

# Growing Up North

Look North: A generation of children await the powerhouse promise



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## Introduction from the Children's Commissioner, Anne Longfield



There has been a renewed and positive focus on the North of England over recent years as Northern Powerhouse plans unfold. New business and transport links are being established, new approaches to leadership and governance are being developed and new schemes to regenerate many urban spaces are increasingly visible.

But what will all this mean for children that are growing up in the North today and what will it take for the

Northern Powerhouse promise to deliver for northern children? Most importantly, what will it offer for those that are growing up in the context of economic disadvantage which still casts a long shadow over so many northern communities?

This report examines these issues and children's experience of growing up in the North today. It is a culmination of a year of conversations with children, business, councils and health professionals and charities. We have examined research and data, visited leading lights, examined examples of creativity and we have looked across the North and elsewhere in the country for inspiration and evidence of what works. The results are set out in this report and its recommendations for change.

We have approached this project with optimism. I am a northerner, and - of course- a proud one at that. Growing up in the North gave me values and attributes that have shaped my life and I wouldn't have it any other way. We understood from the outset that the North isn't all the same. Like elsewhere in the country there are hot spots of activity and wealth, there are children growing up in affluent families and there are schools and organisations that achieve extraordinary success. Research shows that children who grow up in affluent families enjoy relative success wherever they live in the country. No surprise then that these children flourish in the North and enjoy good life chances.

However this is not the case for more disadvantaged children and the fact of the matter is that there are more disadvantaged communities in the North than many other areas of the country, and many of those have entrenched disadvantages over several generations. These are the focus of this report and the recommendations we make.

We found that disadvantage manifests itself in childhood in many ways. A lack of confidence, uncertainty and low expectation. Isolated communities with narrow and poor job prospects. Poor school results and poor connections to further and higher education. Children in some areas look at new developments in the North but have little hope they might feel the benefits or have increased choices in life as a result.

But we also learnt that this doesn't have to be the case.

We found great examples of northern schools boosting communication skills and confidence through languages, creative writing, public performance, visits and local heritage. We found arts, music and sports organisations that develop talent and open up opportunity. We heard how business and schools are working together to expand horizons and raise awareness of career paths, and universities and colleges who are reaching out to disadvantaged children and finding new ways to support them to

continue to study. We recommend that these approaches are extended throughout northern communities as part of a coherent plan to help disadvantaged children to succeed.

We have taken a particular interest in how children progress throughout childhood. Many will do well at primary age when schools in the North are some of the best in the country. But we have been very struck by how many children fall back during the secondary years when children growing up in the areas of greatest need often underachieve. Here hundreds of thousands of children face a double disadvantage of living in a poor community and attending a poor school.

In comparison to the experience of growing up in the other parts of the country, these children are being badly let down. Children in receipt of free school meals in London are 40% more likely to get good GCSE result in Maths and English and two times more likely to go to university than children receiving free school meals in the North.

We are very clear that this needs to change and are recommending new investment and an urgent focus, backed up by joined up local plans to transform children's opportunities in the most disadvantaged northern communities.

The children we met in the North over the last year were ambitious and aspirational for their future. They love and are proud of the place they live. They want a future where they live near their family and community and they want jobs and opportunities to rival anywhere else in the country. The exodus south to find work is real but it is not what these children want. If the North is to flourish it needs to grow and retain the talents of all its children and truly offer the opportunities in life they hope for.

These are their demands for the Northern Powerhouse chiefs, the regeneration and civic leaders and northern Mayors that are designing and developing the North of the future.

There is a real sense of energy across the North of England, a feeling that now is the time to change old narratives and to use Northern grown solutions to ensure a more prosperous future for all children. The challenges are big, but as I conclude the project, I am more convinced than ever that it can be done. There are 3.6m children growing up in the North. Every one of them should have the brightest future possible and best opportunities to look forward to happy, healthy and prosperous lives. Where they live and grow up should not be a barrier to making the most of their lives.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Anne Longfield". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. Below the signature is a short horizontal line.

**Anne Longfield OBE**  
**Children's Commissioner for England**

## Executive Summary

The place we grow up influences every aspect of our lives. It informs our view of the world around us; it influences the relationships we have, and ultimately it impacts on our career choices and wider life choices too.

This report focuses on what this means for children who are growing up in the North. A part of the country that has seen extraordinary change over the last 50 years and one that now has a real opportunity to shape a new future through the regeneration and devolution schemes in place.

It is right to acknowledge that very many of the children we met as part of this project have a childhood full of opportunity and promise. These children are positive about where they live, are doing really well and have great prospects. This report is not seeking to reinforce old narratives of wholesale northern decline. Quite the contrary, throughout we highlight much of the innovative work we have encountered across the North, and emphasise the real impact this is having on children's lives.

However, it is also important to understand that a disproportionate number of children in the North are growing up in communities of entrenched disadvantage which have not enjoyed the financial growth or government energy and spotlight that have so boosted opportunities in other areas of the country – London and the South East in particular.

As a result, too many disadvantaged children in the North are being left behind.

This report sets out starkly what this means:

- > Too many children starting school far behind where they should be. Often with special educational needs no one has picked up.
- > Children from disadvantaged backgrounds facing an education gap that starts before schools and widens throughout education
- > More than half of the secondary schools serving the North's most deprived communities are judged to be less than good.
- > Large numbers of children dropping out of education before they reach 18.
- > Lack of confidence amongst children that economic regeneration will mean more jobs or opportunities.

These findings bolster concerns over northern school performance raised by Ofsted and the Northern Powerhouse Partnership. The Department for Education's own Northern Powerhouse Schools Strategy found that too many secondary schools in the North were plagued by poor leadership and governance. With government backing, schools in London have transformed over the last 15 years. The focus now needs to be put on the North. Throughout this project we have encountered enough examples of brilliant work within the North to show what can be done. The challenge, therefore, is to make this excellence the norm.

Of course, a great childhood isn't just about going to a great school. That's why this project has looked at family life, the impact of communities and the richness of opportunity – friendships, interests, sports and arts that can build confidence and open up new opportunities. Community institutions as well as education and ultimately employers and business all shape children's experience and prospects, and again, we highlight the best of them in this report.

Growing up North has sought to:

- > Increase our understanding of children's attitudes, aspirations and expectations and how these relate to locality
- > Look at the progression of children from early years to early adulthood across different regions in the North of England
- > Assess the opportunities available to young people between and within different regions and City regions

Its conclusions demand a commitment to change. The North can deliver this change, but only if it puts children at the centre of the wider changes that are underway. The recommendations in this report detail how this can be done.

## Recommendations

### **1. Children's prospects should be placed at the heart of the Northern Powerhouse and given the same attention as economic regeneration**

Local areas are thinking big and driving change for business and economies in the North. But true regeneration goes beyond buildings, business links and transport. Children are not confident that they will benefit from new developments. If regeneration is to truly change the prospects for the North it needs to be a catalyst for change for the most disadvantaged communities and start by focusing on the workforce of tomorrow - the children of today.

We want to see:

- > Each local area establish a forum similar in structure to Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to include all the bodies working with children.
- > Central Government showing the same level of willingness to devolve powers and funding for services for children, including education, that they have shown for economic regeneration, *to areas that make compelling bids that they will innovate and integrate to improve provision for children.*

### **2. Government should provide additional investment in the most disadvantaged areas to support local councils and partners to improve children's outcomes and life chances – this should start in the North**

It is clear that local councils are struggling with reduced budgets and increased demands for services in the North. In the most disadvantaged areas we heard how Councils were making savings in non-statutory service areas such as early help and prevention despite the risk of this leading to additional demand on their statutory provision. This was also putting additional pressure on schools who were attempting to fund additional services for their pupils out of their budgets, potentially reducing teaching budgets for schools facing the greatest need.

The DfE has an established and well regarded innovation scheme to enable local councils to develop new approaches to supporting children. We recommend a similar approach is taken with the aim of supporting local areas to work with partners to develop new approaches to overcome entrenched disadvantage and vulnerability amongst the children in the most deprived communities- starting in the North.

### **3. Extra support for families to give their children the best start in life**

Our research shows that children in the North are more likely to attend nursery at ages 2 and 3, but are still less likely to reach the expected standard of development when starting school. Families want to help their children flourish but will always benefit from help if problems develop. We were frequently told that families who were struggling were not being well-supported and this meant expensive problems later on and poor outcomes for the children involved.

We need a renewed focus on early-intervention with families across a range of agencies. We saw great examples where Children's Centres played a vital role in supporting children and their parents; particularly where these centres have extended their support to older children and families as a 'Family Hub'. We recommend that Government supports Family Hubs in identified areas of disadvantage in the North and works with local areas to find a sustainable funding model.

### **4. Earlier identification of special educational needs should be a public health priority**

Our research finds too many children in the North starting school with high-levels of development issues, but fewer children having a special educational needs diagnosis before starting school. The earlier issues are identified the more effective – and cheaper – the support needed. This should be recognised as a health priority as well as an educational one and needs much better local coordination between the NHS and local councils, which should be coordinated by Health and Well-Being Boards.

### **5. A new northern schools programme should be established to improve leadership and governance, boost recruitment and dramatically improve children's attainment in the most disadvantaged areas**

More than half of the schools serving the North's most deprived communities are rated as less than good by Ofsted meaning children in these communities face the double-disadvantage of being from a poor community and attending a weak school. Our research found schools in these communities were consistently facing the same problems: weak leadership, poor governance and difficulties recruiting staff. Changing this will require an ambitious and rigorous development programme over a ten year period implemented through joint working between local authorities, the Department for Education and Regional Schools Commissioners.

### **6. Reform the role of Regional Schools Commissioner**

Many areas said that Regional Schools Commissioners had too narrow a role and did not work closely enough with local schools or councils. We recommend that their role is revised to become coordinators of good practice and improvement to support northern schools.

### **7. Northern areas need to stop children dropping out of education early**

Legally, children are now required to be in education or training until they are 18. But our research found high numbers of children across the North dropping out before this, who are missing vital parts of their education and undermining their future prospects. Every local area needs to have a plan to ensure children are in apprenticeships, training or education until 18.

**8. Local Enterprise Partnerships need to expand their programmes to bring employers and schools together to widen children's horizons and open up job prospects**

While we encountered lots of willingness – on the part of both schools and businesses – to work together it was often ad hoc and piecemeal. As a result few children - especially from the most disadvantaged communities get the chance to take a look at what different kinds of job might be. We fully support the Northern Powerhouse Partnership's campaign for an additional 900,000 children in the North to get work experience, and we need to see much more local action to make this a reality. Public sector employers facing skills shortages such as Network Rail and the NHS should be leading this work.

**9. Arts, culture and sports bodies should prioritise funding for children with disadvantaged backgrounds**

We saw some excellent examples of how arts, culture and sport can transform children's outlook, instill confidence and raise aspiration. Many children wanted to get involved and stay involved but found that opportunities are limited, expensive or not open to them. The bodies funding these activities should prioritise the North, and particularly its disadvantaged areas.



# Key Findings

## Section 1: Children's Life and Careers Aspirations

Throughout this project we met with children and young people across the North of England, including children of different ages and in different settings. We wanted to hear children's experiences of growing up in the North and their aspirations for the future.

They told us they were:

- > Proud of where they're from, proud to be Northern

Overwhelmingly, children we spoke to were proud of where they were from, and proud to be from the North. Generally (though this varied more) they hoped to live in the same city they grew up in as adults.

- > Optimistic for the future, but realistic about the challenges

Most of the children we spoke to were clear that they expected their local area improve in the next five years. Generally, boys were more optimistic than girls.

- > Aware of regeneration, but not convinced about what it means

There was a high degree of awareness of local regeneration. But there was also a fear – particularly pronounced amongst girls – that regeneration was about a few shiny buildings, new shops and pavements, but not much which would materially change their life chances.

## Section 2: What we have found out about children's progression

For this project we have taken a broad look at children's development, looking at children from when they start school, to when they leave education. The aim has been to understand which children are failing to reach their potential, at what points in their development, and where within the North.

### Early Years

- > Children in the North are more likely to be attending nursery at age 2 or 3 than children elsewhere. Despite this, educational issues in the North of England tend to start before a child starts school. Across the North we see:
  - Too few children from disadvantaged backgrounds starting school at the expected level of development
  - Too many children start school with significant development issues which impede their ability to learn, but could have been addressed earlier.

### Primary Schools

- > The performance of primary schools in the North is generally with very impressive. With pupils from all backgrounds tending to make better progress in the North than the rest of the country.
- > We visited many excellent primary schools serving the most deprived communities who were giving children a wide range of additional support and experiences.

### Secondary Schools

- > Secondary school performance is much more disappointing. Generally, pupils in the North of England make worse progress at secondary school than those across England, and particularly

when compared to those in London. Our research shows that most of the difference between London and the North is due to the difference in outcomes for disadvantaged children.

- > Children growing up in the North's most deprived communities face a double-whammy of familial disadvantage and poor institutional performance: more than 50% of children in the most deprived areas in the North are attending secondary schools rated less than good.
- > We visited excellent secondary schools which were bucking this trend, by supporting pupils from some of the most deprived communities by offering a range of support to meet children's needs.
- > Our research found very little evidence of sustained work at either a local or regional level to tackle the systemic issues holding schools back.

#### Post-16

- > Despite the law now requiring children to stay in education or training until 18, too many children are dropping out of education and training before 18. Several northern cities have more than 10% of children missing out on crucial parts of their education.
- > Children leaving school or college in the North *having completed A-levels or equivalents* are as likely to go onto university as their peers elsewhere in the country. And in many northern areas they are significantly more likely to go into an apprenticeship or employment.
- > However, too many children suffer from the effects of low-attainment pre-16, this is particularly true for disadvantaged pupils. When we compare attainment at each age in the North to other areas, particularly London, we see the educational gap widening throughout the school period. The result is that a pupil from London who has at some point had free school meals is twice as likely to go on to university than an equivalent child in the North.

### Section 3: Devolution and Regeneration

To inform this project, we held a series of major summits in the large regional centres across the North. These brought together leading figures from local government, civic society, business and education to discuss the local issues facing children, the strategies in place to address these and provision for children within regeneration and devolution plans.

At the summits we found:

- > A clear awareness of the problems facing children, and particularly of how issues of deprivation combined to impact the prospects for children.
- > Numerous examples of institutions delivering genuinely transformative work with children and agencies innovating effectively to cope with significant demands.

However, there were issues with the levels of local planning and integration for children.

- > There were still big difficulties bringing together all the agencies working with children, particularly health services and schools.
- > Too often individual areas were looking at children at specific stages of development or within certain institutions, rather than looking at the child across their life course.
- > Local areas were more confident and ambitious about what they could achieve around economic regeneration than they were for children.

## Section 1: Children's Experiences and Aspirations

The conversations we held with children were at the heart of Growing up North. We spoke to children of all ages in a variety of settings across the North. We held focus groups in Hull, Leeds, Manchester, Sheffield, Liverpool and the North East with 14/15yr olds, and held separate sessions with boys and girls. While there were some differences between areas a number of consistent themes emerged:

### **Proud of where they're from, proud to be Northern**

Overwhelmingly, the children we spoke to were proud of where they were from, and proud to be from the North. Generally (though this varied more) the young people hoped to live in the same area when they become adults, because they liked where they lived and wanted to stay close to friends and families – subject to the opportunities available to them. We asked those in our groups how they felt their area compared to other areas. They were all aware of the comparison with London. Generally, there was a feeling that there are more opportunities and more money available in London, but that this doesn't necessarily mean a higher quality of life due to a variety of pressures associated with living in the South. As a result, there was little appetite to live in London in the long-term, though a few children we spoke to would like to 'try it' for a bit. Even those with a very particular career intention were more likely to want to pursue this abroad than in London. Instead, the more useful comparison was often with other Northern cities. Across the North, Leeds and Manchester were held up as cities with more going on, and probably more regeneration, but still comparable. This was seen to be the more relevant model for comparing their own area, and what they would like to see it become.

*"I think Manchester is a good place to grow up. There's different things around every corner."* Child in Manchester

*"There's loads of history [which is important] because that's where we're from."* Child in Liverpool

*"I feel Manchester's London...but I prefer Manchester actually."* Child in Manchester

### **Optimistic for the future, but realistic about the challenges**

The commonly held view – across all the cities – was that local areas were improving. Most of the children we spoke to were clear that they expected their local area to be a better place to live in five or ten years. Moreover, young people had experienced noticeable changes in their local areas more recently:

*"They've just built a massive new leisure centre, so you can go there and there's a library and a gym and stuff."* Child in Northumberland

*"It has definitely got better in the last five years. There's loads more to do than there was before and there are lots of new shops."* Child in Sheffield

There were however, mixed views as to the degree to which changes in the local area would translate into better opportunities for young people.

*“They are doing it up, but it’s not really for our age group.”* Child in Newcastle

### **Aware of regeneration, but not convinced it’s for young people**

Children were highly aware of regeneration taking place in their local areas - in particular, there was clear awareness of physical changes – new buildings etc. However, there was often a perception that the changes didn’t amount to much more than cosmetic alterations. There was a fear – particularly pronounced amongst girls – that regeneration was about a few shiny buildings, new shops and pavements, but not much more. In this sense, many young people felt that regeneration was something happening to their city, but not to them.

*“They’ve done up the main thing to make it look nice, rather than getting things done that will actually benefit us.”* Child in Northumberland

Many of the young people in our focus groups remained concerned about the environment in which they lived. Focus groups recognised problems with criminal activity and displayed a nuanced understanding of how crime, lack of opportunity and an undesirable public perception of the North can combine to impact outcomes for young people.

A significant minority of young people we spoke to had been exposed to crime first-hand. This included exposure to violence and threats from gangs, or antisocial behaviour and illegal activity, such as drug-taking. This led some to say that they felt unsafe in the places that they lived. However, others concluded that there were good and bad things in any location, and that there were some particularly ‘bad’ estates or dangerous areas, rather than the entire city or town being overrun with crime. Indeed, many young people were defensive about their home town’s reputation. They highlighted ‘bad press’ and negative media reports as being responsible for amplifying problems in the North that were not ‘that bad’ in reality.

*“There are some places in Leeds that are alright, that are well respected, but there are some places that aren’t in Leeds too that have a bad reputation.”* Child in Leeds

*“People think of us like The Sun thinks of us, the paper slagged us off.”* Child in Hull

*“You get gangs and things, but it’s not everywhere. There’s good and bad in all places, not just here. You just avoid the places with gangs and loads of crime, [I] don’t walk on my own through there.”* Child in Newcastle

### Nothing to do...

Many young people reported that their local areas lacked leisure opportunities; this was something they believed was getting worse, not better. As a consequence, most young people we spoke to relied on fast food restaurants and shopping centres to provide them with a place to socialise with friends. The lack of youth clubs and other activities for teenagers became a particular problem during the winter months. Many of the young people we spoke to observed that the lack of “things to do” or activities to get involved in, led their peers to commit crimes. Such activity might involve breaking into football pitches or abandoned houses for entertainment.

*“We were literally walking around for three hours yesterday in the cold because we didn’t have anywhere to go.”* Child in Manchester

*“If you get abandoned houses people break in and just go and sit in there because there isn’t anything else to do.”* Child in Newcastle

*“There’s nothing our way really, except Maccys and KFC.”* Child in Liverpool

*“[The youth clubs] are not shut down, they’re just for more younger kids, there’s not much for our age at all.”* Child in Liverpool

Concerns about the crime rate and lack of activities, led some young people to draw wider conclusions about neglect and poverty in the North compared to other parts of England, especially London.

### Career aspirations: heavily influenced by immediate friends and family

Overwhelmingly, the young people we spoke to were planning to go into a career of someone known to them personally. This meant the aspirations of the young people we spoke to were reflective of the local labour market – and its limitations. Very few professional or office based occupations were mentioned in any of our sessions. There was also a clear gender divide in terms of career aspirations. That boys were generally much more optimistic about the opportunities open to them locally may also be a reflection of the fact that men earn much more than women in all the areas we visited.

*“[I’d] probably [follow] my sister because she left school not that long ago and she likes kids and now she’s working with them.”* Child in Leeds

Linked to this, our work highlighted three practical issues with the way career aspirations are formed.

### **One big firm can have a big impact**

In every city, there was one major employer which was repeatedly mentioned in relation to careers. In Hull it was Siemens, in Manchester the BBC and MediaCity, in Liverpool the Jaguar Land Rover plant and in Northumberland the Sunderland plant (even though it was a long way away). In all, these big firms were seen as a beacon of good, but achievable, careers.

*“Somewhere like Jag you can grow into your career.”* Child in Liverpool

*“There’s a media college in MediaCity. I’d consider going there really. I know people who’ve been there who say it’s good and from there they’ve gone on to do media as their job.”* Child in

### **It is very hard to turn careers information into opportunities which feel tangible**

This is best illustrated through two examples:

1. In Manchester many of the careers to which the groups’ aspired centred round two big developments: SportsCity and MediaCity. But very few office-based professions were raised. So we asked about another area of Manchester which has recently undergone significant redevelopment – Deansgate and Spinningfields. Everyone in the group knew the area, and were aware of the new developments and could name the shops, but did not think there were jobs connected to the new building beyond retail - even in response to specific questions about the offices in the area and what type of work would be available in them. Yet when we asked about some of the firms with offices in the area, such as local law firm Pannone and national accounting PWC, it turned out that both firms had been at the school careers day recently and had presented on the careers available – including non-degree routes.
2. When we asked ‘what careers aren’t available in Manchester?’ the answer that came back from one group, was ‘science’. We probed this by asking about Manchester’s connection to science – in particular graphene and Professor Brian Cox. It then transpired that Brian Cox had recently spoken at the school science day and the group could tell us about graphene, why it was potentially so useful and how it was discovered in Manchester. None of this knowledge had translated into perceptible opportunities.

Both these examples show that schools can be doing lots of careers work, and it may impart specific and useful information, but that isn’t necessarily enough to change young people’s perceptions about what is available to them. Quite simply, the young people we spoke to had limited awareness of professional occupations that did not feature in their everyday interactions. Without the personal experience of family members, or exposure to the brand/company, young people struggled to identify employment opportunities.

### **Immersive experiences seem to stick**

Though this wasn't explored in detail in our sessions, the children we spoke to were much more likely to proactively mention a career, and express an interest in it, if they had visited the setting. For example, in Northumberland, several of the participants had visited a company that did engineering work for large-scale piping. Several of those who had experienced this expressed an interest in the industry, and all felt it was an achievable local career. In Manchester, there was a similar sentiment amongst those who had visited the SportCity complex.

### **Differences between boys and girls**

Throughout our work we encountered significant differences between boys and girls, both in terms of their career aspirations and what they believed their local area offered them. Within the context of regeneration we think this is important. We know girls outperform boys throughout school but are paid less as adults. This is a particular issue in many Northern areas where traditional industries have been very male-dominated. It is very important that regeneration strategies tackle this and speak to girls' aspirations, particularly if the regeneration is focused industries which are perceived as male.

The challenge around careers is not unique to the North, but there are additional challenges as a consequence of the North's economy. The local labour market is likely to have fewer high-wage, high-skilled jobs, and families are likely to have fewer economic connections.

### **Providing genuine careers exposure**

All the schools we visited were keen to improve their pupils' access to careers information and we encountered numerous businesses keen to improve careers' provision. There was a strong sense that engaging with schools, and improving careers provision was a vital part of regeneration efforts.

However, both business and schools encountered significant practical obstacles in bringing schools and businesses together. Our research suggests a lot of energy is being wasted on ineffective careers interventions. Often we heard of schools focusing on large-scale events, such as a careers fairs with numerous employers, rather than frequent exposure to individual businesses in greater detail, or, even better, opportunities to visit the businesses themselves. The Gatsby Benchmarks<sup>1</sup>, which were piloted in the North East, are a welcome tool in helping schools evaluate their careers provision, with a focus on giving children genuinely meaningful employment exposure which both meets their needs and reflects the local economy. We are pleased to see these included in the statutory guidance for schools and colleges issued as part of the national careers strategy<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://careercompanion.co.uk/img/Gatsby/Gatsby%20Benchmark%20Toolkit%20-%20Full%20Document%20\(Lo-Res\).pdf](https://careercompanion.co.uk/img/Gatsby/Gatsby%20Benchmark%20Toolkit%20-%20Full%20Document%20(Lo-Res).pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/672418/Careers\\_guidance\\_and\\_access\\_for\\_education\\_and\\_training\\_providers.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/672418/Careers_guidance_and_access_for_education_and_training_providers.pdf) (p7)

Paul Carbert from the North East Chamber of Commerce explains how successful the Gatsby Benchmarks can be in improving careers guidance.

### **Paul Carbert, North East Chamber of Commerce**

A survey of North East England Chamber of Commerce members in 2015 found that two thirds believe that schools are not effective at preparing young people for work. One of our key challenges is to improve the careers advice that young people in the North East receive, so that they are aware of the job opportunities locally and are supported to follow the right pathways into work.

Since that survey in 2015, significant progress has been made in the North East. The biggest change has been wider understanding and adoption of the Gatsby benchmarks – a set of standards that can be used by schools to judge the effectiveness of their careers offering.

The role for employers is clearly identified in several of the benchmarks. Benchmark 5 is about giving every pupil the opportunity for school-based encounters with employers and employees, for example through a speaker visiting the school or a mentoring scheme; and Benchmark 6 is about offering all young people first-hand work experience by the age of 18. [...] The Chamber has been a strong supporter of the benchmarks, and we have a number of ongoing campaigns to help facilitate greater interaction between businesses and schools. This year we are planning three Linking Business with Education events, to provide an opportunity for business and school leaders to network and hear about best practice in the region.

Published in full on: [www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

However, despite the implementation of Gatsby Benchmarks, delivering meaningful interactions between employers and schools is a practical challenge. We heard about school teachers needing to devote an entire term to organising one careers fair, or a school careers adviser who drove around industrial estates approaching dozens of local businesses, to have only one agree to come into the school. We also heard from businesses who were attempting to make contact with schools but were either being rebuffed, or had requests made for them which were unfeasible. For example, if schools expect businesses to come in only on a given day, for a specific careers event, this may not work for the company in question. Businesses often told us that they were being asked for a different thing from each school they visited. Flexibility is needed on both sides, but so is clarity about what is needed, on both sides. Disappointingly, we were repeatedly told that major public sector employers in sectors facing a significant skills shortage - such as health and engineering – were amongst the most reluctant to engage with schools.

This is not to say that there are not very good schemes connecting schools and businesses, and giving children in deprived communities exposure to businesses. In Newcastle we saw an excellent project the Primary Innovation and Enterprise (PIE) scheme – which gets businesses into primary schools. Founder, local businessman, Ammar Mirza CBE, explains the rationale for this scheme.



### **Ammar Mirza CBE, Founder of PIE**

The Primary Inspiration through Enterprise (PIE) Project, is the region's biggest enterprise challenge for primary schools.

The Big PIE Challenge has been so successful and businesses have really got on board with it. It was important to me that we didn't go after backing from the likes of Richard Branson or Alan Sugar, we wanted local North East businesses, names that kids and their parents had seen and would recognise. The North East business community has been brilliant, we have so many backers, a wonderful trust board, and we are continuing to grow. We have now just gone into secondary schools, which gives the opportunity to build on prior achievements. If a child gets an entry-level qualification in primary school, they can then aim for Level one in secondary school.

With PIE, it is very much about engaging with the parents too, helping them to understand the benefit of education and developing life skills and business skills from a very early age. We had a big awards ceremony where the kids were presented certificates by Sir John Hall, and through achieving their qualification aged 9, 10 or 11, many of those kids had become better qualified than their parents. To open their eyes to achievement and reward at such an early age is very valuable.

In each area we visited there was work underway to connect schools and businesses. But when we spoke to both businesses and schools within these areas, they still felt most of the onus on them to contact each other, and to structure the intervention. To this end, we have been pleased to see the work announced by the Careers Enterprise Company within some of the Government's Opportunity Areas<sup>3</sup>, including enterprise coordinators working across an area and enterprise advisors within each school to declutter the local offer and help create meaningful careers encounters for young people.

### **Arts, Culture and Sports**

It is not just exposure to careers experiences that can benefit young people. Our research, and the young people we spoke to, really emphasised the importance of a wide range of experiences involving sport, arts and travel.

In Hull, we visited a scheme with Hull Children's University which aimed to widen primary school pupils' horizons of what was available within and beyond Hull. The children we met from the scheme explained to us how it had changed their perceptions of Hull, and increased their confidence about what was on offer to them locally. Natasha Banke, the Children's University Director has written for us about the value of these experiences.

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<sup>3</sup>[https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/sites/default/files/uploaded/opportunity\\_area\\_local\\_priorities\\_updated01.pdf](https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/sites/default/files/uploaded/opportunity_area_local_priorities_updated01.pdf)

**Natasha Banke, Director of Hull & East Yorkshire Children's University**

Hull and East Yorkshire Children's University (HEY CU) is a charity that works with schools regionally in areas of disadvantage. Children are provided with opportunities outside the classroom that make the learning that goes on at school real and relevant to their futures. HEY CU inspires children to go on to careers and educational pathways they never knew existed, and we instil the confidence to do so in them. Giving children aspiration, confidence, curiosity about the world around them and resilience is the corner stone of the charity's work.

HEY CU was pleased to work in partnership with Anne Longfield the Children's Commissioner and her team to help explore the issues affecting education in Hull and East Yorkshire. Together we visited a school who had taken part in our HEY CU Ambassadors Experience as well as other HEY CU work place Experiences. [...]

86.4% of pupils who took part in the Ambassadors Experience in 2017 said the Experience made them feel proud of their city. The Ambassadors Experience is followed up with visits to workplaces of key employers in Hull for example Smith & Nephew, ARCO, P&O Ferries and Associated British Ports, the Centre for Digital Innovation, GGP and British Aerospace. It's important for children to see first-hand the jobs that they can aspire to do locally. We also facilitate visits to educational institutions to show children the variety of educational pathways that are available to them such as the UTC in Hull and the University of Hull. It is important to inspire and educate children as early in life as possible so that they can know what opportunities are available. Children can only aspire to what they know exists.

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Sport was raised with us in all the visits we made for this project. Children told us not just how much they enjoyed playing sport, but activities related to sport, such as coaching or organising teams and we repeatedly heard from children who wanted to work in sports coaching or administration. At the Everton Free School in Liverpool we met children who had started coaching roles at 14, and had been able to develop these skills and travel to China and South Africa to deliver coaching courses. Many of those from the scheme wanted to stay in work related to sport, but even those who didn't felt that these experiences had given them both the confidence to take on new challenges and the skills, such as organisation and public speaking, that would equip them to get other jobs.

The same was true of arts. Most Northern cities and towns have a strong local arts scene looking to involve children, within and outside the classroom. In Liverpool we met with children giving up their evenings to put on concerts for the Liverpool Philharmonic 'In Harmony' project.

Leanne Kirkham, Director of Learning at Northern Ballet, explains how the work they do with communities within and around Leeds is integral to her organisation:

**Leanne Kirkham, Northern Ballet**

My role is to ensure the work of Northern Ballet reaches as many children and young people as possible, and to challenge pre-conceptions about who can access ballet. Last year, we worked with over 50,000 children and young people across the UK through theatre visits, workshops, regular classes and professional training opportunities. I firmly believe that when children are exposed to arts and cultural activities, it fosters their imagination and self-expression whilst enabling them to develop skills that will be the driving force behind the growing UK creative industries. In particular, dance not only offers a creative outlet, but also a range of health benefits for positive physical and mental wellbeing which is crucial to nurture now, more than ever as our NHS is struggling to cope with the demands of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century population.

Since 2012, Northern Ballet has created Children's Ballets which tour across England, predominantly in the North to offer access to ballet for towns and communities who wouldn't usually be able to see live ballet. As part of the tour, our dance artists visit schools, nurseries and libraries across the country to give children the opportunity to learn some ballet before seeing the performance, making the experience as accessible as possible. Over the last 6 years, these productions have reached a live audience of 400,000, a television audience of over 4 million and 21,779 children have taken part in dance workshops.

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## Section 2: How children develop and progress as they grow up

### Overview

For this project we have taken a broad look at children's development, from when they start school, to when they leave education. The aim has been to understand which children are failing to reach their potential, at what points in their development, and where within the North.

To inform this we reviewed work already conducted in the field, particularly that by the Social Mobility Commissioner, the Department for Education as part of the Northern Powerhouse Schools Strategy, IPPR North and the Northern Powerhouse Partnership. Where we felt we could add value to existing work we did so, both by using publicly available data on children's outcomes and by commissioning the Education Policy Institute to do a longitudinal analysis based on the National Pupil Database, which we have published in full alongside this report.

We complemented this work with an extensive programme of visits to schools, colleges and early years' providers and spoke to children and professionals across the educational spectrum. As well as identifying the failings of the system, we were keen to identify and learn from the institutions that were succeeding; to learn what they were doing well, and what this meant for the children within these institutions. We highlight the work of just some of these institutions in this section; they are amazing success stories which shows what can be achieved.

But our wider analysis shows too few children are accessing this support, or are accessing it consistently across their life course. The result is that while many children in the North are succeeding, too many are held back, most often those from poorer families, those living in areas of concentrated deprivation and those with special educational needs. For these children, the issues start early, with too many children in the North starting school with significant development issues; and too few children with special education needs having this identified and treated before they begin education. And despite some excellent primary schools, generally poor secondary school progress means that the deficit gap which starts before school has widened by the time children reach 16, particularly amongst children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

For those children who go onto do A-levels, they have good chances of attending university and the best chance in the country of going into an apprenticeship. But for too many children in the North their educational prospects have been determined before they reach 16, with many spending the remaining years in unsuccessful resits or dropping out of education years before the statutory leaving age.

Figure 1 (below), is based on a longitudinal look at the cohort of children who started school in 2004 and shows the relative performance of children from London and different regions in the North. The black figure represents London. It shows, that in 2004, children in London tended to start significantly behind their peers across the country, but they then caught up throughout school, and by the point they left education, were well ahead of the rest of the country.

**Figure 1: Mean percentile rank of pupil outcomes in London and regions in the North of England**

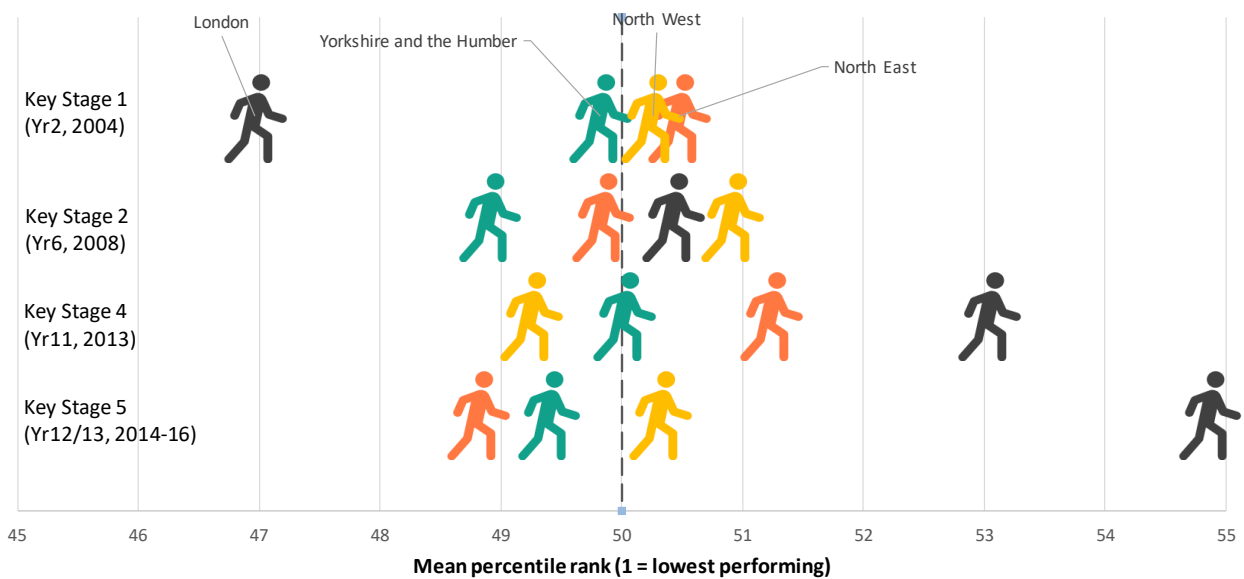
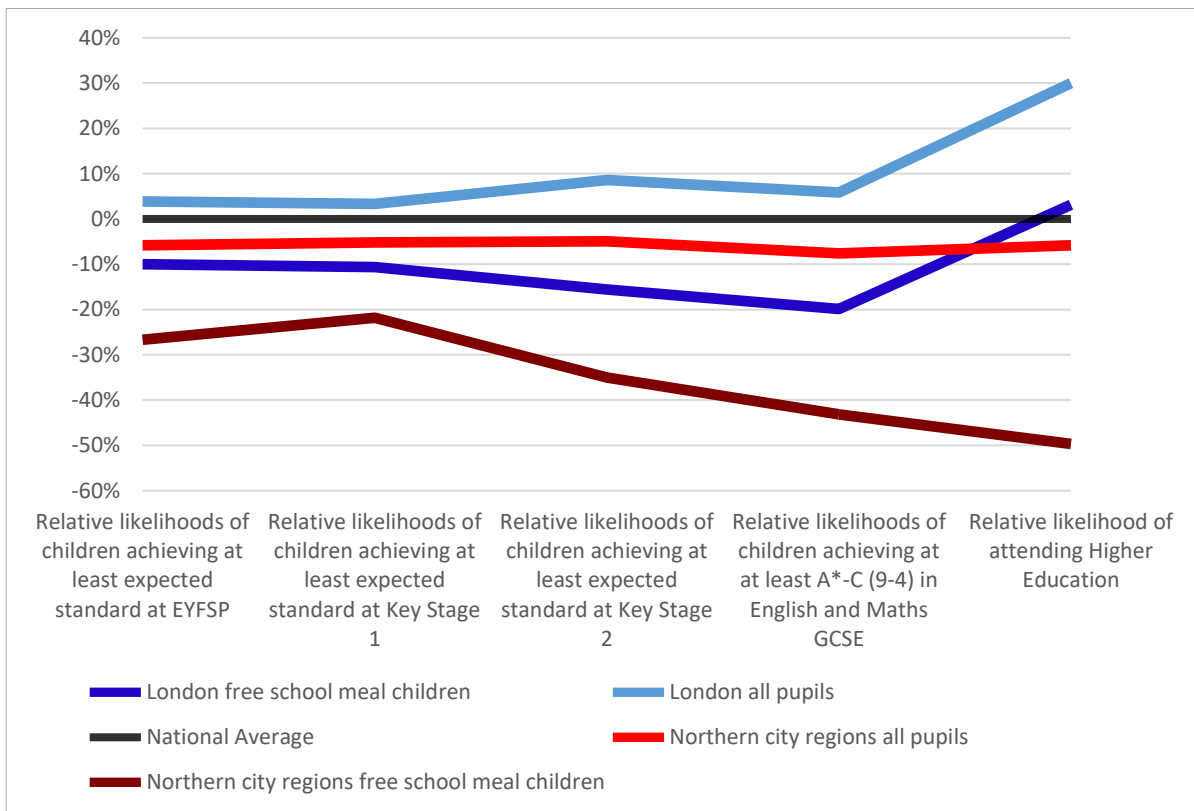


Figure 2 below is based on the attainment of pupils across the country last year. It shows the relative likelihood of a child in the North, against London and the national average, achieving the recognised benchmark from early years through to university. Children in London are, generally, starting school ahead of the national average, while in the North children are slightly behind. In 2004, children in London were well behind the North, but since then the picture has reversed. Today, we see London children more likely to achieve these key milestones throughout childhood while their peers in the North are consistently less likely than the national average to achieve them. This gap is particularly pronounced amongst disadvantaged, free school meals (FSM), children – depicted for London by the dark red line and for the North by the dark blue line. London free school meals children are twice as likely to attend higher education compared to free school meal children in the North.

**Figure 2: Relative likelihood of children from London and the North achieving key milestones compared to the national average**



<sup>4 4</sup> Source: EYFSP - Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Results 2016 to 2017: Additional Tables by Pupil Characteristics SFR60/2017, Key Stage 1 – Phonics screening check and Key Stage 1 assessments England 2017: Local authority tables SFR49/2017, Key Stage 2 - National Curriculum Assessments Key Stage 2, 2017: Local Authority and Regional Tables SFR69/2017, GCSE- Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England 2016 to 2017: Characteristics Local Authority Tables SFR01/2018, Higher Education- Widening participation in higher education 2017: Tables SFR39/2017. For more on how the city regions framework was calculated see the 'A note on the data we used' section.

The cumulative effect is that children leaving education and entering the labour market often do so with a lower level of attainment than they could have achieved. This should be a concern for everyone involved in the North's economy – and increasingly it is. Below, Henri Murison, Director of the Northern Powerhouse Partnership explains why they chose education to be the subject of their first report.

**Henri Murison, Director of the Northern Powerhouse Partnership**

The Northern Powerhouse is about driving the North's ambition. For us to be a place where being disadvantaged holds no child back. Our businesses are crying out for skilled people to grow our businesses and lead the next industrial revolution, but currently those growing up here can't get the skills needed to play their part.

The Educating the North report brought together senior business leaders with those that run some of our best schools and colleges, as well as the leading economist Lord Jim O'Neill. [...]

From the civic leaders of the north including Cllr Susan Hinchcliff, the Leader of Bradford, who has made schools in her area a priority for everyone, to business people working together to reach 900,000 young people getting experience of work, the North is coming together. Growing up North will keep up the pressure that building better futures for our northern children is both a national opportunity, and a national necessity.

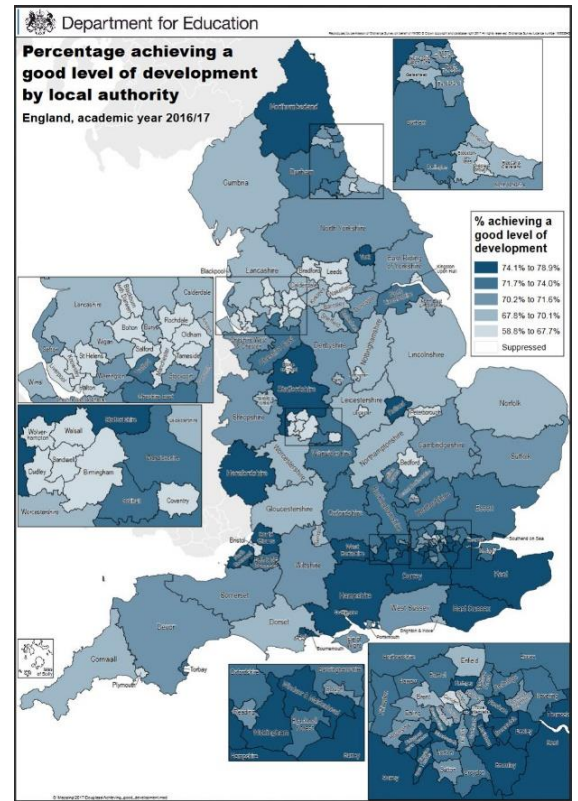
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## Stage by Stage Analysis

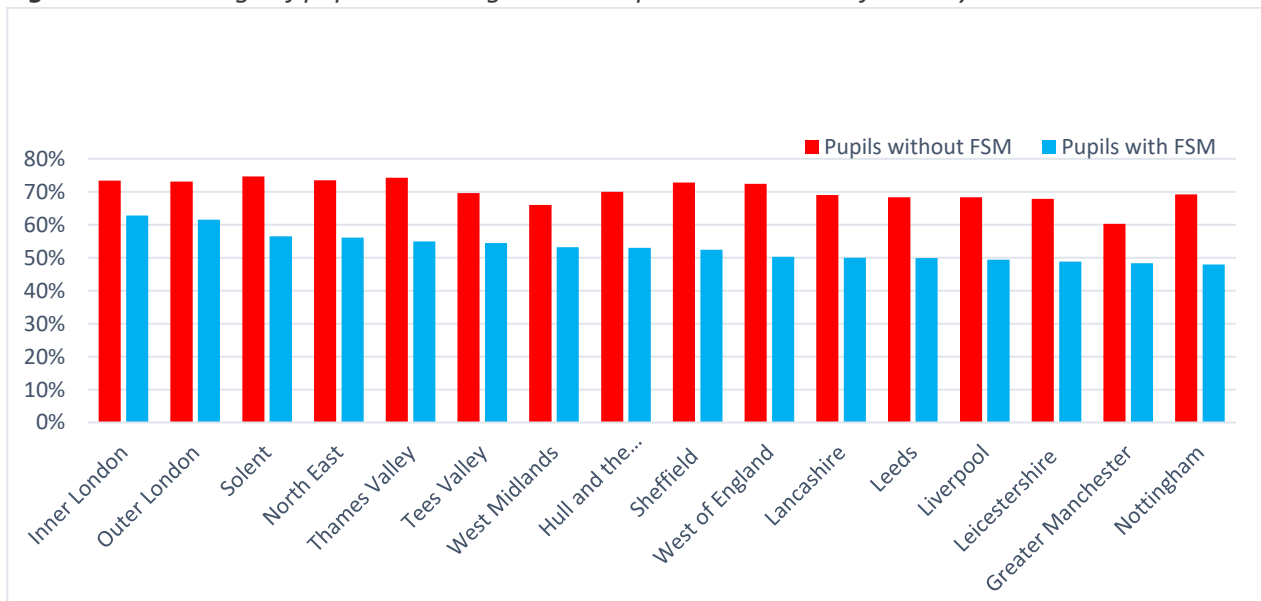
### The Early Years

The first comprehensive indicator we have of children’s progress are the outcomes of the ‘Early Learning Goals’ assessments, made by schools at the end of a child’s reception year (age 4). The tests cover 17 measures of development<sup>5</sup> covering communication, physical development and social and economic development. Children are assessed by teachers on the basis of classroom observations. Figure 3 shows how likely a child is to reach a ‘good’ level of development. Lighter colours represent lower numbers of children getting a good level of development, and as this map shows there are much higher concentrations of light areas in the North of England and Midlands. Across England 71% of children reach a good standard of development; this is also true of the North East region but in North West and in Yorkshire and the Humber it is slightly lower – 68% and 69% respectively, compared with the best performing regions of London and the South East where 74% of pupils reach a good level of development.

**Figure 3:** From the Department for Education



**Figure 4:** Percentage of pupils achieving at least expected standard of EYFS by FSM status<sup>6</sup>



<sup>5</sup> For details of all 17 measures see <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/early-years-foundation-stage-profile-results-2016-to-2017>

<sup>6</sup> SFR60/2017 Early years foundation stage profile (EYFSP) results by pupil characteristics: 2017, Table 4

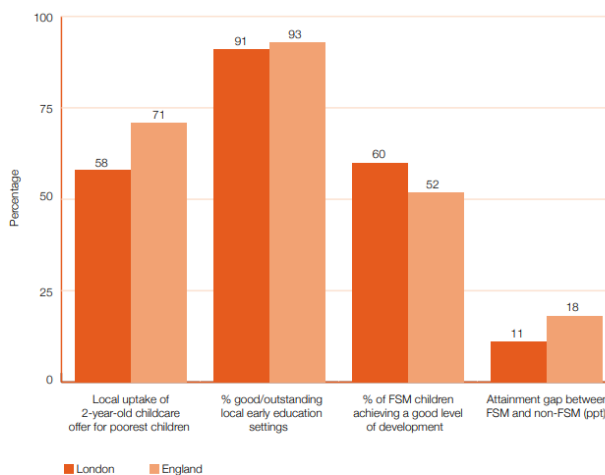


Figure 4 shows the percentage of children reaching the expected standard within the EYFS in England’s major city regions for pupils who claim FSM and their peers. While there is some variation amongst both cohorts, the bigger variation is within those claiming Free School Meals. **This means that a child qualifying for FSM in London is 30% more likely to be at the expected standard when starting school than a child in the Leeds City Region, Greater Manchester or on Merseyside.** This is not just a Northern phenomenon. The EYFS outcomes for FSM pupils around Bristol are also very poor, but lower levels of FSM eligibility (see ‘Note on the Data’ below) means that in Figure 3 Bristol and the surrounding area appear to be doing well.

### The Performance of FSM Pupils

The better performance of London’s FSM pupils in the ELG assessments is not fully understood. It is a relatively recent phenomenon; as recently as 2010 there was no real difference between London and Northern regions in the performance of pupils in early primary school (we only have ELG assessment scores since 2013). This success occurs despite the fact that children in London are less likely to be in nursery, particularly if they are eligible for FSM as shown by Figure 3 (right), taken from the Social Mobility Commissioner’s (SMC) Annual Report 2017. The graph depicts what the SMC have called the ‘London Paradox’<sup>7</sup> – children in London are less likely to attend nursery, less likely to attend a good or outstanding nursery (by Ofsted rating) but are more likely to get a good ELG score. We do not know why this is.

Figure 5: from the Social Mobility Commission



Some of it may be related to ethnicity. As at other stages of education, the ELG outcomes for white FSM pupils are worse than those of other ethnicities. Just 52% of white FSM pupils meet the expected standard of development, compared to 59% of Asian FSM pupils, 63% of Black FSM pupils and 65% of Chinese FSM pupils. But while ethnicity may be a contributing factor, it is considered an implausible cause. Firstly, London’s ethnic make-up has not changed considerably since 2010, and certainly not enough to explain the significant improvement in London’s results. Secondly, it should be noted that each ethnic groups does much better in London<sup>8</sup>. Thirdly, outside of London it is the city regions with larger BME populations – Leicester, Leeds, Greater Manchester – which are under-performing more ethnically homogenous city regions such as Tees Valley, Tyne and Wear and the Solent.

<sup>7</sup> Social Mobility Commission, State of the Nation 2017, p25

<sup>8</sup> SFR60/2017 Early years foundation stage profile (EYFSP) results by pupil characteristics: 2017, Table 4

There has recently been considerable focus on the development of children in the North before starting school particularly from the Social Mobility Commissioner and IPPR. But, as Anna Round, Senior Fellow at IPPR North explains, there is still much we don't know:

#### **Anna Round, Senior Research Fellow - IPPR North**

In our 2015 *State of the North* report, IPPR North identified 'early years gaps' as a key challenge to social and economic progress. Two in particular gave cause for concern. Fewer than half (47 per cent) of children from the poorest ten per cent of households in the north were judged to have achieved a good level of development, compared to 59 per cent of the equivalent group in London (across the UK, the rate was 54 per cent).

Within the north, the gap between the percentage of children in the most and least deprived groups who achieve a good level of development stood at 25 percentage points; in London it was just 15 per cent. Material poverty threatens your chance of a good start wherever you're born – but that threat seemed to be greater in the north than in the capital. These gaps – between regions and between social groups – represent a barrier to building a real 'powerhouse' in the North. [...]

International evidence shows an association between high quality early years education and attainment later on. We know that development is shaped by what a child encounters during this crucial period. Children with access to a stimulating and varied range of experiences have an advantage, but that access, to a large extent, depends on their parents' social and economic resources. For older learners the provision that helps them engage with school and learning opportunities demands time, teacher expertise – and funding.

We need to know more about the lives of young children in the north of England. What kinds of early education are available in different places, and how do parents and carers go about accessing them? What are informal settings like, and how do they interact with nursery or childcare provision? And how does early learning of different kinds sit alongside the rest of a child's life, such as their health, their cultural settings, and the local economy? At IPPR North, we're keen to establish a 'Northern Early Years Commission' to help find answers and develop practical policies.

We welcome the focus on early childhood development within the Government's Social Mobility Action Plan, with an emphasis on early language development and an ambition to close the "word gap" by "boosting access to high quality early language and literacy, both in the classroom and at home"<sup>9</sup>. To support this aim, the Department for Education has committed funding to improving early years provision and spreading good practice within early years settings, all of which is welcome. We would encourage all of this work to focus on the North, where there is a particular need to develop a clearer evidence base about what type of early years interventions will make a difference.

**But where we need additional work is in understanding the role of the home environment.** Research from the Sutton Trust has estimated that "parenting and the home learning environment accounted for half of the 11-month development gap at age five between those from the lowest income families and

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/plan-to-boost-social-mobility-through-education>

those from middle-income homes”<sup>10</sup>. Yet, while we know what types of parental engagement with children best promote childhood development, we do not have a clear evidence base as to how local areas can promote these types of interventions.

That notwithstanding, we did see some very good local projects to take a community wide approach to learning and language, for example the Middlesbrough Reading Campaign and the related Bradford Stories projects, both supported by the National Literacy Trust. As Alasdair Flint of the National Literacy trust explains below, these campaigns aim to support a language-rich environment from birth and engage with parents in a range of settings from football clubs to mosques.

### **Alasdair Flint, Middlesbrough Reading Campaign**

“The National Literacy Trust Hub began delivery of an early years programme, Early Words Together, in primary school nurseries and children’s centres in 2013. Over the course of three years, the programme trained a cohort of early years professionals and volunteers who helped more than 200 parents and families develop the skills and confidence they needed to be able to better support their child’s communication, language and literacy at home.

Early Words Together has been supported by an integrated early years campaign. The Hub works with Public Health to drive awareness of the importance of early years literacy and language development in the most deprived communities. A major public campaign also promotes reading and talking to babies and children, with posters displayed on Middlesbrough’s public screen and bus shelters around the town. More than 20,000 flyers have been distributed to families and supporting information is included in every baby’s personal child health record.

Alongside this, working with James Cook University Hospital and premature baby charity Bliss, the Hub has supported parents of premature babies and given literacy training to nursing staff. Families on the neonatal ward receive a story pack which includes a copy of *Guess How Much I Love You*, donated by Walker Books, and information about the importance of singing, talking and reading to their baby. Books have now become an important part of daily life on the ward.

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We are also pleased to see further research in this area supported by the Sutton Trust and the Esme Fairburn Foundation<sup>11</sup> with some promising early results. We would encourage local areas in the North to look to learn from these trials. We are also pleased that as part of the Social Mobility Action Plan the Department for Education has also committed to looking at the home learning environment and is considering further trials of interventions with families to encourage better parental engagement.

In addition to the need for these universal interventions to improve parental engagement, we must also address the needs of families who will require more than a universal service. That is, families in chaotic situations or with parents who additional issues (such as drug abuse) which will impact on the child’s development. Many of these children will end up being amongst the 237,000 children in the North classified as ‘Children in Need’<sup>12</sup> each year or a currently unknown number who would benefit from what

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Parental-Engagement-Fund-Final-Report.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Sutton Trust, as above.

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/564620/SFR52-2016\\_Main\\_Text.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/564620/SFR52-2016_Main_Text.pdf)

is loosely termed social services 'Early Help'. These children have extremely poor educational and social outcomes<sup>13</sup>, and many will end up requiring extremely expensive later-life interventions from local authorities or other bodies.

The pressures facing this group of children were well understood across the summits we held in the North of England. Most areas recognised that current interventions were failing to turn around the prospects for these children, or prevent more costly interventions later on in a child's life. Josh MacAlister, Founder of the Frontline Social Work social work charity which trains social workers across the North of England explains the pressure on children's services to deliver genuinely meaningful interventions in children's lives:

**Josh MacAlister, Founder and CEO of Frontline**

Like young people across England, northern children benefit from the incredible love, care and resilience of families and communities, even in the most adverse of conditions. But there are messages from social workers about the realities for children and their families relying on services that can be grounding for those living in the south. Parts of northern England experience significantly higher levels of demand with 600 referrals made to social services for every 10,000 children in the North East compared to only 374 per 10,000 in the East of England. This pressure is felt by social workers who, on average, work with more than 19 children each in the North West compared 16 children per social worker in London. And these regional variations of need and demand disguise enormous variation from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. This mirrors a wider finding in the Growing up North report that the greatest variation in outcomes for children can be seen between neighbourhoods with populations of 5,000-10,000.

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There was widespread agreement of the need to make more effective and co-ordinated interventions with children, earlier in their lives. This was clearly articulated by Bernie Brown, who attended our Liverpool summit and is now at Bolton Council:

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<sup>13</sup>[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/690999/Children in Need of help and protection Data and analysis.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/690999/Children_in_Need_of_help_and_protection_Data_and_analysis.pdf)

### **Bernie Brown, Assistant Director of Children's Services**

I am a Child Protection Social Worker by profession. I am now an Assistant Director but first and foremost I am a social worker - All of my career has been predominately about intervention rather than prevention. Prevention for me is the only game in town... The impact that we are having on children's outcomes is incredibly poor across the partnership... because practice is not always joined up. We have to turn this agenda on its head. We have to be working with our colleagues in primary schools. We have to think much more coherently as localities, regions and as a nation, about prevention. It is the only way that we will impact on outcomes for children. We are not yet delivering good enough outcomes for children and, as somebody that grew up in a large City and benefitted massively from the fantastic education that was available and that my children are now benefitting from, I want everybody's children to have those opportunities. Surely that should be possible in Britain in 2018?

It doesn't just need resource, it requires ego and professional status to be set aside, it requires ambition and innovation and a move away from intervention and a fear of making the wrong decision We need to be brave and lead – be the change we want to see.

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Liverpool was not the only area to recognise the potential benefits of a renewed focus on early intervention – this was a feature of all the summits we held for this project. Despite this, local areas were generally struggling to continue to support children's centres, let alone expand them, at the same time as rising pressure on statutory services and falling local authority budgets. This goes to the fundamental issues facing children's services: to invest in earlier intervention with families to prevent more intensive late interventions, while meeting the current demand for these intensive, crisis-point interventions.

The Children's Commissioner has consistently championed Children's Centres and led calls for these to be further developed into 'Family Hubs' which can be a centre of preventative work to support families and provide services and stability for children in often chaotic situations.

The challenge, however, is to find a funding model that enables these centres to develop. At present, many of these centres are closing or reducing their range of services in the wake of funding cuts of around 50% since 2010<sup>14</sup>. Interventions provided through Family Hubs or Childrens Centres can be much more cost effective than more intensive statutory interventions provided by children's services when problems have developed<sup>15</sup>. While we would strongly encourage local areas to do all they can to continue to fund Children's Centres, including the investment of public health funds, our work demonstrated a clear need to put Children's Centres or Family Hubs onto a sustainable footing.

<sup>14</sup>[http://www.barnardos.org.uk/news/Government-must-act-to-help-councils-protect-vital-early-years-services/press\\_releases.htm?ref=127330&topic=5&year=2017&month=0&region](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/news/Government-must-act-to-help-councils-protect-vital-early-years-services/press_releases.htm?ref=127330&topic=5&year=2017&month=0&region)

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph40/evidence/expert-report-3-pdf-430217535>

## Children Starting School with Significant Development Issues

**Table 1:** Local Authorities in England where more than 20% of get an ELG score less than 26

Area	% of with an ELG <26
Stoke-on-Trent	23
Middlesbrough	23
Oldham	23
Rochdale	22
Manchester	21
Bolton	21
Hull	21
Peterborough	21
Halton	21
Wolverhampton	20
Sandwell	20
Leicester	20
Birmingham	20
Walsall	20
Tameside	20
England	14

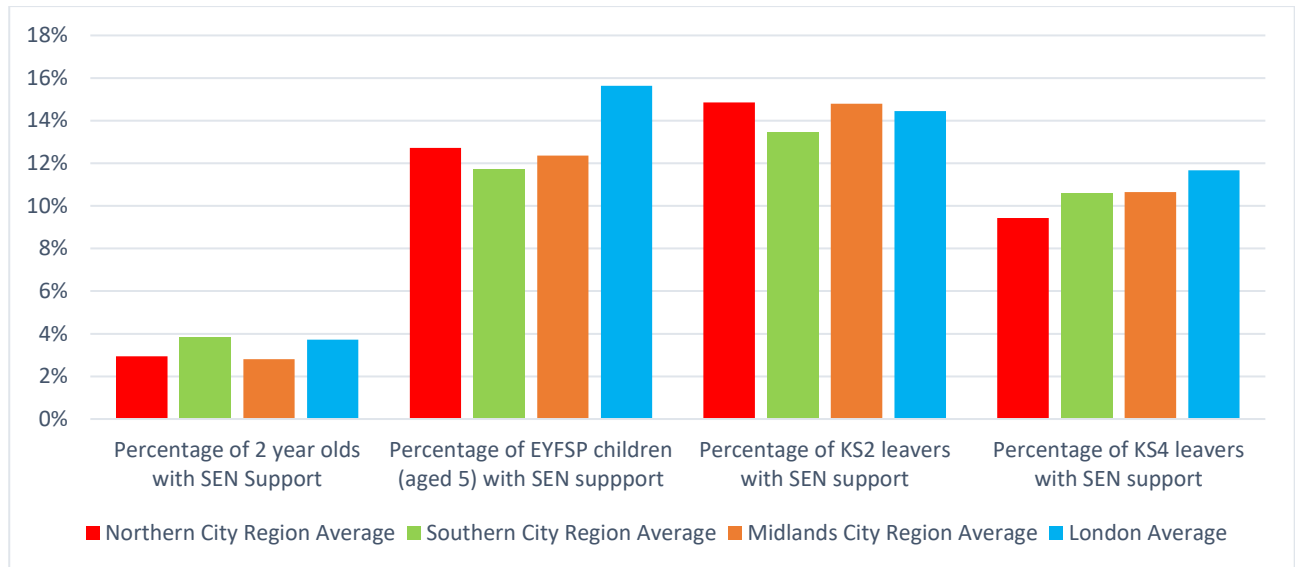
As well as looking to improve the performance of FSM pupils overall, several Northern areas need to address the number of pupils starting school not just failing to reach the expected standard, but with considerable development issues. We have looked at the number of children who have met less than half of the expected Early Learning Goal Indicators. Table 2 shows that of the 15 areas in England where 20% or more children are reaching less than half the expected ELG indicators, all but one are in the North or Midlands. Five are in Greater Manchester.

All of these children are likely to benefit from additional interventions, either from teachers or from other professionals such as educational psychologists or speech and language therapists. In most cases, these interventions are more effective if delivered earlier. The way to reduce the number of children starting school with significant developmental issues is to identify issues early and provide interventions before children start school.

Too few issues are identified prior to a child starting school. Figure 5 (below) shows the number of children identified as having special educational needs (SEN). Across the country there is a huge jump in the number of children identified between age 2 and when a child takes the ELG assessments at the end of reception, and then again by the time a child completes KS2. **But this jump is particularly pronounced in the North, which has a low percentage of children identified at 2 years old, but the highest numbers of identified SEN by age 11.** In not identifying SEN early on, thousands of children are missing out on the support necessary to succeed in education<sup>16</sup>. Again, the variation between local authorities within the North is often as big as the regional variation. For example, in Tameside, just 2% of pupils have identified SEN at age 2, while in nearby Salford, which has similar levels of deprivation, it is 10% suggesting that some local authorities are failing to identify and support SEN pupils early on.

<sup>16</sup> <https://educationdatalab.org.uk/2018/03/chances-of-success-at-key-stage-4-part-one/>

**Figure 6: Percentage of pupils with SEN support at different stages of childhood**



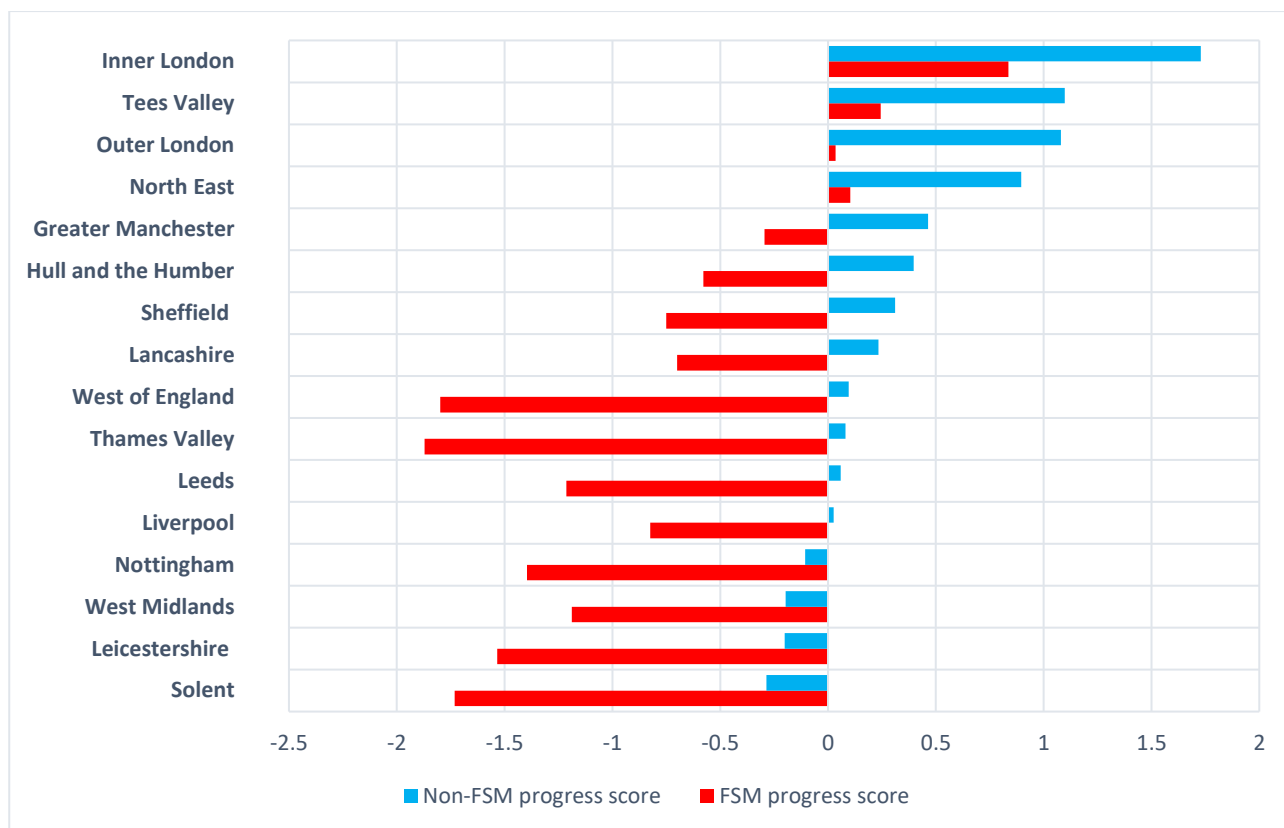
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### Primary School

Overall, primary schools and their outcomes in the North of England are at least as good as those elsewhere in England; a significant achievement by schools given the gap in early years development. Figure 5 (below) shows the progress made at primary school within England’s city regions. The North East City Regions are very close to matching the performance of London, while other major Northern regions including Greater Manchester, Hull and Sheffield are all outperforming most of England. The gap in progress between disadvantaged pupils and their peers remains a concern across the country and it is largest in the southern city regions of Solent, West of England and Thames Valley. While children in the North East and Tees Valley make better progress at primary school than the national average of all pupils.

<sup>17</sup> Source: [Education Provision: Children under 5 years of age, January 2017: Main Tables SFR29/2017](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Results 2016 to 2017: Additional Tables by Pupil Characteristics SFR60/2017](#), [National Curriculum Assessments Key Stage 2, 2017: Local Authority and Regional Tables SFR69/2017](#), [Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England 2016 to 2017: Characteristics Local Authority Tables SFR01/2018](#)

**Figure 7: Key Stage 2 progress scores for reading, writing and maths by FSM status**



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Often this correlates with excellent institutional performance. In their 2016 Annual Report, Ofsted highlighted that a child in the NE was more likely to be attending a good or outstanding primary school than anywhere else in the country. **The proportion of children in these areas attending a good or outstanding school in the NE and Yorkshire rose from 59% to 90%**<sup>19</sup>.

We visited many excellent primary schools that were succeeding because they were responding proactively to the needs of those starting school with additional needs. For example, in Hull we were told that the high numbers of children failing the expected ELG indicators was due to problems with language and communication. To address this, Southcoates Primary School, in East Hull, employs a speech and language therapist to work with the teachers to develop specialist exercises to help children become more comfortable using language. Dame Nicola Nelson, an Executive Head of two outstanding primary schools in Newcastle, has written for us about adopting a similar approach of bringing in specialist support both for speech and language support and mental health and the benefits this has provided for children in her school.

<sup>18</sup> Source: National Curriculum Assessments Key Stage 2, 2017: Local Authority and Regional Tables SFR69/2017

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/.../Education and Skills Annual Report 1516 NEYH.docx>



### **Dame Nicola Nelson, Chief Executive Officer of Valour Multi Academy Trust**

Valour academies in the Outer West of Newcastle upon Tyne strive to remove barriers to learning for their children, beyond those normally associated with education. A trend has been emerging in Newcastle and indeed further afield, of children starting school with delayed speech development. It is becoming too familiar to hear children simply scream or point at objects to get an adult's attention. Creating a language rich environment was unfortunately not enough to enable the children to form sounds and make themselves understood.

We decided to use some of our pupil premium money to employ two speech and language specialists into our schools as the number of children who needed support was ever growing and challenging our staff team. We had also taken the opportunity to use the speech and language therapists to train early years staff and members of the SEN team to assess children and plan programs of work.

The speech development in our children improved and the children began communicating more clearly which also helped with phonics, reading, writing and general happiness. We now have a team of staff in both schools who are trained in speech and language therapy and we no longer need to employ the therapists- though still ask them to work with our more complex cases. We prefer to measure the impact in the ability of children to develop friendships, take part in playing and being happy. In addition our phonics results in year 1 have improved and remain well above national average. [...] For the last few years, as services supporting schools and families are cut, we have seen a monumental rise in the number of children exhibiting mental health issues. We buy into services and this helps in the most extreme cases, however, the sheer volume of children needing help is overwhelming.

Valour academies now have the vast majority of teachers and support staff trained, and employ a full time Thrive practitioner to provide strategies for the children to cope with their difficulties. These 1 to 1 sessions are delivered both during and after school. We have seen some amazing results, particularly with children who have had attachment issues or anger difficulties. We have never excluded a child for over 10 years and have taken in children from other schools who are on the verge of permanent exclusion. Our approach works for us, and more importantly, works for the children and their families.

Published in full on: [www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

This proactive approach to identify issues and supporting children appropriately appears to be borne-out by the SEN data. While the North of England has – on average - the lowest levels of identified SEN at age 2, this rises to the highest levels of identified SEN by the end of KS2, before dropping back to the lowest level at KS4 (see Figure 4 above).

## Moving into Secondary School

Unfortunately, the impressive progress children make at primary schools in the North often go into reverse at secondary as the school system lets pupils down. Both outcomes and progress at secondary school are poor.

Figure 8 shows that children in many areas of the North and Midlands are significantly less likely to leave school with good GCSEs in English and Maths – the vital prerequisites for a huge number of post-16 opportunities. **Of the 16 city regions for GCSE outcomes, seven of the worse performing eight are in the North.**

**Figure 8: Percentage of pupils achieving A\* -C in GCSE English and Maths**

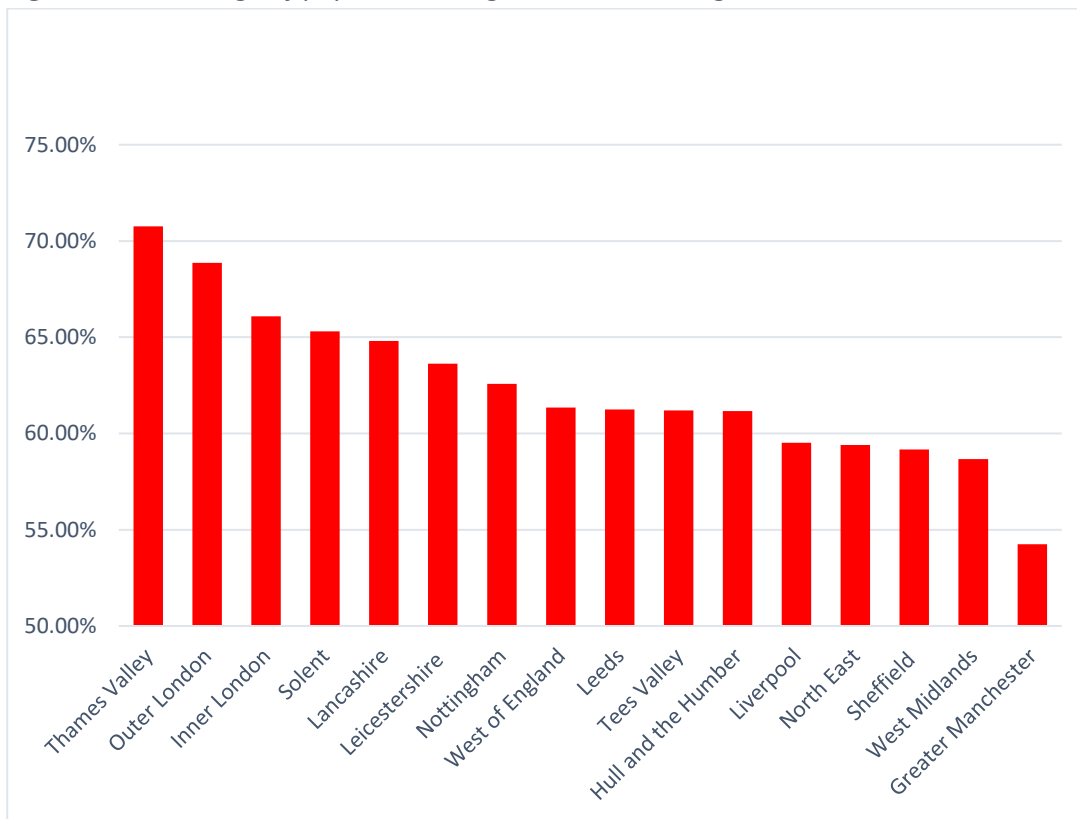
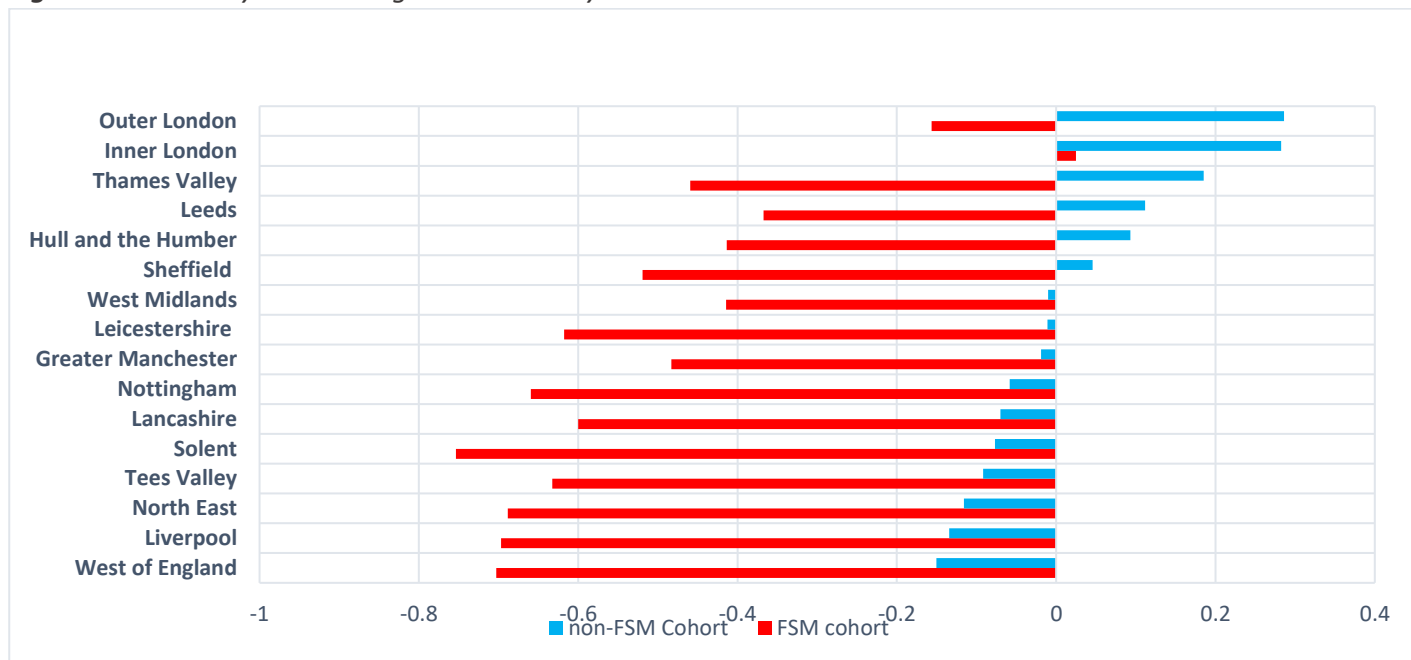


Figure 9 below shows that this is largely to do with the progress students make in secondary schools. The 0 line on the graph below demonstrates the national average level of progress for a child at secondary school in England. Essentially, this chart shows that while non-FSM pupils do slightly better in London and the South of England, the major issue facing the North is the poor progress made by pupils who qualify for FSM at secondary school. Again, this is not a North-South divide, but one of London relative to the rest of England: a child who qualifies for FSM in London gets, on average, half a grade higher in every subject at GCSE than a child outside London who starts secondary school at the same level.

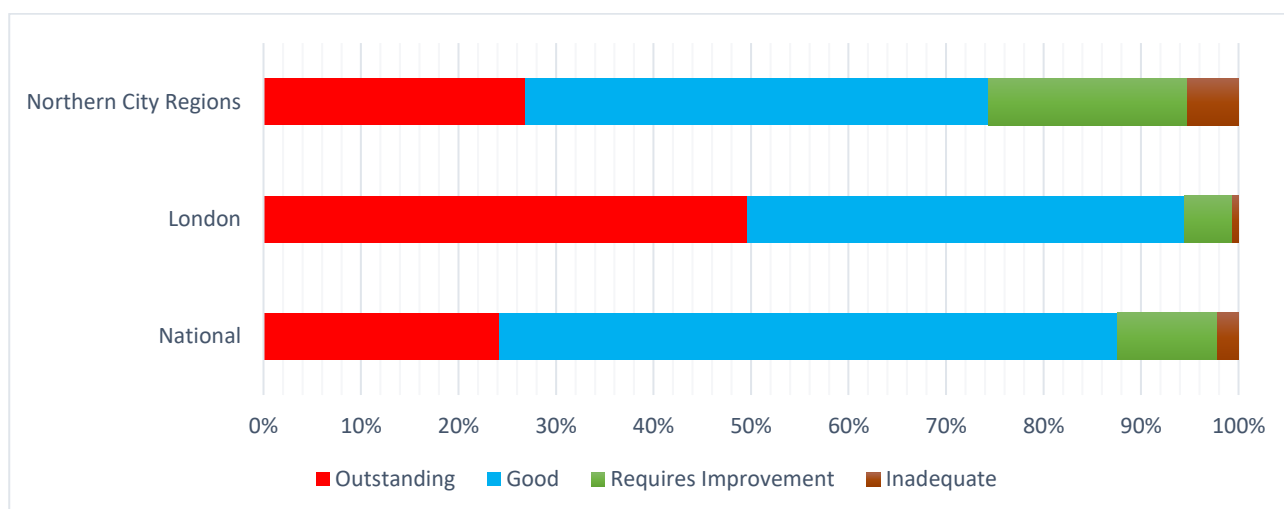
**Figure 9: Secondary School Progress 8 scores by FSM status**



20

Some of this difference in progress is likely to be down to the relative performance of the schools which pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds attend. Figure 8 shows the distribution of secondary school places across England disaggregated by the Ofsted rating of the establishment. Overall, the North has more outstanding schools, but also more schools which require improvement, compared to the national average. London’s schools – once the worst in the country – are now much better than either. Across the North, some areas have particular problems: **nationally, 18% of secondary school places are at institutions rated less than good. In the North East it is 31%.**

**Figure 10: Percentage of all Secondary School places by school Ofsted rating**



21

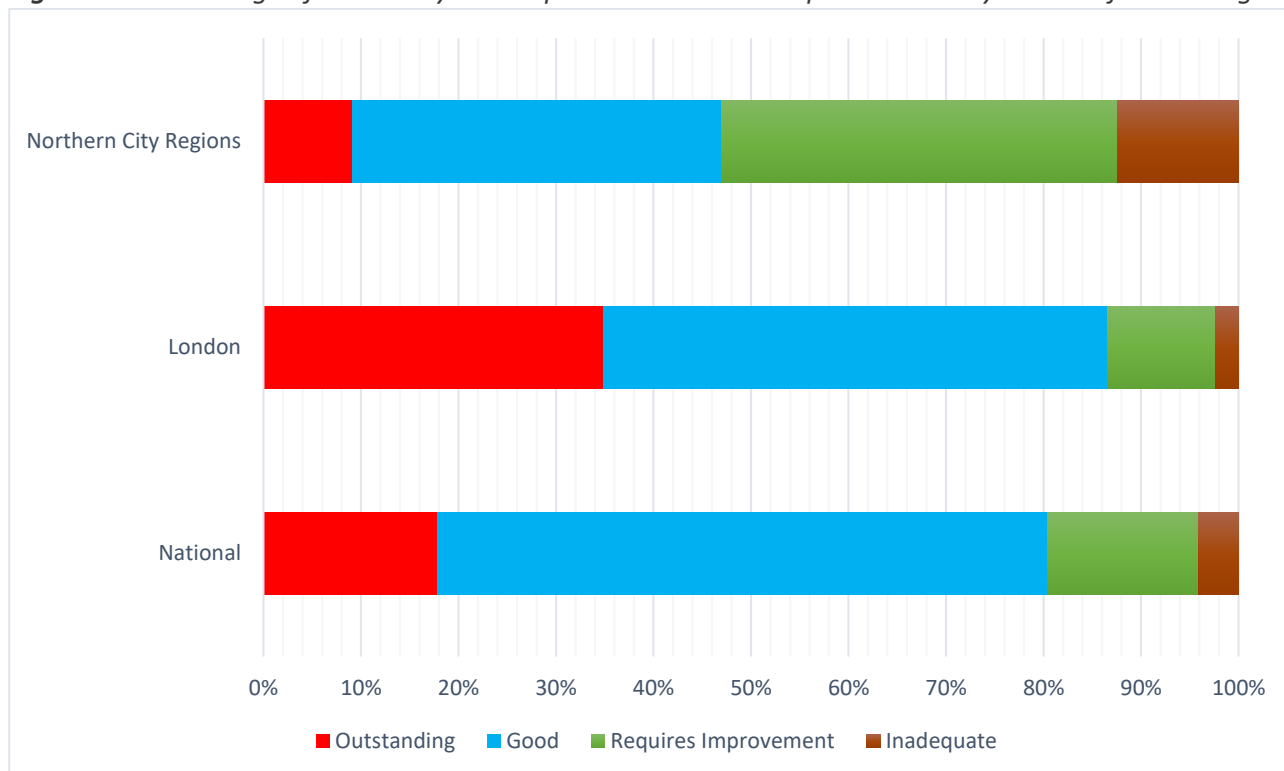
We see a much more significant difference when we look at the distribution of school places in the most deprived locations, as shown in Figure 11. Across England, pupils in the most deprived area are much more likely to attend schools graded less than good –that is, failing in some way: Approximately 20% of

<sup>20</sup> Source: [Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England 2016 to 2017: Characteristics Local Authority Tables SFR01/2018](#)

<sup>21</sup> Source: Data extracted from [Ofsted Data View](#).

schools in the most deprived areas are in the ‘requires improvement’ or ‘inadequate’ bands, compared with 13% in London . But in the north, this increases to an astonishing 54%.

**Figure 11: Percentage of Secondary School places in the most deprived areas by school Ofsted rating**



22

These schools are in areas of entrenched deprivation, with high-levels of poverty, historic low-levels of attainment and high worklessness. At the summits, and on the visits, we heard numerous specific examples of how these issues manifest themselves in children’s lives. But during our programme of visits we also visited many secondary schools where children were thriving despite these challenges. Like the primary schools we mentioned above, they tended to be taking a broad approach to children’s development, with a focus on supporting children from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with additional needs.

Two schools which were taking a particularly proactive approach to supporting children from disadvantaged areas were the Manchester Communications Academy and the Churchill Community College (in North Tyneside). Both schools had become community schools, forging key partnerships with multiple agencies to provide wide-ranging support for children and their families – inside and outside the classroom.

A similar approach has been adopted by Sheffield Park Academy, which is one of only 45 schools in England (out of 1,686) where disadvantaged pupils make better progress than their peers<sup>23</sup>. And of these 45, Sheffield Park has the best overall progress. The Headteacher, Craig Dillon, credits this progress to a combination of bringing in specialist support to help with mental health and special educational needs,

<sup>22</sup> Source: Data extracted from [Ofsted Data View](#). The graph utilises Ofsted’s definition of most deprived area and shows places within schools in the most deprived Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA).

<sup>23</sup><https://educationdatalab.org.uk/2017/07/long-term-disadvantage-part-two-how-do-pipworth-primary-and-sheffield-park-academy-do-so-well-for-their-disadvantaged-pupils/>

recruiting the best young teachers and implementing an internal progress system which allows pupils to take control of their own progress.

All of these schools can demonstrate how their approach is enabling their pupils to exceed:

- > Manchester Communications Academy, despite serving one of Manchester's most deprived communities in Harperhey, has Progress 8 scores well above the national average and Attainment 8 scores above both the Manchester and England averages.
- > Sheffield Park Academy is one of just 0.03% of secondary schools in England which narrows the disadvantage gap, and one of just 0.015% of secondary schools in England which narrows the disadvantage gap while outperforming the national average. Of these select schools, it has the highest pupil progress.
- > Churchill Community College is the only school in the North of England to be awarded the status of 'World Class School'<sup>24</sup>.

All these schools demonstrate what can be achieved, and what a great school can do for the life chances of the North's most disadvantaged children. If disadvantaged pupils across England made the same progress at secondary school as those at Park Academy do, then Maths and English Grade C+ pass rates amongst disadvantaged pupils would rise 28%. The challenge, then, is to make such schools the norm. There are also excellent organisations in the North helping schools to improve the progress of their pupils. The Shine Trust, which previously played a significant role in the London Challenge by spreading good practice has now re-located its headquarters to Leeds, and will be focusing on improving outcomes across the Northern Powerhouse<sup>25</sup>. The North is also establishing its own initiatives: The Tutor Trust, which works in Leeds and Greater Manchester, places trained university students into schools to deliver one-to-one support for pupils who need a bit of extra help. Started in 2012, last year they worked individually with 4000 pupils<sup>26</sup>.

While there has been a lot of recent focus on the reforms that individual schools need to make in order to improve, there has been much less focus on school oversight and the systemic issues facing schools. The challenge for policymakers is to put the conditions in place which enable schools to flourish. And throughout our visits the same systemic issues were raised with us by schools and those working to support them:

- > Recruitment – schools persistently raised the issue of recruitment and retention of good staff. This included schools in major cities with significant graduate populations which should be providing a significant pool from which to attract teachers.
- > Funding –schools repeatedly raised funding as a concern. Primarily the comments on funding were in two contexts:
  - Discrepancies with London. Schools in the North feel they are expected to match the performance of London schools, without the funding to match. The IPPR estimated that in 2016, Northern secondary schools were receiving, on average, £1,300 less per pupil per year than a school in London<sup>27</sup>.
  - Additional pressures on school budgets. Repeatedly, schools raised with us issues about the reduction in non-statutory services provide by local authorities. Many schools told

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<sup>24</sup> <http://www.churchillcommunitycollege.org/world%20class%20school.html>

<sup>25</sup> [https://www.shinetrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/SHINE\\_NorthernProspectus\\_Web.pdf](https://www.shinetrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/SHINE_NorthernProspectus_Web.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.thetutortrust.org/news/launch-of-tutor-trust-impact-report-for-2017-30th-january-2018>

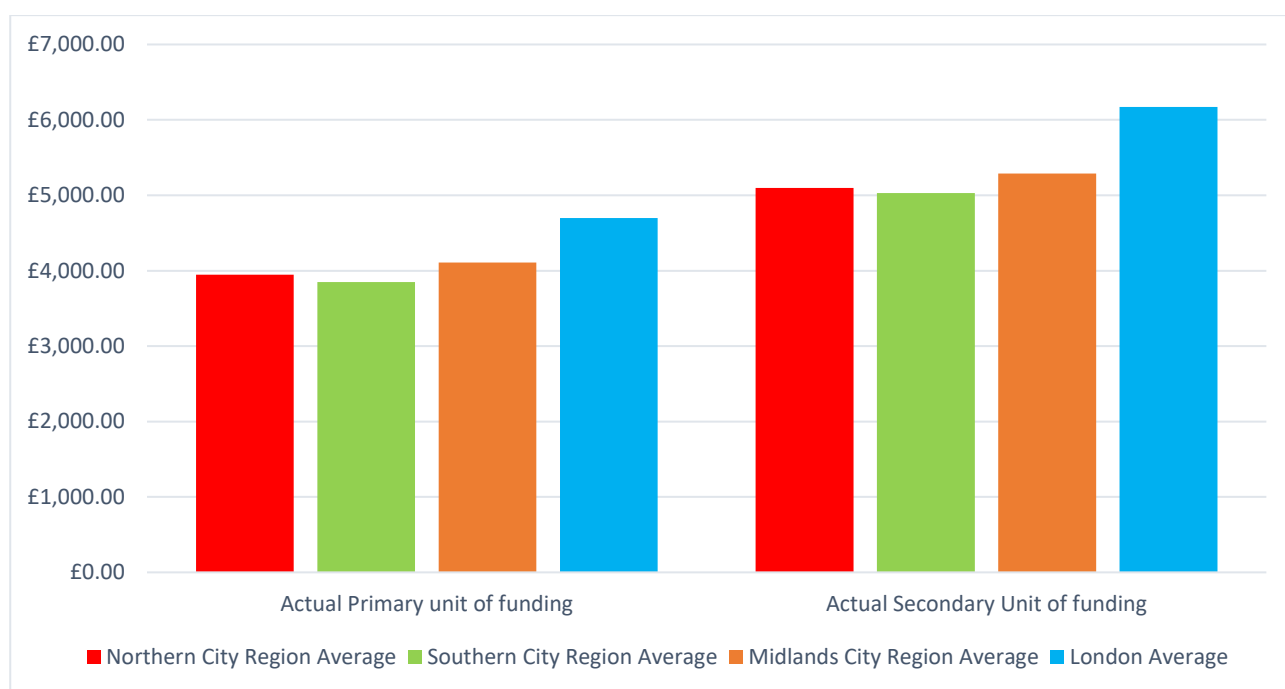
<sup>27</sup> <https://www.ippr.org/publications/northern-schools-putting-education-at-the-heart-of-the-northern-powerhouse>

us they felt like the last community resource left, and attempting to replicate these services within schools was putting a significant pressure on their budgets. One school framed it as a choice, between ‘a school nurse and a geography teacher. Our kids need the school nurse more’.

- > Leadership – we repeatedly heard about the difficulty in recruiting good heads, and also of a concern about over-reliance on one head, without being able to establish a school wide ethos or leadership culture. In addition there was concern about the difficulties of recruiting good school governors. This was often exacerbated by weak support from the MAT sponsor or local authority. In contrast, several academies we visited with a strong corporate or charitable sponsor, praised the support and oversight that these bodies were able to provide, and indicated a wide range of benefits this relationship provided to the school.

The introduction of a National Funding Formula from 2018-19 will go some way to reducing the funding gaps, between areas, and will put funding for schools within the North’s city regions at a similar level to other urban schools (rural areas tend to receive less across the country). However, as Figure 12 shows, London schools will continue to receive more per child.

**Figure 12: 2018/19 National Funding Formula per pupil allocations**



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Beyond the issue of funding, we found little evidence of the type of strategic support, challenge and oversight needed to drive region-wide school improvement.

- > Too few MATs were performing satisfactorily, with too many MATs, both large and small, seemingly unable to support their schools or install effective leadership teams.
- > The problem is not confined to the academy system. We heard complaints too about the support local authorities were giving to schools as more schools became academies and the role of the local authority has decreased.

<sup>28</sup> Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-funding-formula-tables-for-schools-and-high-needs>

These issues were identified by Sir Nick Weller in his Department for Education commissioned 'Northern Powerhouse Schools Strategy'.

**Excerpts from 'A Northern Powerhouse Schools Strategy': Sir Nick Weller, Executive Headteacher – Dixon Academy Chain**

- > DfE should pilot a new 'Teach North' scheme to attract and retain talented newly-qualified teachers in disadvantaged schools in the North; and Northern Powerhouse cities should take the lead on regional marketing initiatives to attract teachers to live and work in the North. [...]
- > Having an effective pipeline of talented and skilled school leaders has become increasingly important as we move towards a school-led system. I recommend that the DfE should consider how it can enhance existing and new leadership initiatives and programmes in the North. [...]
- > Sustainability is key to success. Schools that convert to academy status must have strong performance to ensure successful transition. [...]
- > Northern local authorities must also do more to support academy programmes. Northern Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs) and their offices are key to facilitating this. [...]
- > I believe that strong MATs require strong leaders and we need to develop ways of spreading the influence of strong MATs in the North and the rest of the country. [...]

Published in full on: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/northern-powerhouse-schools-strategy-an-independent-review](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/northern-powerhouse-schools-strategy-an-independent-review)

Where school improvement has been tried on a city-wide level, and succeeded, is in London where the 'London Challenge' was implemented as a joint initiative between the Department for Education and London Boroughs to improve the performance of London's schools. It ran from 2003-2008 and contained several elements. As this evaluation explains, it set out to address many of the systemic issues we have identified above:

*"At its peak, the London Challenge programme had a budget of £40m million a year, funding 'in-kind' packages of support for underperforming schools, jointly brokered by an expert adviser and officials in the Department for Education. It also invested heavily in school leadership, including development programmes and consultant heads to support leaders of struggling schools, and worked with key boroughs to ensure robust local planning and support for school improvement. During the period of the London Challenge, secondary school performance in London saw a dramatic improvement, and local authorities in inner London went from the worst performing to the best performing nationally."*

Implementing the London Challenge, Marc Kidson and Emma Norris, Institute for Government<sup>29</sup>

There were a lot of wider changes to the education landscape between 2003-2008 that make it hard to isolate the impact of the London Challenge. But the paper quoted above is one<sup>30</sup> of many that have

<sup>29</sup>[https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Implementing%20the%20London%20Challenge%20-%20final\\_0.pdf](https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Implementing%20the%20London%20Challenge%20-%20final_0.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> See also <http://www.cfbt.com/en-GB/Research/Research-library/2014/r-london> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-the-city-challenge-programme>

found it did have a significant impact. Crucially, Kidson and Norris argue that the London Challenge laid the foundations for the continued success of London schools because the onus for school improvement moved to the school itself *“Over time, the centre of gravity for intervention shifted towards the teaching profession itself, with increasing ownership by senior practitioners driving sustainable improvements”*<sup>31</sup>.

Acknowledging that the London Challenge started off as an initiative within those overseeing schools, before being taken on by the schools themselves is important. Outside of London, and in the North in particular, it appears that we have the emphasis on individual schools and practitioners to take ownership of the outcomes, but this has not been preceded by the sustained efforts on the part of local and national leadership to address the fundamental issues holding schools back.

Yet while we want to replicate the success of the London Challenge, we are not suggesting that London’s schools are the model for northern schools. For all the successful schools we visited in the North, we also saw plenty where successful London heads had been parachuted in, only to fail to replicate that success. The schools we highlight above, while learning from others, have all adopted their own approach to serving their local community. Unfortunately, we have not found the conditions within the North to enable the London Challenge to be replicated. There is not an individual or body taking responsibility for the performance of schools. Local authorities in the North have oversight of an increasingly small number of secondary schools and were generally pessimistic about their own ability to effect change in schools within their areas, citing the power that had passed to individual academies, multi-academy trusts, regional schools commissioners and the Department for Education. We saw too little evidence of co-operation between these agencies.

- > We also encountered criticism of the role of regional schools commissioners (RSCs). There was a feeling that RSCs were failing to engage with either schools or other local bodies, leading to complaints that there was a lack of clarity about their decisions, and how they fitted into a wider plan for the region.
- > Individual schools complained about a lack of communication from the RCS. We visited schools that had been informed by the RSC that they would be transferred to a new academy sponsor, but had received no further communication, leaving the schools to believe the RSC would decide upon a new sponsor without any involvement from them or other local stakeholders.
- > Local authorities complained to us of minimal contact with the RCS, and a failure to engage on the work they were doing to improve schools or other services.

Both schools and local-areas complained that RCSs appeared to make decisions on individual schools, rather than conveying any plan for a specific area. We repeatedly heard about schools being brokered into academy chains without any connection to the local area.

All of these issues make the matter of school oversight and accountability overly complex.

Even without the formal powers of the regional schools commissioners, or powers over funding, there are things that local authorities, LEPs and combined authorities could look to address by using their leverage and networks. The Northern Powerhouse Schools Strategy called on Northern Powerhouse City

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<sup>31</sup> As above, p2



Regions to take a lead in attracting and retaining talented teachers in the North's schools. These cities have huge graduate populations to draw from, and well established schemes such as TeachFirst, and the Tutor Trust.

## Key Stage 5

Generally, the performance of FE, HE and sixth forms are good across the North of England. If we look at Ofsted ratings of institutions, these are in line with the national average everywhere but the North West (which has higher numbers of both Outstanding and unsatisfactory providers).

For children who take level-3 qualifications during KS5 (that is A-levels or equivalents), their attainment and the outcomes children reach post KS5 are close to the best in the country. On average, young people completing level 3 qualifications in the Northern city regions<sup>32</sup> receive good average point scores, and only slightly lower average A-level scores (lower A-level scores but higher overall scores suggests a greater propensity to take vocational courses). Once completing A-levels, children in the North have a similar chance of going to university, as is shown in Table 2. Children in London are significantly more likely than those elsewhere to attend university.

**Table 2: Key Stage 5 attainment**

	Average Level 3 point score per entry <sup>33</sup>	Average A-level Point Score per entry <sup>34</sup>	Percentage of pupils attending Higher Education <sup>35</sup>
<b>Northern City Region Average</b>	31.5	29.7	36%
<b>Southern City Region Average</b>	32.2	31.4	36%
<b>Midlands City Region Average</b>	31.2	29.6	37%
<b>London average</b>	32.1	31.2	49%

The North also does well when we look at the non-HE destinations for children leaving school or college having completed A-levels or equivalents, as shown in Figure 13. **The North leads the country in terms of those leaving college and going into an apprenticeship** and has strong numbers going into sustained employment. Given that this data shows the outcomes for children a year after leaving education, this suggests strong connections within local areas between colleges and employers.

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<sup>32</sup> This is a lower percentage of children in the North than the South, see Figure 13.

<sup>33</sup> Source: [A level and other 16 to 18 results 2016 to 2017](#): Local authority tables SFR03/2018. Average level 3 point score per entry denotes the average score attained by a child for any level 3 qualification. Average A-level point score per entry denotes the average score attained by a child for an A-Level. For context, at A-Level, 16 points is an E, 24 points is a D, 32 points is a C, 40 points is a B, 48 points is an A and 56 points is an A\*.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Source: [Widening participation in higher education 2017](#): Tables SFR39/2017. The widening participation tables calculates these figures as a percentage of children who went state funded mainstream schools at age 15.

**Figure 13: Percentage of Key Stage 5 pupils with employment destinations**



36

However, the picture is less positive for those who do not take A-levels or equivalents. As is shown in Figure 14 below, children in the North are significantly less likely to attain an A-level or equivalent qualification, compared to children in London.

**Figure 14: Percentage of children qualified to Level 2 and 3 by age 19**



37

The second area of concern for post-16 outcomes is the number of children not in education or training, both post-16 and post-18. As Figure 15 shows, across the Northern City Regions more than 6% of children are out of education or training despite a statutory requirement for children to be in education until 19.

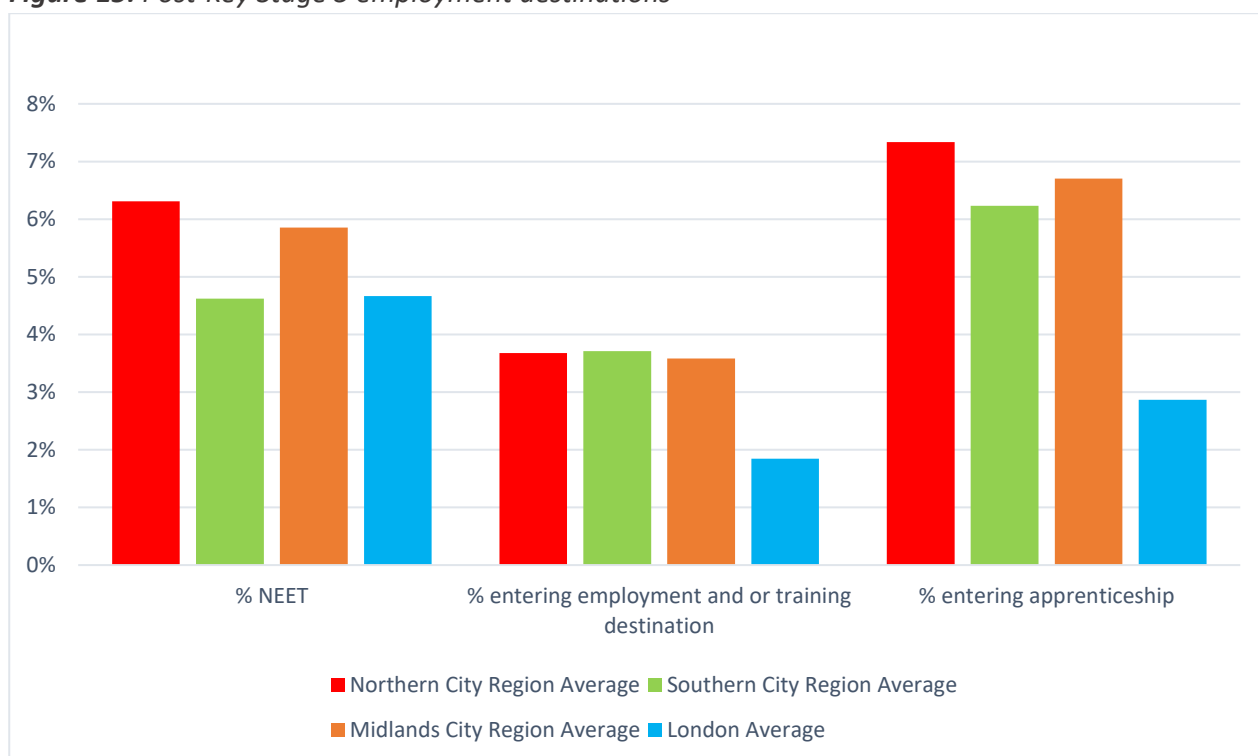
<sup>36</sup> Source: [Destinations of Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 pupils](#): Key Stage 5 local authority and parliamentary constituency tables SFR56/2017. Destinations for state funded mainstream schools only. NEET percentage calculated as the percentage who did not sustain a destination.

<sup>37</sup> Source: [Level 2 and 3 attainment by young people aged 19 in 2016](#): Local authority tables 16 to 24 SFR16/2017

This is a particular problem in some cities. Nationally, 5% of all children aged 16-18 aren't in sustained education or training, but in some areas (all in the North) it is twice this: Knowsley, Middlesbrough, Manchester, Salford and Blackpool.

We see a similar pattern post-19 – the North does well for employment and apprenticeships, but the numbers of NEETs are still concerning. However, in a reversal to previous stages, the situation in London is also worrying. Children in London may have a higher chance of entering higher education, but for the 51% of children who do not go on to higher education, they have a much lower chance of entering sustained employment or an apprenticeship than elsewhere in the country and a higher chance of becoming NEET.

**Figure 15: Post-Key Stage 5 employment destinations**



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<sup>38</sup> Source: [Destinations of KS4 and KS5 Pupils 2016](#); Key Stage 4 local authority and parliamentary constituency tables SFR56/2017. Destinations for state funded mainstream schools only. Apprenticeship figure presented is as a percentage of all children in a sustained education or employment destination. NEET percentage calculated as percentage who did not sustain a destination.

## A Note on the Data we have presented

Most of the data presented within this section is for City Regions, a list of which are in the table below. This is because the North's human and economic geography is defined by its large urban conurbations, normally encompassing a mixture of cities and towns. Research we commissioned from the Educational Policy Institute show that all Northern regions have more than 80% of the population living in urban areas, mostly around big-conurbations.

**Figure 16: Economic geography of England's regions**



Centre for Cities initially identified six key city regions of Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, Hull and the North East<sup>39</sup> and to this list we've added the Tees Valley City Region and Lancashire LEP area. Together, these areas can be loosely defined as the 'Northern Powerhouse'. A key part of the rationale for this project was to examine these city regions, and their potential to improve the outcomes for children. We therefore wanted to compare these city regions with similar conurbations throughout Britain. There is no comprehensive list, so we have included all the Local Enterprise Partnership areas which include at least one major city<sup>40</sup>.

While we hope this presentation will enable the fairest possible comparison between similar areas, as with any regional or local comparison, there are significant differences between the city regions in terms of size, urban/rural mix and deprivation as is displayed below. In using this framework, weighted averages were calculated based on the populations of the local authorities within the city regions in the context of the analysis. When aggregating the city regions into the general areas of Northern city regions, Midland city regions, Southern city regions and London, weighted averages were calculated based on the populations of the city regions within the larger area. Though this averages out many differences in the areas, and the shocking variation within some of the aggregated areas, this approach is necessary to present the differences between the areas in a clear way. The most recent data was used as much as possible and it is noteworthy that with the exception of the EPI analysis all other data looks at children in the present day, rather than a cohort of children progressing through the education system.

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.centreforcities.org/publication/northern-powerhouse-factsheet/>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-enterprise-partnerships-local-authority-mapping>

City Region Key				City Region Deprivation Rank <sup>41</sup>	Population <sup>42</sup>	0-17 population <sup>43</sup>	Percentage of children FSM <sup>44</sup>	Average salary <sup>45</sup>
Northern City Regions	London	Midlands City Regions	Southern City Regions					
Liverpool				1	1,212,112	242,710	22	£25,515
West Midlands				2	2,864,925	681,663	22	£25,435
Tees Valley				3	669,946	144,996	22	£24,521
Inner London				4	3,529,346	731,495	24	£41,913
Sheffield				5	1,384,969	288,224	19	£24,335
Hull and the Humber				6	757,080	153,063	17	£24,347
Leeds				7	2,508,040	558,556	17	£25,567
Greater Manchester				8	2,782,141	629,278	17	£22,600
North East				9	1,966,902	380,743	19	£25,625
Lancashire				10	1,198,798	246,792	14	£26,068
Nottingham				11	2,177,990	443,590	15	£24,723
Outer London				12	5,258,546	1,253,238	14	£35,370
Leicestershire				13	1,031,300	220,207	11	£25,229
West of England				14	919,587	186,452	14	£27,660
Solent				15	1,969,331	401,892	11	£30,326
Thames Valley				16	896,823	214,347	9	£34,526

<sup>41</sup> Source: [English Indices of Deprivation](#): File 11 upper tier local authorities. Calculated by giving ranks to each city region based on a population-weighted average of upper tier local authority deprivation scores for all local authorities in the city region.

<sup>42</sup>Source: [Mid-2016 Population estimates for UK](#).

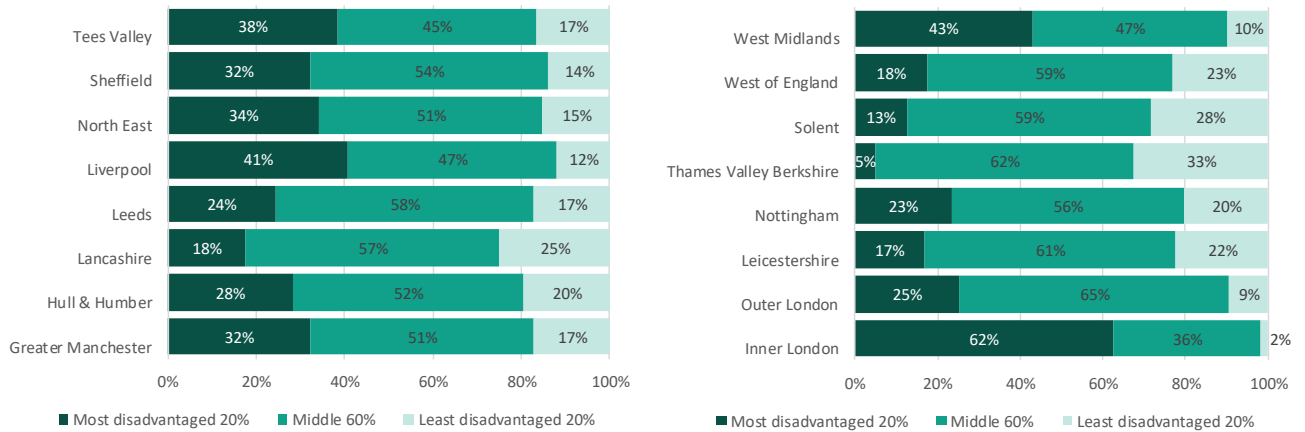
<sup>43</sup> Ibid

<sup>44</sup> Source: [Schools, pupils and their characteristics January 2017](#): Local authority and regional tables: SFR28/2017. Calculated as a weighted average of the percentage of all children aged 15 or under on FSM.

<sup>45</sup> Source: [Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2017](#): Place of Residence by Local Authority –AHSE, Table 8.7a Annual Pay Gross

As Figure 17 shows, Northern city regions tend to have larger cohorts of FSM pupils. This is borne out by the analysis below which shows the deprivation profiles of addresses within Britain's city regions. As the left of the chart below shows, **the Northern City Regions have much larger numbers of children growing up in deprived neighbourhoods than in the wealthiest neighbourhoods.**

**Figure 17: Proportion of cohort in region and city-region who live in deprived and wealthy neighbourhoods**



## Section 3: Devolution and Regeneration

To inform this project, we held a series of major summits in the large regional centres across the North. These brought together leading figures from local government, civic society, business and education to discuss the local issues facing children, the strategies in place to address these and the provision for children within regeneration and devolution plans.

At the summits we found a clear awareness of the problems facing children, and particularly how issues of deprivation combined to impact on the prospects for children. We also saw numerous examples of institutions delivering genuinely transformative work with children and agencies innovating effectively to cope with significant demands. We have featured many of these projects in this report.

However, while there were impressive elements of every local offer, overall there was a lack of strategic vision or over-arching plan. There was a clear understanding that the outcomes for children are heavily influenced by deprivation but local areas had often failed to convert this into a strategic plan to identify the children most at risk and to offer effective interventions. The overall impression was that individual areas were looking at children at specific stages of development or within certain institutions, rather than looking at the child across their life course.

Even within individual services, our research emphasised the importance of strong leadership. Josh MacAlister, Chief Executive of Frontline and a member of the project advisory board has written for us on the progress we have seen, and where we have more to go.

### **Josh MacAlister, Chief Executive and Founder, Frontline**

The last five years have been an encouraging time to work in the social work system given the focus and drive to improve social work practice. Frontline has played its part in progress taking hold in councils like Manchester where we will have recruited or developed over 70 social workers by this summer and where they recently came out of intervention from central government. There have also been dramatic improvements that have been inspiring to watch from afar in places like Leeds and North Yorkshire. Our experience has been that these improvements have come about because social services for children have become clearer about their purpose and grown in confidence. The shift across the country, including in the North, is away from process driven work to a focus on practice. It means social workers directly helping families as skilled change makers rather than orbiting around families as care coordinators.

Progress in improving services in northern local authorities has been more impressive for the fact that many of them have had to cut budgets more dramatically than many of their southern counterparts. This progress results in better lives for children and it is a solid basis on which to further improve protection and support for children.

The Growing up North report rightly calls on regions to bring the same mind-set, leadership and focus of economic regeneration to the work of improving experiences for children. This should mean councils making the most of the opportunities of devolution and working more across city regions. This would also help establish better conditions for innovation across public services.

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Co-operation between agencies was generally better within local authorities, but action across a devolved area, between local authorities or involving institutions not part of the local authority (in particular schools and NHS bodies) were all lacking. We also saw evidence that cuts to budgets were making agencies shrink back into their statutory role, retreat into the silo, just at the time when they need to work together better. Below, Bernie Brown, who has experienced working in children's services across the North, articulates the need to go further in bringing services together.

**Bernie Brown, Assistant Director of Children's Services**

I think locally and nationally we have to strive to develop policy and practice that has a sense of connectedness to the people we serve, and continuity with the broader national policy agenda. This requires dialogue across the sector, and its partners, and across government departments.

A road map is required to provide that clarity on what the offer for the most vulnerable should be and how that is to be delivered, in the context of our diminishing resources. A clear commitment to prevention, linking early years, school readiness, persistent absence to health outcomes and emotional wellbeing for young people is surely obvious. Clear alignment with the work of Public Health is also essential if any meaningful impact is to occur and an acceptance that our work is with children, and children live in families, of many shapes and sizes, who in turn, live in our communities. Communities create social capital, and this, if invested in, will contribute to self-sustainable and strong communities who play, learn, are healthy and safe and will thrive in the future.

We must listen intently to children, their families, kin, carers and our communities who receive our services at really challenging times in their lives and meaningfully respond to what they tell us works –transformation will take a humble and humane approach to complex needs.

As a leader I regularly need to remind myself of my own history and how it informed my career choice – I am a social work practitioner in my heart ,I believe in the human capacity for change – parents want to succeed , we have to facilitate that success and develop services that catch people before they fall and pick them up and support them to stand strong time and time ...and yes time again – not unlike the peer support we offer each other when we fail as systems and partnerships in delivering the corporate parenting duty.

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Lots of local areas recognised with us the potential benefits of such an approach, and failing to implement it is not due to lack of enthusiasm but rather a lack of leadership and co-ordination. In particular, there was a concern that much of the agenda around children – from schools to the NHS – was outside of local control and not part of proposed devolution deals.

This was in sharp contrast to local economic regeneration plans. Wherever we visited there were clear and ambitious regeneration plans. Local areas were confident about what they could achieve and numerous partners – from the public and private sector – were clear on this agenda and their role. This is the level of confidence, ambition and integration we could see for children, and we did see some

projects attempting to deliver it. One good example we encountered, where significant reform is underway to integrate services around the child, is Blackpool, as Merle Davies, the Director of Centre for Early Childhood explains for us below.

**Merle Davies, Director – Centre for Early Child Development, Blackpool**

Blackpool was fortunate enough to be one of five sites in England to be funded by the National Lottery through A Better Start, to take a 'place based approach' to early child development. [...]

By using a different approach to commissioning, from April '18, Blackpool will have a Health Visiting service which goes beyond the 5 mandated visits to a minimum of 8. Working with Oxford and Exeter Universities we will be introducing Behavioural Activation as part of the toolkit for Health visitors for women with early onset Perinatal Mental Ill-Health. With Speech and Language our new commission features a Home Visiting service which can be accessed directly by Health Visitors, who now use the Welcome Assessment - meaning they can get timely support for children requiring it. Parents have worked alongside Professors from the University of Michigan to develop the Survivor Mums' Companion, a psychoeducation programme for pregnant women who have survived childhood trauma and abuse, into a model for Blackpool which is now being piloted.

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More often there was informal co-operation, but without the structural change needed to really bring about significant change. This example from East Riding's Principal Social Worker, Penny Donno, at the Hull summit, demonstrated the benefits of co-operation, but also the limitations of that co-operation without underlying structural change.

*"In terms of social work we are challenged to get the best social workers. We have seen success in our recent teaching partnership, including Hull, North Lincs, North East Lincs in terms of developing those relationship to actually share the skills. ...I think we can build on some of that success towards regeneration. We might invest really heavily in social practice models for our social workers. Hull invests in a different practice model but, actually becoming together through the Teaching Partnership we are sharing that."*

Bringing services together did not require a statutory body. In Liverpool, we saw an incredible set of inter-related projects working with vulnerable young people within the 'Blue Mile' around Goodison Park football stadium. All of these projects were run by Everton Football Club's 'Everton in the Community' arm and included measures working with children in care, children in gangs and children who had been permanently excluded from school. While the projects were all impressive in their own right, the collective effort often meant children stayed within projects for years and then ended up working with or for the club. There is no doubt that the allure of such a famous club, combined with the financial support provided by Everton, added an extra element to these great projects.

### **Denise Barrett-Baxendale, Everton Football Club**

Our wonderful charity, Everton in the Community, has recently celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary – an achievement of which all of us associated with EitC are extremely proud of. Thirty years of supporting those most in need across the city of Liverpool and further beyond.

Everton in the Community had humble origins. Founded in 1988 and based in a converted house in the shadows of Goodison Park, the charity aimed to provide sporting opportunities in the local area, but we were always determined to make a bigger impact and do all we can to help change lives and, in some circumstances, save lives.

We work 365 days a day in helping to combat a diverse range of social issues that are prevalent on the streets of Liverpool and Merseyside. Our award-winning practitioners support the most vulnerable and underprivileged members of our local communities with over 40 programmes focusing on employability, education, disability, youth justice, mental health and poverty to name but a view. [...]

Our commitment to education is extensive and longstanding. From our Alternative Provision curriculum offering at Everton Free School to our apprenticeship and employability programmes, we provide the opportunity for young people to discover, explore and reach their potential in a secure, supportive and stimulating environment whilst our Youth Engagement programmes harness the energy, enthusiasm and commitment of a wide range of young people, empowering them to effect positive social change.

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The most comprehensive attempt we saw to integrate services and design them around the child was 'Child Friendly Leeds'. This showed the most ambition for children and while it is being delivered within one local authority, it went the furthest in terms of understanding children's lives and the multitude of agencies they interact with.

### **Cllr Judith Blake, Leader, Leeds City Council**

Our ambition is for Leeds to be the best city for children and young people to grow up in - a crucial element of Leeds City Council's work to become the best city in the UK by 2030. [...] Child Friendly Leeds is the thread that brings together all the work that we are doing to create better outcomes for the 187,000 children and young people that live in our city.

Since Child Friendly Leeds was launched in 2012, we have been building a city-wide effort to put children and young people at the heart of our thinking, planning and action. The child friendly vision is one that the whole city can, and is, uniting behind – one that invites everyone, including individuals, schools, sports clubs, voluntary services, private sector companies, health, the police and the wider public sector to determine and develop their role in improving the lives of children and young people. It puts children at the very heart of the city's growth strategy.

The voice of the child is at the heart of everything that we do. We engage with children through our voice and influence work, the 'Have a Voice Council' for children looked after, and the Care Leaver's Council to find out their priorities and we act on what they tell us.

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Examples going beyond one local-authority area to realise the benefits of co-ordinated action over a wider area, such as a city region or combined authority, were rarer. We frequently heard that children were not part of the current devolution deals, or strategic plans.

However, it is encouraging to see some potentially important initiatives being established. For example, the Merseyside Strategic Vulnerability Alliance is bringing together six local authorities, police, CPS and the voluntary sector to share data and best practice in tackling issues around vulnerability. The group's primary focus is tackling issues of concern for all agencies, such as gangs and criminal exploitation, on these issues it hopes to be able to co-ordinate action between local authorities, and between agencies. The group also enables knowledge sharing the establishment of a single lead on issues which are rarer in Merseyside: such as Prevent and honour based violence.

Greater Manchester, which has by far the most comprehensive devolution settlement, now has have a number of projects underway across the devolved area from early years to employability. While in an early stage, the greater number of agencies within local control in Greater Manchester – including police and NHS – should bring about much greater opportunities to unite services for children. Cllr Sean Anstee, Leader of Trafford Council, and Chair of the Greater Manchester Skills and Employability Board explains their priorities below. We hope that Greater Manchester manage to implement this agenda and indeed go further with additional powers from Central Government. In turn this can be the model for devolution so that similar powers can also go to other local areas with plans in place to use them.

**Cllr Sean Anstee, Greater Manchester Skills and Employability Board.**

Our ambition in Greater Manchester is to create an integrated employment and skills eco-system which has the individual and employer at its heart, and that better responds to the needs of residents and businesses and contributes to the growth and productivity of the Greater Manchester economy.

We want to see an employment and skills system in Greater Manchester where young people will leave the education system with the knowledge, skills and attributes they need to succeed; where working age adults who are out of work or who have low levels of skills will have access to the support they need to enter and sustain employment; and where all adults have the chance to up-skill and progress in their careers.

Employers will be actively engaged in shaping this system and in return, we want to see them take responsibility in supporting residents back into work. Our employment and skills initiatives will be developed at a local level focusing on those furthest from the labour market with the right integrated support required to move them closer to work. We will ensure further education and training providers will get more people into intermediate and advanced level skills in areas linked to Greater Manchester's growth sectors. Underpinning this, we will use Greater Manchester's devolved powers around health commissioning to integrate health with our skills agenda to capitalise on the fact that 'good work is good for your health'.

## Acknowledgements

Firstly, I want to thank the children who I have met throughout this project and who have shared with me their insight into life in the North today. Their experiences and aspirations have been the single biggest influence on the final report. I would also like to thank the adults caring for these children – the families and professionals – who I have encountered in numerous different settings. Their knowledge has ensured that this report is as much grounded in frontline experience as analytical research. Then there are the leaders from across local government, business, the arts and civic society who attended one of my regional summits and discussed with me their plans for the future. I hope we can continue to work together. The project’s advisory board have enabled all of this engagement and their expertise has been vital in evaluating the evidence we have encountered. All of them are doing brilliant work to include children in a more prosperous future for the North and I am very grateful that we could work together on this project. Finally, I want to acknowledge the support of my team, who have worked with me to ensure we could take the most comprehensive approach possible, in particular the project’s lead, Martin Lennon.

### Project Advisory Board

Cllr Judith Blake	Leader of Leeds Council
Cllr Sean Anstee	Leade of Trafford Council
Dr Richard Mantle OBE	Chief Executive, Opera North
Luciana Berger MP	Labour MP for Liverpool Wavertree
Prof Denise Barrett- Baxendale MBE	Deputy CEO, Everton Football Club and Chief Executive, Everton in the Community; board member, UK Sport
Lucy Beaumont	Comedian and writer
Bill Holroyd CBE DL	Businessman; founder, ‘On:side’ youth zones
Lord Haskins	Chair, Humber LEP
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Bishop Christine Hardman	Bishop of Newcastle
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Isabelle Trowler	Chief Social Worker for England
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