



House of Commons  
Education Committee

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**Appointment of Chair, Social  
Mobility and Child Poverty  
Commission**

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**Second Report of Session 2012–13**

***Volume I***

*Report, together with formal minutes and  
written evidence*

*Ordered by the House of Commons  
to be printed 10 July 2012*

## The Education Committee

The Education Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Department for Education and its associated public bodies.

### Membership at time Report agreed:

Mr Graham Stuart MP (*Conservative, Beverley & Holderness*) (Chair)  
Neil Carmichael MP (*Conservative, Stroud*)  
Alex Cunningham MP (*Labour, Stockton North*)  
Bill Esterson MP, (*Labour, Sefton Central*)  
Pat Glass MP (*Labour, North West Durham*)  
Damian Hinds MP (*Conservative, East Hampshire*)  
Charlotte Leslie MP (*Conservative, Bristol North West*)  
Ian Mearns MP (*Labour, Gateshead*)  
Lisa Nandy MP (*Labour, Wigan*)  
David Ward MP (*Liberal Democrat, Bradford East*)  
Carly Whittaker MP (*Conservative, Calder Valley*)

### Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the Internet via [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk)

### Publications

The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the Internet at [www.parliament.uk/education-committee](http://www.parliament.uk/education-committee)

### Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Dr Lynn Gardner (Clerk), Geraldine Alexander (Second Clerk), Penny Crouzet (Committee Specialist), Benjamin Nicholls (Committee Specialist), Ameet Chudasama (Senior Committee Assistant), Caroline McElwee (Committee Assistant), and Paul Hampson (Committee Support Assistant)

### Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Education Committee, House of Commons, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 6181; the Committee's e-mail address is [educom@parliament.uk](mailto:educom@parliament.uk)

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# 1 Background to the hearing

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## Pre-appointment hearings

1. The *Governance of Britain* Green Paper, published in July 2007, included a proposal that the Government nominee for key positions [...] should be subject to a pre-appointment hearing with the relevant select committee [...] The hearings would cover issues such as the candidate's suitability for the role, his or her key priorities, and the process used in selection.<sup>1</sup>
  
2. The Government's proposal was welcomed by the Liaison Committee, which entered into discussions with the Cabinet Office on the framework for pre-appointment hearings and, in particular, which appointments should be subject to them. A final list of such posts was agreed between the Liaison Committee and the Government in May 2008.<sup>2</sup> Four posts were deemed suitable for pre-appointment hearings before the then Children, Schools and Families Committee. These are:
  - Chair of the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency
  - Chair of Ofqual
  - Children's Commissioner for England
  - HM Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills
  
3. The Government made it clear that it would not regard any views expressed by committees on the suitability of any such appointment to be binding; but it undertook to take those views into consideration in deciding whether or not to proceed with the appointment.
  
4. The process of pre-appointment hearings has developed since 2008 and these are now a regular part of select committee business.<sup>3</sup>

## Chair, Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission

5. The Chair of the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission is a new post, created since the August 2009 list of posts subject to pre-appointment scrutiny was agreed. On 15 May 2012 Sarah Teather MP, Minister of State for Children and Families, Department for Education, wrote to the Committee, stating the Government's wish that the new post should be subject to the pre-appointment process. The Committee considered the Minister's letter on 22 May and decided to take up the opportunity to hold a hearing.

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1 Cm 7170, page 29

2 The full list is set out in the First Special Report of the Liaison Committee, Session 2007–08, HC 594, *Pre-appointment hearings by select committees: Government response to the Committee's First Report of Session 2007–08*

3 See background as set out in *Appointment of HM Chief Inspector, Ofsted*, Seventh Report of Session 2010-12, HC 1607-I

6. On 25 June the Minister of State wrote again to inform us that the preferred candidate was the Rt Hon Alan Milburn.

7. The Minister of State's letters, the candidate's *curriculum vitae* and a memorandum by the Department for Education, Department for Work and Pensions and the Cabinet Office setting out the requirements of the post and details of the recruitment process, are all printed with this Report.

8. We accordingly invited Mr Milburn to attend a pre-appointment hearing on 10 July 2012.

## 2 The post

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9. The role of the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission is to monitor progress by Government and others in society against the objectives of improving social mobility and reducing child poverty. It is a new advisory non-departmental public body, established under the Welfare Reform Act 2012. The Act sets out that the Commission must on request give advice to a Minister about how to measure socio-economic disadvantage, social mobility and child poverty. Such advice has to be published. The Commission must also publish an annual report, to be laid before Parliament by the Minister, on its views on progress made towards the goals of improving social mobility and reducing child poverty in the United Kingdom. The report must describe measures taken by Scottish Ministers, Welsh Ministers and Northern Ireland departments in accordance with the relevant strategy for those countries, as well as progress towards the implementation of the overall UK strategy. Ministers may also ask the Commission to carry out other tasks relating to these goals.

10. In her letter of 15 May, Sarah Teather stated that “the Chair will be expected to lead the Commission, establishing it as an influential and credible voice on social mobility and child poverty, as well as being an advocate and challenger to external institutions for the social mobility agenda”.<sup>4</sup>

## 3 The candidate

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### The candidate's background

11. Alan Milburn was the Member of Parliament for Darlington from 1992 until he retired from the UK Parliament at the general election in 2010. He held various shadow frontbench posts in Opposition (Shadow Health Minister from 1995 to 96; Shadow Treasury Minister from 1996 to 97) and also worked with Shadow Chancellor Gordon Brown MP to formulate the Labour Party's fiscal and macro-economic policy framework in preparation for government. After the 1997 general election he became Minister of State for Health (1997-98) and then joined the Cabinet as Chief Secretary to the Treasury (1998-

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4 Letter from Sarah Teather MP to the Chair, 15 May 2012

99). He was also Secretary of State for Health (1999-2003) and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (2004-05). He resigned from the front bench in 2005. In 2009 he was appointed Chair of the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions and went on to be appointed by the Coalition Government in 2010 as Independent Reviewer on Social Mobility to review and report on child poverty and social mobility.<sup>5</sup>

### Lines of questioning

12. In line with the guidance drawn up by the Liaison Committee on the conduct of pre-appointment hearings, our questioning sought to test the professional competence and personal independence of the candidate. The Liaison Committee also observes that a candidate will need to be able to withstand parliamentary and public scrutiny should they take up the post, and that questioning may therefore be robust.

13. In the evidence session we explored the following areas with Alan Milburn:

- Suitability for the post, including experience and independence;
- Setting up and leading the Commission;
- The child poverty targets and the Government's child poverty strategy;
- The principle of social mobility, Mr Milburn's previous work in this field and the Government's social mobility strategy.

A transcript of the oral evidence session is printed with this report.

### The Committee's views on the suitability of the candidate

14. The Committee considers that Alan Milburn has demonstrated his suitability for the post of Chair of the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission. We are grateful to the Minister of State for giving us the opportunity to hold this hearing and we endorse the Government's choice of candidate.

# Appendix 1: Letters to the Committee from Sarah Teather MP, Minister of State for Children and Families

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## Letter from Sarah Teather (14 May 2012)

### **Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission: Chair– Pre-Appointment Hearing**

The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission is being established to monitor progress, by Government and others in society, against the objectives of improving social mobility and reducing child poverty, reporting annually to Government on progress made. An exercise to appoint the Chair and Members to the Commission has begun, all of which will be Ministerial appointments. The Chair will be expected to lead the Commission, establishing it as an influential and credible voice on social mobility and child poverty, as well as being an advocate and challenger to external institutions for the social mobility agenda.

As you will be aware, the current published list of posts subject to pre-appointment scrutiny by Select Committee was agreed in August 2009, therefore, this post is not included. My Ministerial colleagues have agreed that, given the high profile of the Commission and the role of the Chair, they would like to make the post of Chair subject to pre-appointment scrutiny.

I am offering the Education Select Committee the opportunity to hold such a hearing. I would appreciate it if this hearing would be conducted before the end of June. This is so that the formal appointment can be made before summer recess, enabling the Chair to be involved in the interviews for the Members, expected to take place in August. I realise that this is a demanding timescale and I will ensure that officials in the Child Poverty Unit provide full assistance to the Committee if the Committee agree to take up this opportunity.

Please could you let me know if the Education Select Committee is willing to hold this pre-appointment hearing?

I am copying this letter to Lynn Gardner.



## **Letter from Sarah Teather (25 June 2012)**

### **Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission: Chair**

I am writing to invite the Education Select Committee to hold a pre-appointment hearing with our preferred candidate, Alan Milburn, for the post of Chair of the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission.

I understand that 10th July has been identified as the date on which this hearing could take place and that officials have been liaising with the Committee to ensure that you will have all the information required. Enclosed is a short memorandum which contains the background to this post and information on the appointment process.

I look forward to your embargoed report on the hearing before it is published. As set out in the guidance for pre-appointments, the Committee's views will be considered before confirming the appointment.

## Appendix 2: Memorandum by the Department for Education, Department for Work and Pensions and the Cabinet Office

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### Chair– Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission

#### Background

##### *Commission*

The Welfare Reform Act, which received Royal Assent on 8 March 2012, provides for the establishment of a Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission. This Commission will be an Advisory Non Departmental Public Body established to monitor progress, by Government and others in society, against the objectives of improving social mobility and reducing child poverty. In doing so, it will consider the broad range of child poverty, life chances and social mobility indicators, set out in the Social Mobility and the Child Poverty Strategies. It will publish annual independent report/s to Government on progress made towards improving social mobility and reducing child poverty. It will consist of a Chair, a Deputy Chair and up to 7 members, two of whom will be appointees of the Scottish and Welsh Governments (one each).

##### *Child Poverty Strategies*

The Child Poverty Strategy ‘Tackling the Causes of Disadvantage and Transforming Families’ Lives’ sets out the framework to tackle child poverty from 2011–2014, and provides this Government’s first step towards laying out a new approach for ending child poverty. It focuses on a broad set of policies that target the drivers of poverty and incentivises action, and is founded on the understanding that poverty is not just about income and must also build the wider life chances of children to increase opportunity and aspiration.

The Government aims to reduce child poverty across the United Kingdom. However, there is recognition that many of the policy levers which are needed to reduce child poverty are the responsibility of the Devolved Administrations and that many of the actions outlined in the strategy will only apply to England. Each of the Devolved Administrations is responsible for producing their own strategy on child poverty and for taking action in those areas where policy is devolved.

The Child Poverty Strategy for Scotland sets out the Scottish Government’s approach to tackling child poverty. It makes clear that tackling child poverty is a long term undertaking, with many factors influencing child poverty levels. It highlights the case that the causes and effects of poverty and inequality are complex and multi-dimensional, and require a range of interventions and responses. These must address the underlying causes of poverty, not just the symptoms, as poverty is about much more

than a lack of income. On this basis, the strategy sets out 2 main aims in respect to tackling child poverty. They are: to maximise household resources; and to improve children’s wellbeing and life chances. The strategy focuses on policy matters that are devolved to the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Ministers, and sets out a range of policies that will be applied over the course of the strategy.

The Child Poverty Strategy for Wales sets out the Welsh Government’s vision and strategic objectives for reducing child poverty in Wales. These are to: reduce the number of families living in workless households; improve the skills of parents and young people living in low income households so they can secure well-paid employment; and reduce inequalities that exist in health, education and economic outcomes of children and families by improving the outcomes of the poorest.

The strategy gives a clear account of what the Welsh Government can achieve in helping to reduce poverty with a specific focus on policies devolved to them. The strategy sets out a distinctive Welsh approach to the provision of public services that can address the long-term root causes of poverty.

### **Social Mobility Strategy**

The Social Mobility Strategy “Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers” set out the Government’s vision of a socially mobile country where no-one is prevented from fulfilling their potential by the circumstances of their birth, and established improving social mobility as the principal goal of the Government’s social policy.

The strategy focuses on relative inter-generational social mobility—the extent to which people’s success in life is determined by who their parents are—and aims to break the link between social background and outcomes at every stage of life: from the Foundation Years through school and the transition into adulthood and work.

The strategy developed a set of leading indicators of long-term improvements in social mobility, looking at the gaps by social background in outcomes at each life stage. These have been included in Departmental Business Plans, ensuring that social mobility is placed at the heart of Whitehall policymaking and giving the public the information necessary to hold the Government to account.

### **The Key Requirements of the Post of Chair**

The Chair will be required to:

- establish the Commission as an influential and credible voice on social mobility and child poverty;
- lead the Commission and set its agenda; chair meetings;
- ensure that the Commission provides, and publishes, the requested advice and/or research in its annual progress report/s to Government; and
- be an advocate and challenger to external institutions for the social mobility agenda.

In order to fulfil these, the Chair must be able to:

- Demonstrate commitment and success in improving long-term outcomes for children and/or social mobility;
- Demonstrate a very high level of organisational leadership, providing outstanding strategic direction and delivery in either the public or private sector; and
- Demonstrate that they have a proven record in building and sustaining effective working relationships with a range of stakeholders.

## **Role and Person Specification**

### ***Role specification***

The Chair will need to ensure the Commission fulfils its remit, as set out in legislation, by:

- Establishing the Commission, identifying and securing Ministerial agreement to the key priorities for the Commission, and setting them out in an annual Business Plan;
- Leading the Commission, setting its agenda and chairing meetings to provide the best possible progress report/s on the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Strategies and targets;
- Ensuring the Commission responds appropriately, effectively, and in a timely manner to requests for advice by the Minister/s of the Crown;
- Being an advocate for the social mobility agenda: holding to account and challenging key institutions in areas such as Higher Education and the professions;
- Building and sustaining effective working relationships with a range of stakeholders, including Ministers, senior Government officials, representatives from local communities and experts in the field;
- Being the public spokesperson for the Commission;
- Utilising the expertise and experience of Commission members and securing Ministerial agreement to its commissioning;
- Ensuring active engagement by all members in the business of the Commission, including encouraging them to sustain their knowledge and understanding of the issues, reviewed through an annual appraisal of each member.

## ***Person specification***

Candidates were also expected to demonstrate:

### ***Essential***

- An in-depth and up-to-date understanding and knowledge of issues relating to social mobility and/or child poverty, including the wider policy context;
- A track record of strong negotiation, persuasion, advocacy and diplomacy skills in challenging and influencing high-level decision makers in a range of public, private and/or voluntary organisations;
- The ability to think strategically about wider social mobility and child poverty issues, working with a range of individuals and communities to set strategic direction within the wider policy context to achieve results;
- Excellent leadership and interpersonal skills to manage differing, strongly held opinions and agree clear, unequivocal ways forward;
- Excellent communication and networking skills to communicate with, and gain the confidence of, a variety of audiences: Ministers, researchers, those in the social mobility and child poverty sectors and media representatives in a professional and credible manner; and
- Personal integrity, with commitment to maintaining high standards in public life and promoting sound corporate governance.

### ***Desirable***

- Experience of working with, and delivering effective outcomes for children, young people and/or families.

## **Terms and Conditions**

The appointments will be made by Ministers for a period of no longer than five years, subject to a satisfactory annual review.

These posts are unremunerated. However, reasonable expenses will be reimbursed, including travel expenses and subsistence. As a post holder appointed for a limited duration, you will not be eligible for compensation upon the ending of your appointment.

### ***Process***

The process has been managed by the Commission Team in the Child Poverty Unit, jointly sponsored by the Department for Education, the Department for Work and Pensions and HM Treasury. As with all public appointments the process for the appointment of the Chair of the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission is required to follow the Code of Practice of the Commissioner for Public Appointments

(OCPA), and an OCPA assessor, Olivia Grant, has overseen the process, including being part of the sift and interview panel.

The keeping with Cabinet Office guidance, the post was advertised on their public appointments website. Other activities included:

- Advertising it on the Knowledge Hub, administered by the Local Government Association;
- All Individuals on the Register of Interest for Public Appointments in Scotland were contacted;
- links were made on the Scottish Government website and it was also published on the Employability and Tackling Poverty Learning Network;
- The advert was also directly sent to organisations across Wales that have links with Welsh Government in relation to Child Poverty.
- In addition, over 900 stakeholders working in the social mobility and child poverty areas were also contacted via email which included a link to the public appointments website.

## ***The Selection Process***

### ***Sifting of applications***

The panel met to consider applications from 8 candidates, each of which provided evidence and examples of their ability to meet the criteria as set out in the role and person specification. The panel unanimously selected a shortlist of 4 for panel interview. References on the shortlisted candidates were also obtained. Ministers were advised of the successful candidates.

### ***Final Interviews***

The panel included consisted of: Olivia Grant, Office for the Commission for Public Appointments Assessor, who was the Chair of the panel; Sue Owen, Director General, Strategy Group Department for Work and Pensions; Tom Jeffery Director General, Children, Young People and Families Department for Education; and Caleb Deeks, Head of Deputy Prime Minister's Research and Analysis Division, Cabinet Office. A note taker from the Child Poverty Unit was also present.

The candidates started the interview with a short presentation on: "How would you lead the Commission to contribute to the government's goals of ending child poverty and improving social mobility?"

Following this were questions which covered the following areas:

- Why the candidate had applied for the post;
- Strategic thinking and direction setting;
- Leadership skills and interpersonal skills;
- Negotiating, persuasion and advocacy section;

- Personal integrity and standards of public life;
- Conflicts of interest; and
- Time commitment.

All the candidates were assessed against the key criteria. 2 candidates were assessed as being appointable as Chair and our preferred candidate for the post of Chair is Alan Milburn.

*June 2012*

## Appendix 3: Alan Milburn's CV

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### Public policy experience

#### **Member of Parliament for Darlington** (1992–2010)

Retired from the UK Parliament at the general election in 2010

#### **Shadow Health Minister** (1995–96)

Responsible for developing the Labour Party's community, social and mental health service policies in preparation for government

#### **Shadow Treasury Minister** (1996–97)

Working with Shadow Chancellor Gordon Brown MP to formulate the Labour Party's fiscal and macro-economic policy framework in preparation for government

#### **Minister of State for Health** (1997–98)

Given policy responsibility by Prime Minister Tony Blair for reforming the National Health Service

#### **Chief Secretary to the Treasury** (1998–99)

As the youngest member of Tony Blair's Cabinet had responsibility for all aspects of public expenditure, the development of public-private partnerships and the overseeing of the financial services industry

#### **Secretary of State for Health** (1999–2003)

Leading a radical reform programme of health and social care services including the creation of a market within the NHS, autonomous NHS Foundation Trusts, choice for patients and devolution of decision-making

#### **Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster** (2004–05)

Responsible for co-ordinating and developing government policy across all Whitehall departments working directly to Prime Minister Tony Blair. Co-ordinated Labour's successful 2005 general election campaign.

#### **Chair, Panel on Fair Access to the Professions** (2009)

Responsible for delivering independent cross-party recommendations to Prime Minister Gordon Brown on improving social mobility in Britain.

#### **Independent Reviewer on Social Mobility** (2010–)

Appointed by the Coalition Government to review and report on child poverty and social mobility.

### Voluntary and business experience

#### **Chairman of AFROX** (2006–)



A charity specialising in helping African governments to combat the growing problem of cancer on the continent.

**African Governance Initiative (2008–)**

Undertaking pro-bono work for Tony Blair's AGI advising the government of Sierra Leone on implementing its agenda for change.

**Trustee of the Yorkshire Sculpture Park (2005–)**

Helping this world leader develop its profile and services.

**Chair, Bridgepoint European Advisory Board (2004–)**

A member of the Advisory Board to this successful mid-market private equity group on its overall strategy since 2004 and chairman since 2010.

**Chair, Mars Global Advisors (2011–)**

Operating chair of a high profile and diverse range of advisors assisting one of the largest global firms with its strategic development

**Member PepsiCo UK & Ireland Advisory Board (2005–12)**

Providing broad strategic advice to the company.

**Non-executive director Diaverum AB (2010– )**

Assisting Europe's second biggest provider of renal dialysis services to develop its quality services agenda.

**Director, A.M.Strategy Ltd (2006–)**

The consultancy company through which I undertake consultancy advice and speech work.

**Senior advisor, PwC Global Health Practice (2012–)**

Working with PwC to advise governments and health systems around the world on health reform

## **Further background and personal details**

Born in 1958 he was raised by a single mother on a council estate in North East England where he still has his home. He is married to Ruth, a hospital consultant. They have two sons, aged 20 and 15.

He is a graduate from the University of Lancaster where he studied history.

Prior to entering Parliament he worked in business development, for a trade union research centre and in a radical bookshop.

His interests include art, food, travel and Newcastle United.

# Formal Minutes

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**Tuesday 10 July 2012**

Members present:

Mr Graham Stuart, in the Chair

Alex Cunningham  
Damian Hinds  
Ian Mearns

David Ward  
Craig Whittaker

Draft Report (*Appointment of Chair, Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

*Ordered*, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 14 read and agreed to.

*Resolved*, That the Report be the Second Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Written evidence was appended to the Report as Appendices 1 to 3.

*Ordered*, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

[Adjourned till Wednesday 11 July at 9.15 am

## Witnesses

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**Tuesday 10 July 2012**

Page

**Alan Milburn**, preferred candidate for Chair of the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission

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## List of Reports from the Committee during the last Parliament

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The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

### Session 2010-12

First Special Report	Young people not in education, employment or training: Government Response to the Children, Schools and Families Committee's Eighth Report of Session 2009-10	HC 416
Second Special Report	The Early Years Single Funding Formula: Government Response to the Seventh Report from the Children, Schools and Families Committee, Session 2009-10	HC 524
Third Special Report	Transforming Education Outside the Classroom: Responses from the Government and Ofsted to the Sixth Report of the Children, Schools and Families Committee, Session 2009-10	HC 525
Fourth Special Report	Sure Start Children's Centres: Government Response to the Fifth Report from the Children, Schools and Families Committee, Session 2009-10	HC 768
First Report	Behaviour and Discipline in Schools	HC 516-I and -II (HC 1316)
Second Report	The role and performance of Ofsted	HC 570-I and II (HC 1317)
Fifth Special Report	Looked-after Children: Further Government Response to the Third Report from the Children, Schools and Families Committee, Session 2008-9	HC 924
Third Report	Services for young people	HC 744-I and -II (HC 1501)
Fourth Report	Participation by 16-19 year olds in education and training	HC 850-I and -II (HC 1572)
Fifth Report	The English Baccalaureate	HC 851 (HC 1577)
Sixth Report	Services for young people: Government Response to the Committee's Third Report of Session 2010-12	HC 1501 (HC 1736)

Seventh Report	Appointment of HM Chief Inspector, Ofsted	HC 1607-I
Eighth Report	Chief Regulator of Qualifications and Examinations	HC 1764-I and -II
Ninth Report	Great teachers: attracting, training and retaining the best	HC 1515-I

**Session 2012–13**

First Report	The administration of examinations for 15–19 year olds in England	HC 141-I
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