can be problematic for many children and was identified as a significant issue in the DfES five-year strategy for children and learners, warranting the introduction of coordinated admission arrangements and better information sharing between schools. However, the transfer to secondary school is often particularly difficult for Traveller children when families may have little, or very negative, experiences of secondary education (Derrington and Kendall, 2004), something that was recognised in the current study: 'For many Traveller families, going into secondary is the break point'. In this interviewee's authority, work with parents was a focus, with some Traveller parents taking part in 'parents as educator' courses from which they could gain accreditation for supporting their children's learning. As a direct result of being involved in such a course, one Traveller parent was now working with the authority's Traveller Education Service which was viewed as being particularly beneficial.

Children living in deprived areas

For the majority of the interview sample, children living in deprived areas were an issue for the local authority, with interviewees identifying gradations of deprivation, from 'significant' areas to 'pockets'. A number of interviewees referred to the significance of Sure Start in respect of meeting needs in this area. Sure Start is a government programme which aims to achieve better outcomes for children, parents and communities by:

- increasing the availability of childcare for all children
- improving health, education and emotional development for young children
- supporting parents in their aspirations towards employment.

The DfES five-year strategy for children and learners emphasised the links between low socio-economic status and under-achievement, and called for earlier multi-agency intervention to support disadvantaged children and families, not just educationally, but holistically, focusing on 'the welfare of the whole child' (GB. Parliament, HoC, 2004). It urged the introduction of multi-agency family support through Sure Start children's centres offering early education, childcare, health services and specialist family support on one site. As such, the strategy could be seen to cut across most, if not all, of the Green Paper principles outlined earlier in this chapter, as indeed could a number of the local

authority strategies to meet the needs of children living in deprived areas that were identified by interviewees. Examples were quoted of initiatives to improve local housing, regenerate local areas of significant deprivation, improve before- and after-school care (for example, breakfast clubs, study support, and so on) in particular through extended school activity, increase lifelong learning opportunities, and improve leisure and sporting opportunities (see Illustration 5). Once again, the need for targeted funding towards the areas of most need was identified.

Illustration 5: Positive Futures project

In one authority, a Positive Futures project had been developed. This is a national sports-based social inclusion programme aimed at marginalised 10–19 year olds in the most deprived areas. It is funded by the Home Office, the Football Foundation and Sport England, as well as through individual funding from local supporters. In this particular authority, working very closely with the local drug action team, a project worker was running evening programmes involving various activities such as football and basketball, in order to encourage young people to become involved in sport and thus reduce the potential for them to become involved in offending and antisocial behaviour.

Source: Local authority documentation and telephone interviews in phase one of the NFER study, 2004

3.3.3 More able children

When asked to elaborate on how the local authority was contributing towards improved educational outcomes for more able children, interviewees invariably referred to programmes within the gifted and talented strand of EIC. Activities highlighted as part of this strand included: residential, summer schools and master classes. In one authority, with a large number of private schools, the needs of more able children were well recognised.

Strategies for the more able have been a priority since the late 1990s because we have that small number of schools with a privileged clientele and a large number of private schools that cream them off aged 11 no matter.

Other strategies focused on more able children included increasing opportunities post 16, in order to provide courses, for example, at local further education (FE)

colleges, that were more appropriate for their aims and needs. Indeed, the transformation of the 14–19 phase has been a focus within recent government thinking and policy, for example, through the establishment of the Tomlinson Working Group on 14–19 Reform and its focus within the DfES five-year strategy for children and learners, which advocated wider choice of high quality programmes and improved vocational and work-based routes. One interviewee in the present study referred to an existing partnership in this respect between three schools and the local FE college, offering a much more varied post-16 curriculum. In one local authority, more able children were able to take advantage of facilities and staff expertise at other schools, while another was a pilot authority for Aim Higher, a programme that focused on raising the aspirations of those capable of going on to higher education. One interviewee highlighted a Sports Council scheme that provided funding for elite athletes.

Some interviewees warned against merely assuming that more able children were being catered for, there was always more that could be done, 'there is no room for complacency'. Indeed, two interviewees argued that this group should also be regarded as having special educational needs. The DfES five-year strategy for children and learners suggested that some schools lacked confidence 'to attend fully to able pupils and ensure that they achieve their highest potential' (GB. Parliament, HoC, 2004). It introduced a new centre of excellence for gifted and talented youth which would advise teachers on the most effective way to teach more able young people, stretching and challenging them and thus enabling them to achieve their potential.

Finally, one interviewee expressed concerns about nurturing or cultivating children's talent too early:

I have some concerns here, that if we are not careful and try and hot-house children too soon we don't give them the social environment they need. Children need to be children. Just because they could sit a GCSE at 11, I don't think they necessarily need to.

Key points

- A wide range of strategies was evident within local authorities' documentation that could be categorised according to the five Green Paper principles. However, a set of recurrent themes also emerged within each

of these overarching principles: partnerships or groups; local authority-level strategies or plans; forums and councils; and services.

- When asked to comment on strategies to improve educational outcomes for children and young people generally, in the main, interviewees referred to the collaboration and partnership that existed between the local authority, services and schools. The benefits of children's centres which operate as 'one-stop shops' for families, offering early education, childcare, health services and specialist family support on one site, were highlighted, as were the benefits of extended schools in providing a single base for joined-up community services.
 - The monitoring and leadership role of the local authority in terms of its contribution to school improvement was stressed. New organisational structures, evaluation frameworks and information sharing systems were identified as beneficial in improving educational outcomes.
 - For vulnerable groups, effective monitoring to enable earlier identification and to implement appropriate support was noted as a key strategy to improve outcomes. Improved information sharing, particularly at primary or secondary transfer, was highlighted as important for children with SEN, as was the need for appropriate and targeted funding to schools to support their needs. Flexibilities provided through LSUs, part of the government's EiC initiative, were also highlighted.
 - A holistic approach to meeting the needs of looked-after children through increased multi-agency partnership working was reported. The importance
- of investing greater resources in recruiting more foster carers and improving the quality of placements was also raised.
- The extent to which Traveller children featured as a significant issue for local authorities varied. The positive work of the Traveller Education Service was referenced in terms of raising the achievement of this group. Transferring from primary to secondary school was identified as particularly problematic: work with parents was seen as a focus in order to enable them to better support their children's learning.
 - Children living in deprived areas were highlighted as an issue, to varying degrees, in the majority of the local authorities in the sample. Particularly referenced in terms of strategies to achieve improved outcomes for such children was the Sure Start programme, especially children's centres. Other local authority strategies quoted in respect of this group were initiatives to improve local housing, regenerate local areas of significant deprivation, improve before- and after-school care, increase lifelong learning opportunities, and improve leisure and sporting opportunities. Once again, the need for targeted funding towards the areas of most need was identified.
 - For more able children, activities or programmes within the gifted and talented strand of EiC were highlighted in terms of improving educational outcomes. Also referenced were increased opportunities post 16, which were more appropriate for their aims and needs. Some interviewees warned against complacency, arguing that there was always more that could be done.

4 Key factors in achieving educational outcomes

4.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the key factors or components of local services and strategies in achieving improved educational outcomes. It focuses first of all on the documentary evidence (primarily BVPPs and CPAs) from the sample of 46 local authorities, drawing out examples of the desired components of local authorities in order to achieve improved outcomes for children and young people. The chapter then moves on to include the perceptions of interviewees from the sample of 18 local authorities in order to elaborate on these key factors or components.

A number of key factors or 'ingredients' for efficient councils and/or effective service delivery were evident within the documentation. Box 4.1 shows these key factors, in rank order, where evident in more than one local authority's documents.

Some degree of overlap was evident in these key factors, for example, several related to various elements of partnership working. However, six major themes emerged, which were also evident in the comments of the telephone interviewees:

- partnership working and its associated elements
- key principles underpinning service delivery
- funding
- staffing
- community engagement
- awareness of local circumstances.

4.2 Partnership working

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given its emphasis in recent legislation (for example, the Children Bill (2004)) and key policy documents (*Every Child Matters* (HM Treasury, 2003); *Every Child Matters: Next Steps* (DfES, 2004)),

Box 4.1 Key factors in achieving improved educational outcomes

- Effective partnership working
- Effective consultation and communication
- Staffing
- Commitment to ensuring high quality service delivery
- Resources/funding
- Community involvement
- Effective community leadership
- Striving for continuous improved performance
- Strong leadership role re planning, decision making and policy development
- Openness and transparency
- Value for money (that is, ensuring cost-effective systems)
- Diversity and equality (that is, being socially inclusive)
- Accountability
- Monitoring and reporting on progress
- Effective use of new technology to ensure local access to services
- Equality of access to services
- Clear priorities and objectives
- Integrity and honesty
- Fairness
- Sustainability
- Flexibility or adaptability
- Sharing best practice (that is, learning from others to ensure improvement)
- A strong customer focus
- Sound performance management
- Awareness of local circumstances.

Source: Local authority documentation in phase one of the NFER study 2004

and as noted in the previous chapter, partnership working was recognised in both the documentation and the interviews as a major component of improving outcomes for children and young people. Indeed, the DfES five-year strategy for children and learners refers to partnerships as one of the 'key principles of reform'

underpinning 'a step change in children's services, education and training' (GB. Parliament, HoC, 2004).

Partnership working was widely perceived by interviewees to be 'crucial', 'critical', and as being the way forward: 'Gone are the days of the monolithic local authority, partnerships are the way it has to be'. The influence of key documents, such as those mentioned above, in shaping the changing local authority landscape was recognised: 'The Children's Bill has been a huge step in creating the Children's Service'. The value of effective partnerships both between and within agencies was highlighted: 'Partnerships in terms of effective interagency links, but also the component parts of the educational service are very important too'. Equally, the need to extend the range of partners to include the voluntary and community sectors, as well as the public, private and independent sectors, was also recognised. As *Every Child Matters* (HM Treasury, 2003) noted, children's needs are often complex and multi-faceted and thus rarely fit within the realm of one service or agency, an issue that was also referenced by interviewees.

A number of elements of partnership working were perceived by interviewees, and reflected in the documentation, to be vital to its success:

- shared value systems
- common aims and objectives
- leadership
- clarity of roles
- communication
- contiguity
- monitoring.

Shared value systems

The building up of shared values and a shared belief about what the partnership was trying to achieve for children and young people was considered by interviewees to be essential: 'Getting people onto an agenda where every child does matter'. At the same time, there was recognition that this would not necessarily occur as a matter of course. Bringing together professionals from traditionally separate

services with often very different cultures, systems, priorities, and even terminology was something that required effort: '[It] has to be worked at all the time and reinforced in every possible way'. Joint training was identified as an important step towards achieving some form of synthesis, and it is noteworthy that the documentation of a number of local authorities also referenced training for elected members. However, many interviewees observed that significant cultural change was required for partnerships to be truly effective and to avoid the reinforcement of a 'silo' mentality where each partner was concerned for their own 'patch' rather than for the partnership or authority as a whole.

It is being able to play a role in those partnerships that, where necessary, contribute to a change of culture, to moving away from a professional stasis to an optimism and realisation of how their expertise can contribute to better life chances for children.

A number of interviewees felt that cultural change was actually more important than structural change, although it was recognised that there may be a need for the latter to take place eventually. As *From Vision to Reality* notes 'the real change is people, processes and policies, not organisations', in other words a 'form follows function' approach (LGA, 2004).

Common aims and objectives

Inextricably linked to shared value systems was the need for common aims and objectives, reinforced by shared targets to be met by all involved: 'It makes partnership very easy when we all have the same outcome intended'. Once value systems were shared, and a common identity established, it was believed to be easier to tackle such issues as terminology in order to arrive at 'universally understood definitions', for example, of the term 'vulnerable children' or 'at risk'.

Leadership

However, in order to enable the development of shared values and the delivery of common objectives, some form of local strategic leadership was believed to be a central requirement. The suitability of the local authority for this role was confirmed in the Children Bill (2004) and reiterated by the interviewees in the current study in terms of its ability to provide 'a catalytic dimension' to initiating partnership working. At the same time, the local authority was seen as having 'a clear role' in ensuring that the necessary infrastructure existed in order to be able to respond to the needs of its

community, and to intervene appropriately if the achievement of better outcomes for children and young people was considered to be under threat.

Clarity of roles

Clarity of roles was considered to be essential for effective partnerships, so that all those involved had a clear understanding of what was expected of them. In a recent study of multi-agency working (Atkinson *et al.*, 2002), understanding roles and responsibilities emerged as the second most frequently identified factor in effectiveness.

Communication

Good communication and information sharing systems were seen as important elements of effective partnerships. Interviewees emphasised the need for ongoing dialogue and feedback so that everyone was kept informed of what was going on and thus the potential for conflict was avoided. The importance of establishing 'open systems of listening and communication' was particularly highlighted in the documentation of local authorities.

Contiguity

Contiguity in terms of having co-terminus boundaries, (for example, with Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and the police) as was the case for one large rural authority, was seen as 'a major advantage' in being able to develop effective partnerships: 'I have great sympathy for my colleagues who come from counties where they have three of four PCTs, some of them cross border'.

Monitoring

Finally, monitoring performance and reporting on progress were seen as vital to ensure continued quality and avoid any 'variability' across partner agencies. At the same time, sharing best practice so as to learn from and build on the experience of others was identified in the documentation as a key tool in shaping partnership practice.

4.3 Key principles underpinning service delivery

A number of key principles were seen to underpin effective service delivery to achieve improved outcomes for children and young people. Those evident in both the text of the documentation and the responses of the interviewees included: flexibility (in terms of the

changing needs of the local community, in implementing or managing service delivery, and to be able to deploy resources most effectively); commitment to ensuring improvements in the quality of service delivery; and accountability for actions taken. Interestingly, weak accountability was highlighted in the inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié and the need for 'clear accountability' was identified in the subsequent Green Paper (*Every Child Matters* (HM Treasury, 2003)) as a key strand of the government's strategy to provide a framework for universal and targeted provision.

Interviewees identified the importance of the local authority having an overall vision of 'where it wants to go, wants to achieve, where it wants to focus improvements'. Strategic vision was seen as central to driving forward the work of the local authority: 'Council has set out clearly what its vision is by 2010 and what the strategic aims are. That is helping to give focus and direction'.

Focusing on the needs of children by putting them at the centre of the local authority's thinking was seen by interviewees as a key principle underpinning service delivery. Integral to this was the greater involvement of young people in the process; something that interviewees felt it was of 'paramount importance' that local authorities took seriously.

Other key principles highlighted in the documentation, but not specifically referenced in the interviews, included: openness and transparency; diversity and equality (being socially inclusive); integrity and honesty; and fairness.

4.4 Funding

Within the documentation, the importance of managing resources effectively in order to achieve the local authority's vision, or mission statement, whilst ensuring value for money, was identified. In some cases, BVPPs highlighted a need to invest now so as to avoid greater expenditure in the future. Overwhelmingly, when asked about funding, interviewees identified the necessity for it to be sustained in order to achieve improved educational outcomes for children and young people. Much of the funding was short term and targeted, which then created difficulties for local authorities in terms of meeting needs effectively.

It was already predestined what it's going to be spent on and that squeezes the decision making of the local authority even more narrowly into a very limited area ... And if they say we also want local services to be more flexible in the way they provide for the needs of people, then that's an unrealistic combination.

A number of interviewees particularly referred to the uncertainty and lack of stability that ensued from short-term funding.

It's essential to have stable funding. The government is storing up difficulties for itself. There has been an explosion of initiatives all over the place – Sure Start etc. – but all of these are time-limited and they haven't secured money to make these things long term. I feel they are putting off the big day when they will have to say we are keeping this and this, but that and that will have to go.

At the same time, interviewees reported their 'frustration' at having to bid so often for comparatively small amounts of money: 'There is a disproportionate amount of time given to this short-term funding mechanism – a bureaucratic nonsense'.

The issue was raised of how projects could be mainstreamed when the funding was not sustained, with the fear that any cuts in funding would therefore affect priorities: 'If the money were cut off, all these projects and partnerships would wither on the vine'. Furthermore, it was thought that sustained funding was not always properly enabled by central government, and that funding streams were not fully organised: 'Too much at the moment is reliant on a fair wind'. Equally, where funding was secured through private finance, it was believed to be particularly sensitive to the vagaries of economic change:

They'll only do it while their order books are full; they've got some extra capacity and are making extra money. If it comes to a tight financial situation, then the community projects will be one of the first things to go.

However, there was a pragmatic recognition that funding streams do change over time and care had to be taken that the issue of funding was not used as an excuse. Thus, the need for local authorities to be confident of their priorities was highlighted, in order to identify the sources of funding that would best serve those priorities.

Interviewees welcomed the proposal to consider a move towards three-year settlements in the 2004 Spending Review. It was felt that this would match more with requirements for three-year plans and would, to some extent, alleviate the problems imposed by short-term funding cycles.

Other important issues to emerge related to geographical and national differences. One interviewee felt that rural deprivation was not always recognised in terms of funding in quite the same way as urban deprivation was. In one Welsh authority, the interviewee highlighted differences in funding arrangements, noting that there was no 'hypothecation' of resources to particular services as there was in England: 'What goes in to the services is up to authorities'. This meant that a link between priorities and expenditure was not always explicit and what ensued was a 'funding fog'.

4.5 Staffing

The documentation emphasised a recognition of the need for the recruitment and retention of a high quality, well-managed, well-trained and motivated workforce, committed to the community vision. This factor was reiterated by interviewees who also highlighted the significance of the local context in recruiting and retaining skilled staff. For one interviewee in a mainly rural authority, an attractive environment was seen as a contributory factor, particularly within the teaching profession.

In terms of teachers and so forth, we have not had any real problems in terms of recruitment and retention – not because we pay them an awful lot of money, but it's a very nice place to live. ... We do have the advantage because they suck their teeth and say 'Oh well, we'll put up with it because we like living here'.

In a relatively affluent authority, high living costs were perceived to have led to increased levels of mobility and thus staff turnover, which, in turn, created a lack of continuity within the system.

At the same time, with the current emphasis on increased partnership working and service integration, the need for greater balance within the skills base of the workforce was also recognised by interviewees, along with a concomitant need for ongoing training and professional development opportunities. A recent

pamphlet from The Education Network (TEN, 2004) pointed out the importance of an increased supply of people who could work across boundaries; this is what Atkinson *et al.* (2002) referred to in their study of multi-agency working as 'hybrid professional types'.

4.6 Community engagement

Local authority documentation referenced the importance of active community involvement in the decisions that affected the lives of local people, with the need for consultation and ensuring access for all to the relevant highlighted information. In this way, it was noted, local authorities could remain attuned to, and 'in touch' with, the needs and requirements of local stakeholders, and thus determine corporate objectives appropriately. BVPPs from several local authorities noted an investment in new technology, for example, creating or enhancing council web pages, in order to improve information sharing and democratic decision making.

Engaging the local community was also identified as a key factor by interviewees who stressed the importance of dialogue and information sharing. However, a note of caution was sounded regarding the 'stake' that local people had in service delivery. Where programmes were targeted towards those in greatest need, client groups might not have the necessary influence to resist threats to the continuance of that programme, for example: 'Sure Start is a service for poor people and poor people are not as organised and able civically to resist attacks on their services'. Here, the importance of the community leadership role of the local authority was emphasised.

As noted in an earlier section, interviewees identified the importance of involving young people in service delivery. Different 'gradations of consultancy' were identified, from information giving (but not necessarily directly involving young people) through to involving them in executive decision making.

4.7 Awareness of local circumstances

One result of greater engagement with the local community was perceived by interviewees to be an increased knowledge of that community and the context in which service delivery was taking place. The benefits of

local knowledge for planning and decision making were particularly highlighted.

As an authority, you need the knowledge and the links, to know what's there, know what the needs of the community are, know what's available both inside and outside the authority to help meet those needs, and how you can do it in a way that is joined up and sensible.

At the same time, interviewees noted the need for that knowledge to be evidence-based, rooted in research of local conditions ('doing things you know, or are sure; will work'), thus emphasising once more the need for greater community engagement.

Key points

- A number of key factors or 'ingredients' for efficient councils and/or effective service delivery were evident within the documentation. Six major themes emerged: partnership working, key principles underpinning service delivery, funding, staffing, community engagement and awareness of local circumstances.
- Partnership working was recognised in both the documentation and the interviews as a major component of improving outcomes for children and young people. The value of effective partnerships both between and within agencies was highlighted, as was the need to extend the range of partners, in recognition of the complexity of children's needs which rarely fit within the realm of just one service or agency.
- A number of elements of partnership working were perceived by interviewees, and reflected in the documentation, namely: shared values about what the partnership was trying to achieve; common aims and objectives reinforced by shared targets; leadership (with the role of the local authority in this confirmed); clarity of roles and responsibilities; good communication and information sharing systems; contiguity (in terms of co-terminus boundaries); and monitoring (including sharing best practice in order to learn from and build on the experience of others).
- Key principles underpinning effective service delivery included: flexibility (in terms of the changing needs of

the local community, in implementing or managing service delivery, and to be able to deploy resources more effectively); commitment to ensuring improvements in the quality of service delivery; and accountability for actions taken. Interviewees also highlighted strategic vision, 'putting children at the heart of the local authority's thinking'.

- The importance of managing resources effectively in order to achieve the local authority vision, whilst ensuring value for money was identified in both the documentation and the interviews. Overwhelmingly, interviewees stressed the need for sustained funding in order to achieve improved educational outcomes for children and young people. Short-term, targeted funding created difficulties for local authorities in terms of meeting needs effectively and mainstreaming effective projects.
- Proposals to consider a move towards three-year settlements in the 2004 Spending Review were welcomed by interviewees who felt this would match more with requirements for three-year plans and go some way towards alleviating problems imposed by short-term funding cycles. Geographical and national

differences also emerged as an issue regarding funding in some authorities.

- The documentation and interviewee comments recognised the need for the recruitment and retention of a high quality, well-managed, well-trained and motivated workforce, committed to the community vision. Interviewees also noted the need for greater balance within the skills base of the workforce, with increased numbers who could work across boundaries, and a concomitant need for ongoing training and professional development opportunities.
- The importance of active community involvement in local decision making was referenced in the documentation, particularly highlighting the need for consultation and ensuring access to relevant information for all. Documentation from several authorities noted an investment in new technology in order to improve information sharing and democratic decision making. Engaging the local community, particularly young people, was also identified as a key factor by interviewees who stressed the importance of the community leadership role of the local authority in this respect.

5 Barriers and challenges to achieving improved educational outcomes

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the perceived barriers and challenges that might prevent or impede the achievement of the educational outcomes identified in Chapter 2. Firstly, it presents evidence from the analysis of the documentary evidence from the sample of 46 local authorities and then draws on the perceptions of the telephone interviewees from the sample of 18 local authorities in order to elaborate on some of the issues raised.

Evidence of barriers or challenges to achieving educational outcomes was much less evident within the documentation of the local authorities. However, a number of issues did emerge and these are listed in rank order below, where evident in more than one local authority's documents:

1. staffing
2. funding/budgetary constraints
3. rurality
4. balancing national and local priorities
5. increasing numbers of individuals (including young people) with complex care needs which puts pressure on support services
6. deprivation.

The majority of the above issues were also reflected, to varying degrees, in the perceptions of the telephone interviewees and, where this is the case, these issues are discussed. However, interviewees were specifically asked to comment on whether any of the following issues presented a challenge for their authority and these will be addressed first of all:

- low aspirations
- cultural differences between professionals working with children

- existing council structures and restructuring
- an emphasis on the classroom at the expense of factors outside school that might affect children's ability to learn.

In addition, interviewees were asked to consider whether their local authority's contribution to improving educational outcomes for children and young people might be affected by:

- the autonomy for schools debate
- the neighbourhood renewal or community leadership role of the authority.

5.2 Low aspirations

For the majority of interviewees, the problem of low aspirations was perceived to be a continuing problem. A culture of non-learning was identified where education was not valued and a 'not for the likes of us' attitude prevailed. This culture was often propagated by parents' negative experiences of school. Some parents may never have gone to school themselves and thus generational levels of non-attendance were perpetuated. The changing context of the local area was believed to be an influential factor, particularly in areas of high unemployment where traditional industries such as heavy engineering and mining had significantly declined over the years. Young people had little to inspire them to stay and work hard, 'they're just aren't the economic opportunities here'. In one authority where 'the brightest and best academically' were attracted elsewhere, low aspiration was viewed as an ongoing challenge: 'Those with lower attainments stay and raise their families and don't have aspirations for their families. It repeats the cycle'.

However, although the issue of low aspiration was recognised as a problem, some interviewees warned against identifying it as a barrier to educational achievement and thus using it as an excuse to blame others. This was seen as something of a 'cop out': 'What

we are really saying is that we can never do anything because it is so built into that society'. For this interviewee, it was linked to a perception that the system of assessment within education was not appropriate for a large number of people.

Like giving an IQ test to people using words they've never met and then saying they're stupid – perhaps the barrier is the way we are testing a very mixed and varied society.

One interviewee suggested using the issue as 'a spur' to promote action and identify ways of raising aspirations amongst parents and their children. The role that schools could play in this was seen as crucial: 'We don't have a school that says "our children can't" and that used to be the case'. Equally, turning around the culture of non-learning was believed to require a government, as well as a whole-authority, approach to changing attitudes and raising expectations of young people.

Several interviewees referred to ways in which their local authority was working to overcome the problem of low aspirations. In one authority, schools were involved in 'young leadership' projects, which aimed to raise young people's aspirations and develop leadership skills through curriculum-based and extracurricular work. Programmes aimed at improving young people's confidence and self-esteem were thought to be influential in raising aspirations, because they challenged young people's perceptions of themselves. At the same time, echoing the suggestions made in the DfES five-year strategy, the need for a broader range of opportunities for young learners, particularly in the 14–19 and 16–19 age groups was identified. As the recent NFER report *Mapping the 14–19 Learning Landscape* noted, the need 'to provide opportunities that raise standards and achievement' is 'a prime mover' for changing that landscape (Sims and McMeeking, 2004). The report goes on to highlight the strategic leadership role for the local authority that is inherent within this agenda, in terms of making links with local priorities for change (such as the development of the new children's services model) and/or initiating links with partners.

In another authority, the issue of low aspirations was a priority for the LSP, supported by work on both family learning and adult and community learning. The importance of further support for parents in order to help them become more effective in helping their

children to learn was identified. Poor adult basic skills were highlighted as a particular problem, but existing programmes aimed at adults were felt to be merely 'scratching the surface'. One interviewee felt that refocusing the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funding for adult basic skills towards more family learning programmes would produce significant improvements. For another interviewee, the government's Early Years funding was believed to be making a difference in terms of a children-centred model that combined family learning with children's needs and development in one set of activities.

5.3 Cultural differences between professionals working with children

There was some variation in opinion amongst interviewees as to the extent of the cultural differences that existed between professionals working with children and young people. It was not seen as an issue of particular significance in authorities where there was 'plenty of dialogue'. Interestingly, in the six authorities where it was not perceived to be a problem, five of these were relatively small, urban authorities. It may well be that interagency communication and joint working were facilitated by proximity. In other local authorities, despite a 'real commitment' to making multi-agency working actually 'work', it was the 'minutiae', for example, differences in pay structures, holiday allowances, data gathering and terminology, that was perceived to get in the way often at an operational level.

Some of the organisational approaches are very different – different approaches to gathering data, different performance indicators which have been set by different government departments, separate computer systems. Those sorts of things get in the way of good joint working, rather than professional culture.

For a minority of interviewees, cultural differences were seen as a continuing problem. One education-based interviewee particularly referred to cultural differences between education and health, which were believed to impede operational-level partnership working.

Sometimes it feels like knitting fog with them – you never know if the person you're talking to can really deliver. A lot of things don't happen despite verbal commitments.

One interviewee felt that the current emphasis in recent legislation and policy documents on working together may, in fact, have accentuated differences between services which 'prior to having to think about working together' actually were working that way:

And to some degree the threat of everything that's coming seems to be putting people into watertight compartments. One of the little worries I have is that prior to this, there didn't seem to be any defending one's position to this extent, looking to say 'Ah well, we're going to have to prove ourselves here somewhere'.

A 'clear determination' to put the needs of young people first was seen as one way of meeting the challenge of cultural differences and working more collaboratively.

The aim over time is to establish a culture of 'can do' and high expectations and a culture of support for pupils in schools, rather than supremacy of professional expertise.

5.4 Existing council structures and restructuring

A number of interviewees did not feel there were any challenges inherent in existing council structures: 'The elected members have their feet on the ground and are prepared to get stuck in'. One of these interviewees referred to some inter-departmental rivalry, but did not see it as a particular problem, while another referred to operational-level relationships: '[Challenge] exists more on the ground, in terms of the relationships and interchange that goes on between providers'. As already highlighted in the previous chapter on key factors, for some interviewees, cultural change was considered to be the first step towards achieving structural change: 'Setting up co-working, co-thinking first – culture first and structure second, albeit on tight deadlines'. Interestingly, the Serving Children Well initiative, a 'bottom-up' approach to service delivery to children and their families, actually challenges the premise that 'imposing structural change is an effective way to achieve more joined-up working and better outcomes for children and young people' (TEN, 2004).

Two interviewees indicated that their authorities were fairly well along the route towards restructuring services, one of whom referred to the authority having developed

a 'series of directorates' with cross-cutting themes that would reflect the community strategy. For three other interviewees, local authorities were making progress in terms of council structures: 'The council has turned a corner'. In another authority, the interviewee highlighted the difficulties imposed by having a 'two-tier' structure where the district council 'doesn't understand the way education works', although this situation was reported to be improving as a result of increased dialogue.

There was a perception amongst interviewees of the benefits that were likely to accrue from greater integration, one interviewee noting it was more a question of 'how' rather than when that might take place. However, the introduction of a new children's service was seen as posing some challenges, in the short term in relation to individuals' concerns about job security, but also in the longer term, in relation to its power and influence.

The single Children's Service directorate will have 75/80 per cent of the council's entire budget. [It] will also have 'fingers in every pie'. [It will be] hugely powerful.

Equally, some uncertainty was expressed regarding the delays in providing services that restructuring might cause, for example, as a result of increased bureaucracy.

If, for example, a local authority decided that it was going to have a new director of Children Services, and Education and Social Services would be dramatically changed in order to fulfil the new requirements, then the danger is that for five years you're in a bit of a mess. Because there is so much restructuring and re-logoing and re-note-papering and everyone applying for their own jobs. I don't want to sound cynical, but it becomes a bureaucratic nightmare. What about the child at school for six years while you're restructuring?

Although the increased focus of the new integrated service on improved outcomes for children was largely welcomed, some concern was articulated about the potential for it to shift attention away from other vulnerable groups, for example people with complex care needs and older people.

Although the LEA's focus has always been on children, traditionally Social Services have had a dual focus – children and adults. Concerns about the creation of Children's Services exist as to whether services for adults, particularly older people might suffer at the

expense of children and young people. I already detect amongst some of the councillors that children seem to be getting everything.

Accountability through joint inspections was highlighted as a potential problem in restructuring for some councils. For one, an external inspection had reported a lack of cooperation between departments and changes had been made accordingly. New performance management systems and clear corporate priorities were felt to be having a positive effect. Increased accountability, for example of the director of Children's Services, was perceived to have the potential to limit innovation in service delivery, '[s/he] will be the one to blame if anything goes wrong'.

5.5 An emphasis on the classroom at the expense of factors outside school

Some interviewees referred to having a common agenda that focused on children's welfare first and then sought improved learning outcomes. However, most interviewees emphasised the need for a more holistic, balanced approach to achieving better outcomes for children and young people, thus reflecting the priorities within the DfES five-year strategy. It was believed that too great an emphasis on factors outside the classroom could allow schools to absolve themselves of responsibility for underachievement. At the same time, there was recognition of the effect that factors in children's lives outside school could have on their ability to learn.

There is a real understanding that we are not going to get children to concentrate on learning outcomes if they feel threatened, hungry, insecure or frightened.

Mutual awareness and understanding of the importance of each set of factors was felt to be vital.

[There is] not enough appreciation of education maybe on the social care side – teaching and learning and school improvement is important but is foreign to them. Some have the perception that LEAs are only concerned with exam results and not vulnerable kids. As we move to a Children's Service we need social care to become interested in standards [in the same way] as LEAs have become interested in child protection and what have you.

Due to the recognition, highlighted in the previous chapter, that children's needs 'cut across agency boundaries', more effective links between schools and outside agencies were reported to be developing. Equally, supporting parents and engaging them in supporting their children's education was perceived to result in children doing better in school: 'It's not rocket science'. The influence of the extended schools agenda was highlighted in terms of inter-generational learning, with schools increasingly becoming 'open all hours' community resources.

5.6 Staffing

As reported in the previous chapter, staffing was considered to be a key factor in achieving better educational outcomes for children and young people. However, the availability, as well as the recruitment and retention, of professional staff was also identified by interviewees as a challenge, with 'well-known' and 'acute' shortages in some areas highlighted. Recruitment problems had led one local authority to consider the option of schools sharing headteachers. However, it was feared that this would result in amalgamation.

Chapter 4 also noted the need for greater balance within the skills base of the workforce. Interviewees saw this as an increasing challenge as partnership working increased and roles changed, an issue that was highlighted in *From Vision to Reality* (LGA, 2004), which highlighted the need for staff to have 'new skills and new tools' as well as 'to know how to use them and be confident with them' in order to work differently. Interviewees pointed out that what was needed was the creation of 'a much richer workforce better able to meet the needs of young people'. The Green Paper *Every Child Matters* laid out government proposals for workforce reform 'to improve the skills and effectiveness of the children's workforce' (HM Treasury, 2003) through common training programmes and occupational standards, which was also a priority within the DfES five-year strategy for children and learners. However, interviewees in the current study warned that reform was not a 'cheap' option – appropriate resourcing was vital if the enthusiasm of professionals for this work were not to be 'nipped in the bud'.

5.7 Funding/budgetary pressures

Given the above comment, it is perhaps not surprising that the need for targeted and sustained funding was also identified as being a challenge to, as well as a key factor in, achieving better educational outcomes, both in the documentation and by interviewees. This was underlined in *Every Child Matters: Next Steps* which noted that managing change needed to be underpinned by 'effective and efficient investment' (DfES, 2004), and in the DfES five-year strategy which referred to the need for 'ambitious reform' to be supported by 'substantial investment' (GB. Parliament, HoC, 2004).

Interviewees from some local authorities identified severe shortages of funding, with one reporting that the authority was in the apparently contradictory position of bemoaning the fact that it had not been 'fingering' by Ofsted through the inspection process. If that had in fact been the case, and weaknesses had been identified, the perception was that additional resources would have followed in order to support the ambition to improve performance.

For one interviewee, the problem of a lack of funding had been exacerbated by a legacy of decaying buildings dating back to the 1880s, which were no longer adequate. The estimate for replacing these buildings was £30 million over the next three years. In spite of the identification of funding as a 'major' problem, this interviewee warned against seeing it as the only one: 'It would be an excuse to say it's the only barrier'. The issue of funding is highlighted in the DfES five-year strategy which promised 'guaranteed three-year budgets for every school from 2006' as one of its key reforms (GB. Parliament, HoC, 2004).

5.8 Rurality

The rural nature of some local authorities was raised as a particular challenge by interviewees in two large county authorities. For one, transport was a significant issue linked to funding: 'About seven per cent of my total education budget goes on transport'. Ensuring the quality of school buses was viewed as a constant worry. Equally, young people often had quite long distances to travel. This was particularly the case at sixth form level as only four schools in the county had sixth forms, so students could end up having to travel up to two hours a day. An inevitable result of this was felt to be an increase

in drop-out rates at sixth form level, but also into the first year of secondary education. The advent of e-learning was welcomed as a 'useful' strategy for rural authorities. The DfES five-year strategy for children and learners recommended the establishment of more sixth forms, sixth form colleges and vocational provision in order to extend the choices available to young people.

The emphasis on inclusion was believed to be an issue of particular significance for rural areas. One of the two interviewees who commented referred to the difficulties many small, rural schools would face in providing the necessary facilities for pupils with more complex SEN. As a result, special schools were still felt to have an important role to play. At the same time, the other interviewee noted that the move to close schools with falling pupil rolls was not always clear cut in more rural authorities. This would inevitably result in young people having to travel even longer distances.

5.9 Greater autonomy for schools

The issue of greater autonomy for schools (a key focus of the DfES five-year strategy) was not universally welcomed by interviewees, a number of whom referred to it as 'erroneous and misplaced', 'detrimental' and 'a very retrograde step'.

Anything that would encourage schools to go back to their own corner and simply do their own thing would actually make it more difficult for us to work in ways that are proving to be very effective.

The majority of interviewees stressed the importance of the relationship and the partnership that existed between local authorities and their schools ('we have very good collaboration and joined-up working'), as well as between schools themselves. One interviewee reported that headteachers sat on the senior management team for the authority, which was believed to enhance the capacity of the authority to respond to challenges. A number of interviewees highlighted the 'vital role' that local authorities were still felt to have in monitoring and improving performance and providing strategic leadership: 'Schools are saying there are many elements of the service they can't provide working on an individual school basis'. For some, any development that was perceived to have the potential to damage the level of

partnership that existed, such as increased autonomy for schools, was felt to be of little advantage.

[There would be a] danger of wrecking delicate systems that have been growing for years, where networks of schools help each other with appropriate level of challenge from the local authority.

If you irresponsibly, on a political wheeze, start breaking up local networks, you will get kick back from it.

Even in authorities where the issue of schools' autonomy was not felt to pose any particular challenge to improving educational outcomes, interviewees stressed a continuing role for the local authority.

Schools are the vehicle for improved standards, not ourselves, so we've put ourselves in the position of being able to give schools strong leadership, which they expect, but it is clearly rooted in raising standards and that is part of the [local] culture ... schools still turn to us for moderation and support.

Once again, the need for effective partnership was identified, along with a sense of balance. One interviewee referred to a need to update the *Code of Practice on Local Education Authority–School Relations* (DfEE, 2001) to reflect recent developments such as the new relationship with schools, so that the authority's role and responsibilities were made more explicit.

We need the levers we can pull through the Code of Practice [so that] if there's a school that doesn't want to play ball on certain issues, there's something more that we can do rather than wring our hands. The Code of Practice needs to articulate all of that, as well as protecting schools from an overbearing LEA that wants to meddle and get involved in what colour walls are in the schools.

5.10 The neighbourhood renewal and community leadership role of the local authority

Overwhelmingly, interviewees were of the opinion that an increased neighbourhood renewal and community leadership role for the local authority would enhance, rather than impede, its contribution to improving educational outcomes. This was inextricably linked to the

realisation, articulated in the previous chapter, of the interrelationship of the issues that impinged on the lives of young people, for example, highlighting a correlation between domestic violence and truancy. Interviewees spoke of the inherent benefits of having a strong emphasis on neighbourhood committee working, stressing the importance of community involvement and engagement, particularly where young people were concerned.

Some interviewees highlighted examples of regeneration projects which had been effective in providing some form of additional benefits for communities in respect of local authority services. For example, in one authority, three Neighbourhood Renewal Fund programmes were perceived to be functioning as 'intensifications' of the nature of support provided by the local authority. Another interviewee highlighted a 'fantastic example' of a regeneration project in a relatively deprived local area, which had led to the creation of a multi-purpose centre for the community, offering such facilities as a library, youth zone, sports hall, gymnasium, dance arena, community halls, café, room for people with sensory disabilities, internet access, and DJ-ing. However, a minority of interviewees noted that local authority priorities, for example, in terms of education, were not always compatible with a regeneration agenda: 'LEA time and money has been taken up on some regeneration projects that have had no demonstrable outcome for us at all'.

Key points

- The barriers or challenges to achieving better educational outcomes was much less evident within local authority documentation. However, a number of issues did emerge: staffing; funding/budgetary constraints; rurality; balancing national and local priorities; increasing numbers of individuals (including young people) with complex care needs which puts pressure on support services; and deprivation. Most of these issues were reiterated by the interview sample.
- Interviewees were specifically asked to comment on whether certain issues had presented a challenge for their authority. Low aspirations (and a culture of non-learning where education was not valued) was perceived to be a continuing problem. The

importance of family background and the changing context of the local area were highlighted as influential factors in this respect, the latter often leading to significant population mobility. Projects to raise young people's confidence and self-esteem, increasing the range of opportunities for young learners, and helping parents to become more effective in supporting their children's learning were highlighted as ways of addressing this.

- Some variation in opinion surfaced amongst interviewees as to the extent of cultural differences between professionals working with children and young people. It was not seen as a problem where much dialogue occurred, and this was particularly the case in small authorities, but in others, the 'minutiae' (for example, differences in pay structures, holidays, and so on) were perceived to get in the way at an operational level. A determination to put young people's needs first was seen as one way of meeting the challenge to work more collaboratively.
- From the interviews, local authorities appeared to be at different stages along the route to restructuring services, with some described as 'well along' and others making progress. Greater integration of services was seen in terms of 'how' it would take place rather than when. Although the introduction of a new integrated service for children was largely welcomed, some challenges were identified: in the short term in relation to individual concerns about job security, but in the longer term in relation to its power and influence and its potential to shift attention away from other vulnerable groups. Accountability through joint inspections was identified as potentially problematic for restructuring, with the need for clear performance management systems and clear corporate priorities highlighted.
- The recruitment and retention of high quality staff, already highlighted as a key factor in achieving better educational outcomes, was also identified as a

challenge by interviewees. Particularly noted was the challenge to ensure balance within the skills base of the workforce as partnership working increased and roles changed. Interviewees warned that reform was not a cheap option and called for appropriate resourcing in order to develop workforce reform and encourage greater partnership working.

- Not surprisingly, given the above comment, ensuring targeted and sustained funding was identified as a challenge to, as well as a key factor in, achieving better educational outcomes (also underlined in recent key policy documents).
- The rural nature of some local authorities was raised as a particular challenge in two large county local authorities, with transport a significant issue.
- Greater autonomy for schools (a key focus of the DfES five-year strategy) was not universally welcomed by interviewees. The majority stressed the importance of the relationship that existed between local authorities and their schools, as well as between schools themselves. Local authorities were still felt to have a key role in monitoring and improving performance, as well as providing strategic leadership. Once again, the need for effective partnership working was identified.
- Overwhelmingly, interviewees felt that an increased neighbourhood renewal and community leadership role for the local authority would enhance, rather than impede, its contribution to improving educational outcomes. Again, this was linked to an awareness of the inter-relationship of the issues that affected young people's lives. Examples of regeneration projects that had provided additional benefits for communities in respect of local authority services were highlighted by interviewees. However, a minority noted that local authority priorities, for example, in terms of education, were not always compatible with a regeneration agenda.

6 The continuing role of the local authority

The report ends by reflecting on what should be the continuing role of the local authority in achieving better educational outcomes for children and young people.

The DfES five-year strategy for children and learners placed a duty on local authorities to work in partnership to ensure better outcomes for children and young people, with children's trusts, involving a wide range of partners (including both the community and the voluntary sector) as the central vehicle in integrating the planning and commissioning of services. It emphasised the traditional educational leadership role of local authorities, but urged them to become champions for pupils and families 'to ensure that every parent has a choice of good school and no pupil is failed by a poor education' (GB. Parliament, HoC, 2004). Rather than delivering services, local authorities were to 'recast' themselves as commissioners with a quality assurance role. It was envisaged that proposals within the strategy to guarantee funding for schools would free local authorities from the 'annual wrangle' over funding to better concentrate on this new role and allow them 'to develop education as part of their wider vision' (GB. Parliament, HoC, 2004).

So, in the light of this changing landscape in local authorities and education, what sorts of roles were envisaged and preferred by interviewees in the current study? Several key themes emerged that reflected those outlined above. The local authority role was variously portrayed as:

- A *facilitator*, 'enabler', 'galvaniser', or 'animateur' of networks and partnerships between local services, voluntary agencies, and so on, including the sharing of good practice. The local authority as an 'honest, disinterested broker' between all agencies with strategic responsibility was also a suggestion.
- A *proactive leadership* or 'key driver' function, ensuring coherence, coordination, strategic planning and the existence of overarching structures and resources.
- A *critical friend* (to schools) and watchdog, with the capacity to 'challenge what's taking place when it's

not good enough'. The 'ongoing dialogue and relationship' between schools and the local authority was seen as a distinctive feature here, something that HMI and Ofsted cannot attain. Local authorities needed to be able to intervene strategically rather than reactively.

- A '*moral leadership*' role, promoting 'a value system which has got a strong purpose about it, a commitment to equality of opportunity and access and inclusion'.
- A *local orientation*, being in touch or 'engaging' with local communities and their needs and promoting local culture and pride.

By far the most common response from interviewees was to describe the local authority in its facilitating role, and this was sometimes noted as a unique and irreplaceable function.

If they got rid of the local authority, then they would immediately have to reinvent something like it to do the job. Without that, you are not going to get a coherent set of services for the children that are most needy.

You need a local authority that is very proactive, innovative, is able to facilitate improvement, being good at helping people network and share practice ... to challenge what's taking place when it's not good enough. I don't think national strategies would have worked without local authorities to implement them.

Perspectives also suggested that local authorities needed further investment in citizenship, leisure and indeed in the drive to 'rethink targets' to address how young people become 'useful members of the community'. Notably, a few respondents actually stressed how the local authority's future role related to being 'smarter at working with more partners', 'more flexible', being able to 'think more creatively and innovatively'. Finally, it was said, it might be that local authorities are the vehicle to ensure that 'everyone's got a vested interest' in achieving better outcomes for children and young people.

Key points

- The DfES five-year strategy for children and learners has placed a duty on local authorities to work in partnership to ensure better outcomes for children and young people, with children's trusts as the central vehicle in integrating the planning and commissioning of services. It has emphasised the traditional leadership and quality assurance role of local authorities in this. At the same time, it was envisaged that guaranteed funding for schools would allow them to 'develop education as part of their wider vision' (GB. Parliament, HoC, 2004).
- Perceptions of interviewees in the current study reflected this. The local authority role was variously portrayed as: a facilitator, 'enabler' or 'galvaniser'; a proactive leadership (or key driver) function; a critical friend (to schools) and watchdog, with the capacity to challenge when what was taking place was not good enough; a 'moral' leadership role (promoting value systems with a strong sense of purpose and a commitment to equality); and a local orientation (being in touch with local communities and promoting local culture and pride).
- The most common response from interviewees was to describe the local authority in its facilitating role, sometimes noted as an irreplaceable function. Also noted were the need for local authorities to: invest further in citizenship and leisure; be 'smarter' at partnership working; be more flexible; think 'more creatively and innovatively'; and, finally, to be the vehicle to ensure that everyone was working together, with 'a vested interest' to achieve better outcomes for children and young people.

7 Conclusion

This small-scale scoping study has attempted to address a broad remit looking at the role of the local authority within the context of a new landscape involving reconfigured services, revisions to the curriculum, rethinking around the role of schools and local communities, and a reconsideration of the contribution of the community, including young people themselves.

From the telephone sample and local authority documentation, it is clear that most authorities are already embracing this new agenda. The associated language of the Children Bill and its five principles, as well as that of partnership, flexibility, holistic support for young people, innovation, and the local authority as a facilitator, reverberated throughout the data. 'Education outcomes' are clearly generally perceived to mean far more than aggregated attainment measures and there is ample recognition that addressing other outcomes inherent in the five principles associated with safety, health and economic well-being are vital components of – and indeed precursors to – educational achievement. However, with regard to these principles, the data did show least reference to 'enjoyment' (as opposed to achievement), 'making a positive contribution' and also 'economic well-being', and these may be areas in need of further attention.

Strategies identified for achieving these broad outcomes included greater collaboration between services and also schools, better information-sharing systems, the extended school agenda, and new evaluation frameworks. Key factors in delivering outcomes covered strategic vision; shared values; accountability; effective resource management and monitoring; training, recruitment and retention of staff; and new ways of involving communities in decision making. Barriers included low aspiration within communities; funding constraints and also certain local circumstances or contexts, such as rurality. Further exploration of these factors, barriers and strategies – and specifically how local contexts might influence or impinge on them in practice – is a feature of the next phase of the research.

Overall, the key messages to emerge from this present phase suggest that the role of the local authority, albeit changing, is perceived as no less vital in achieving educational outcomes. Terminology such as 'enabler', 'key driver', 'critical friend' perhaps highlight a new and more subtle leadership function, yet one that is still noted as unique and irreplaceable.

Appendix

Table A1.1 Characteristics of the local authorities involved in the phase one telephone interview sample

	Type and region	Political control	Deprivation	KS/GCSE attainment
1.	A mainly rural unitary authority situated in the southern borderland between England and Wales.	Conservative held	192nd most deprived local authority area out of 354 districts.	KS2 27.6 KS3 35.2 58.2% 5+ A* to Cs 91.7% 5+ A* to Gs
2.	A north-eastern metropolitan borough, 60 per cent semi or truly rural.	Labour held	36th most deprived local authority area out of 354 districts.	KS2 27.7 KS3 34.2 59.8% 5+ A* to Cs 87.1% 5+ A* to Gs
3.	A rural county authority in the south of England.	No party has overall control	Unemployment stands at 2 per cent. Deprivation as a whole is low, rural isolation is a key problem.	KS2 27.4 KS3 34.8 54.9% 5+ A* to Cs 90.3% 5+ A* to Gs
4.	A unitary authority in the north west of England, fourth largest in terms of population.	Labour held	Unemployment stands at 2.6 per cent. Some of the wards are in the 15 per cent most deprived in the country.	KS2 27.6 KS3 34.7 53.4% 5+ A* to Cs 91.5% 5+ A* to Gs
5.	A very large, rural unitary authority with no single urban conurbation.	Conservative held	Substantial pockets of deprivation.	KS2 27.1 KS3 35.3 55.6% 5+ A* to Cs 90.9% 5+ A* to Gs
6.	An extensively rural county authority situated in the West Midlands, with no single centre of population.	No party has overall control		KS2 27.8 KS3 35.0 54.0% 5+ A* to Cs 90.7% 5+ A* to Gs
7.	A largely rural county with the majority of the population living in villages and small market towns.	Joint Labour/Liberal Democrat control	270th most deprived local authority area out of 354 districts. Unemployment stands at around 2.4 per cent.	KS2 27.2 KS3 34.8 57.0% 5+ A* to Cs 91.2% 5+ A* to Gs
8.	A north-eastern metropolitan borough with a vibrant '24/7' city centre and affluent rural and semi-rural areas to the north.	Liberal Democrat held	48th most deprived area out of 354 districts. More than two-fifths of the population live in the 12 wards that are amongst the 10 per cent most deprived nationally. Five are in the 1 per cent most deprived.	KS2 26.7 KS3 33.2 40.0% 5+ A* to Cs 81.1% 5+ A* to Gs

9.	A northern metropolitan borough including part of the Peak District National Park, with a mix of densely populated urban centres and more rural and semi-rural areas.	Minority Labour administration	82nd most deprived area out of 354 districts. Substantial areas of multiple deprivation which contrast sharply with areas of affluence. Almost one-third of the population live within the 10 per cent most deprived wards in the country and well over half live in the 25 per cent most deprived.	KS2 26.8 KS3 33.5 43.3% 5+ A* to Cs 85.4% 5+ A* to Gs
10.	A large, northern metropolitan borough covering a narrow strip within a larger area in the north west of England.	Significant Labour majority.	Third most deprived area out of 354 districts. A high concentration of social problems – 27 of 33 wards are in the 10 per cent most deprived in the country. Unemployment stands at 4.3 per cent compared to the NW regional average of 3.6 per cent.	KS2 26.5 KS3 31.5 39.6% 5+ A* to Cs 79.0% 5+ A* to Gs
11.	An urban unitary authority situated in the north east of England, a mix of town and county.	Labour held	109th most deprived area out of 354 districts. The borough is relatively prosperous, but has some significant deprivation.	KS2 27.5 KS3 34.3 51.0% 5+ A* to Cs 89.5% 5+ A* to Gs
12.	An outer London Borough situated to the south west of the capital, one of the smallest London Boroughs.	Liberal Democrat held	265th most deprived area out of 354 districts – relatively affluent. Unemployment at 2.5 per cent is below the London average of 4 per cent.	KS2 28.3 KS3 37.0 67.0% 5+ A* to Cs 91.3% 5+ A* to Gs
13.	A county authority in the south west of England with an unusual settlement pattern – the population increases by 50 per cent in the summer months.	Liberal Democrat held	Unemployment stands at 4 per cent. Wages are 32.9 per cent below the UK average.	KS2 27.2 KS3 34.7 54.4% 5+ A* to Cs 92.2% 5+ A* to Gs
14.	One of Britain's first new towns, based in a large county authority north of London.	Labour held	184th most deprived local authority area out of 354 districts	KS2 28.1 KS3 35.6 58.1% 5+ A* to Cs 90.9% 5+ A* to Gs
15.	Small unitary Welsh authority with two-thirds of the population concentrated in the town itself.	No party has overall control	For 30 years has experienced devastating macro economic restructuring. Has the highest percentage of wards in the 100 wards of greatest deprivation in Wales (55 per cent); approx. 30 per cent of the population have a long term limiting illness (the highest rate in Wales and second highest in England and Wales). Unemployment is estimated at 4 per cent (the Welsh average is 3.5 per cent).	No data

Table A1.1 Characteristics of the local authorities involved in the phase one telephone interview sample *contd*

16.	A metropolitan borough in the West Midlands	Labour held	40th most deprived area out of 354 districts. Overall the borough has high levels of deprivation and is among the 10 per cent most deprived authorities in the country, sufficient to qualify it for neighbourhood renewal funding.	KS2 26.4 KS3 32.9 46.9% 5+ A* to Cs 85.5% 5+ A* to Gs
17.	An outer London Borough situated on the south-western edge of London, bordering three other London Boroughs and a large county authority.	Liberal Democrat held	246th most deprived local authority area out of 354 districts. The unemployment rate of 1.7 per cent is one of the lowest in London.	KS2 28.1 KS3 36.9 64.9% 5+ A* to Cs 92.1% 5+ A* to Gs
18.	A mainly urban unitary authority. The diverse and historical city is undergoing significant regeneration. It has few open spaces and has a number of contaminated former commercial and industrial sites. However, it also has an environmentally sensitive coastline.	No party has overall control	88th most deprived local authority area out of 354 districts. Unemployment is at a 25-year low at 2.3 per cent, but this is above the regional average.	KS2 26.8 KS3 32.5 44.5% 5+ A* to Cs 82.1% 5+ A* to Gs

Source: Local authority documentation in phase one of the NFER study, 2004
KS = key stage
(Deprivation data from English Indices of Deprivation, 2004)

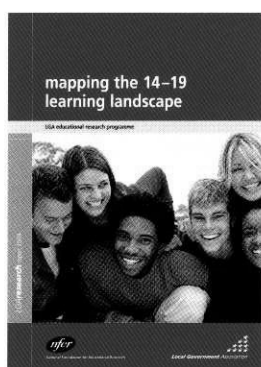
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David Sims and Susan McMeeking

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Sally Kendall, Richard White and Kay Kinder

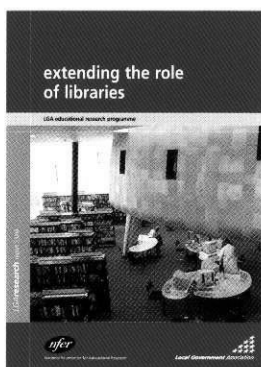
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the local authority contribution to improved educational outcomes
phase one report

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The report identifies:

- strategies to achieve improved educational outcomes
- key factors in achieving educational outcomes, covering six major themes: partnership working, key principles underpinning service delivery, funding, staffing, community engagement and awareness of local circumstances
- barriers and challenges to achieving educational outcomes
- the continuing role of the local authority.

Overall, the key messages to emerge from the research suggest the role of the local authority, albeit changing, is perceived to be no less vital in achieving educational outcomes.

This report is important reading for local authority staff, schools and many other agencies concerned with improving the outcomes of education for children and young people.

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