



**Early Years,
Education
and Skills**

Membership 2017/18

HM Opposition

Tracy Brabin MP
Mike Kane MP
Gordon Marsden MP
Angela Rayner MP*

NEC

James Asser*
Rachel Garnham
Eddie Izzard†
Sarah Owen

CLPs and Regions

Peray Ahmet, *Greater London Region*
Simeon Elliott, *South East Region*
Natalie Fleet, *East Midlands Region*
Sarah Hayward, *Greater London Region*
Emma Toal, *Eastern Region*
Fiona Twycross, *Greater London Region*

Affiliates

Jasmin Beckett, *North West Youth*
Eda Cazimoglu, *Labour Students*
Clare Lally, *Scottish Policy Forum*
Callum Munro, *Community*
June Nelson, *BAME Labour*
Maggie Ryan, *Unite*
Richard Watts, *Association of Labour Councillors*
Anne Western, *Local Government Association*

Elected Reps

Lucy Powell MP
Julie Ward

* Co-Convenor

† Replaced Christine Shawcroft

Policy Development

The Early Years, Education and Skills Policy Commission is responsible for developing policy on a range of topics related to the wellbeing, development and care of children, as well as education, training and skills from childhood through to adulthood.

This year, the Commission has been tasked with developing the principles of the National Education Service (NES) as its priority issue. It has met several times to discuss and hear expert evidence on a range of topics related to the National Education Service, including youth services, staff within the NES, inclusion, Sure Start and alternative provision for pupils who do not attend mainstream school.

The Commission held a policy seminar at Annual Conference, which began with opening remarks from the Shadow Education team. Gordon Marsden MP, Shadow Minister for Higher Education, Further Education and Skills, Tracy Brabin MP, Shadow Minister for Early Years, Mike Kane MP, Shadow Minister for Schools and Lord Watson were all in attendance and discussed a range of issues with delegates, including Labour's offer for students and young people, the Government's failing 30 hours childcare policy and school funding cuts.

Sure Start proved a popular topic for delegates with many highlighting how centres had been closing in their areas and the concerns they had for parents that might struggle to travel to their nearest Sure Start centre. Delegates also spoke about children's mental health, with many arguing that the current assessment model in England is contributing to the crisis in mental health.

The Commission met in December and had discussions on the submissions that were sent in and the motions from Annual Conference 2017. These included points on holiday hunger, stopping the expansion of grammar schools and increasing democratic control over academy chains.

At this meeting, the Policy Commission agreed that the priority area to be taken forward for consultation would be 'Towards a National Education Service', to build on the 2017 manifesto promise and the speech Angela Rayner, Shadow Secretary of State for Education, gave at Annual Conference in 2017.

The Commission met again in January where they heard from Angela Rayner who spoke on the National Education Service, the draft principles underpinning it and the need to take this work forward through a programme of stakeholder engagement. Mike Kane was also in attendance and discussed the issue of teacher retention and recruitment with the Commission and the need for better working conditions across schools.

The reference back on school policy, moved by Colne Valley CLP at Conference, was considered by the Commission at this meeting. A discussion was held on the paragraphs referenced back by Conference and it was noted that ongoing policy work could help to clarify the position of the Party and the shadow team on the issues which were referenced back.

The Commission had a thorough discussion on the submissions received from Party members, with a particular focus on faith schools, higher education, a National Education Service, secondary schools, early years and the wider curriculum.

In February, the National Policy Forum met in Leeds. Three breakout sessions were held over the weekend on the consultation topic of 'Towards a National Education Service'. Each of the breakout sessions had a panel including Angela Rayner and Tracy Brabin representing the shadow education team. During these sessions, NPF Representatives highlighted that the relationship between the health and education sector is particularly important with regards to early years and it was suggested that further work could be undertaken with other policy commissions, for instance the Health and Social Care Commission.

They also discussed the need for the National Education Service to take into account education devolution in the UK, suggesting that there are lessons the NES could learn from the different education systems in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Brexit was a recurring theme throughout the weekend and it was noted that Erasmus + is important to protect. Representatives also emphasised that leaving the European Union, combined with technological changes, could provide challenges in retraining the current workforce. Representatives also had a discussion on the importance of informal social education for young people, stressing the need to understand what good alternative provision looks like.

Early Years, Education and Skills

The Commission met again in March, where they heard an update from Jo Platt MP, a member of the shadow education team, and Tracy Brabin MP on the work of the Shadow Education Team. They discussed Sure Start and early intervention and many took the opportunity to stress that the health and education sectors are entwined.

Themes of the submissions discussed by the Commission at the meeting included the National Education Service, selective education, faith schools, academies, the curriculum, and apprenticeships. The Commission heard evidence from two expert witnesses on the themes of alternative provision and youth services. These two areas were chosen after the National Policy Forum weekend, as they were identified as areas the National Education Service could look to develop.

The Commission heard evidence from Kiran Gill on the subject of alternative provision and pupil referral units. Kiran is the founder of The Difference, a charity which aims to upskill school leaders in supporting mental health and reducing exclusions.

In the same session, they heard evidence from Anntoinette Bramble, Deputy Mayor of Hackney Council, on the subject of youth services.

The Commission had a variety of different discussions on the issues raised by Kiran and Anntoinette. Commission members spoke about the low quality education some students receive in some alternative provision settings, and how this has been exacerbated by the increase in autonomous academies. They also discussed the link between poverty and social exclusion, as well as local authorities that currently provide high-quality alternative provision.

Commission members also discussed the impact austerity is having on children and young people, as well as how the National Education Service charter could better reflect youth services and present a wide offer that extends beyond school based education.

In April, Angela Rayner launched the National Education Service Roadshow in Swindon. The NES Roadshow ran alongside the NPF consultation “towards a National Education Service” and involved events in the nine English regions.

These events were attended by Angela and members of the Shadow Education Team and were

an opportunity for CLP members to engage in the consultation and to discuss education issues with the Shadow Education Team.

As part of the Roadshow, the Shadow Education Team hosted a roundtable with many representative organisations from across the education sector on the principles of the National Education Service. Emma Lewell-Buck MP, Shadow Minister for Children and Families, hosted a roundtable specifically on children and adults with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) within the NES and Mike Kane also hosted an NES Roadshow event in Manchester with teachers and education professionals.

The Commission met again in May, where Angela Rayner gave an update on the work of the Shadow Education Team and the National Education Service Roadshow and consultation. The chair also gave an update on the work of the Joint Policy Committee (JPC).

The Commission heard evidence from expert witnesses on the themes of staff within the National Education Service and Special Education Needs (SEND) and inclusion.

In the first part of the meeting the Commission heard evidence from Kevin Courtney, joint General Secretary of the National Education Union (NEU) and Sally Hunt, General Secretary of the Universities and College Union (UCU) on the issue of staff within the NES.

Sally Hunt thanked the Labour Party for its support during the recent pension strikes and Commission members had detailed discussions on a number of issues, including academies and accountability, the governance of schools, pensions and the marketisation of education.

The Commission also heard evidence on inclusion from Navin Kikabhai, chair of The Alliance for Inclusive Education (ALLFIE), Richard Rieser, consultant for the World of Inclusion and Micheline Mason, an inclusion campaigner.

A detailed discussion was had on how cuts to school budgets are impacting on high needs provision. It was suggested that budget cuts are leading to a decline in teaching assistants, a reduction in SEND support from local authorities and growing class sizes which are leading to increased exclusions both official, as well as big increases in illegal off-rolling (where pupils disappear from the school registers).

The Commission met again in June for a joint meeting with the Health and Social Care Policy Commission, which took place in Cardiff. The Commissions met to discuss early intervention measures, with a particular focus on what Labour's Sure Start offer could learn from Flying Start, Wales' early years programme for families living in disadvantaged areas.

Members were joined by Huw Thomas, Leader of Cardiff Council, Huw Irranca-Davies AM, Minister for Children, Older People and Social Care and Vaughan Gething AM, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services who gave an overview of the current early years and education policies in Wales.

Members had detailed discussion on a number of the issues raised, including how local authorities can ensure they balance competing priorities, the importance of joined up care in early years, with a particular focus on the 'team around the family', the need for minimum standards of qualification in early years, procurement and Wales' emerging childcare offer.

The Commission also heard evidence on Flying Start from Natalie Macdonald from the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. Natalie outlined that much like Sure Start under Labour, the four key elements of Flying Start are; Health Visiting; Early Language Development; Childcare and Parenting. Natalie also told the Commission about the long term impact of quality early years provision and the need for a PGCE pathway.

Members had lively discussions on a number of points made including how to ensure Flying Start reaches groups which are typically hard to reach, the pay of early years staff and the reduction in maintained nurseries.

Commission members also discussed the impact of formal testing on young children, the importance of alleviating child poverty and the need to professionalise early years educators. The value of ensuring equal access to further and higher education, as well as the need to create parity of esteem between further and higher education was also underlined.

At this meeting, the Commission had a thorough discussion about the Party Democracy Review and the role of the National Policy Forum.

In July, the Commission met to consider the submissions received during the consultation,

including those from the many events and discussions had at local parties across the country.

Angela Rayner thanked everyone for their involvement in the process. She told the Commission that as part of their ongoing work in developing the NES, the Shadow Education Team are considering the structure of the National Education Service and the details and legalities that surround it. She reiterated to the Commission that while the finer details are in development, all education institutions that receive funding within the National Education Service will have to abide by the final principles.

Consultation: Towards a National Education Service

In the 2017 General Election manifesto Labour launched the framework for a unified National Education Service (NES) to move England towards cradle-to-grave learning that is free at the point of use.

The manifesto set out a vision for the NES to be built on the principle 'every child and adult matters'. It has always been one of Labour's central beliefs that everyone, whatever their background, should be given the opportunity to reach their potential, to succeed not just in the world of work but in their own development. The NES seeks to extend this opportunity to everyone, at any time in their life, regardless of their circumstances or background.

The development of the National Education Service is the key focus for Labour in developing education policy before the next General Election, which means it is vital to get the framework right.

At Labour Party Annual Conference 2017, the Shadow Secretary of State for Education, Angela Rayner MP, launched the draft charter for the National Education Service, which outlined ten principles that will underpin the development of the NES in years to come.

This year the Early Years, Education and Skills Policy Commission have focused on developing these principles further. In April, the Commission launched the consultation document "Towards a National Education Service."

The Commission took evidence on a range of issues relating to the NES from:

- Kiran Gill, The Difference
- Anntoinette Bramble, Deputy Mayor of Hackney
- Kevin Courtney, National Education Union (NEU)
- Sally Hunt, Universities and Colleges Union (UCU)
- Richard Rieser, World of Inclusion
- Micheline Mason, Inclusion Campaigner
- Navin Kikabhai, Alliance for Fair and Inclusive Education (ALLFIE)
- Huw-Irranca Davies AM, Minister for Children, Older People and Social Care
- Vaughan Gething AM, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services

- Huw Thomas, Leader of Cardiff Council
- Natalie MacDonald, University of Wales Trinity Saint David

The Commission would like to thank these speakers for coming to give evidence. They would also like to thank every individual person, CLP and organisation who contributed to the consultation, whether online through the Labour Policy Forum website, a written submission or by taking part in person at a local party, NES Roadshow or other NPF consultation event.

THE PURPOSE OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION SERVICE

"[Education should] engage children and young people, enabling them to develop their interests and broaden their horizons, giving them the best life chances possible to participate fully in the life of the nation as equal citizens, modern, responsible and engaged, and as fully rounded, happy human beings, motivated to continue learning throughout their lives."

National Education Union

Over the past eight years the Conservatives' austerity agenda has had an untold impact on the lives of millions of people across the country. Their economic and social policies have disproportionately affected the most disadvantaged in our society, who have seen their wages fall in real terms, their housing costs rise and their social security relentlessly cut.

The number of children living in poverty is growing year on year and there are now 4.1 million children living in poverty in the UK. Unsurprisingly, the consequences of this can be seen in the classroom and since 2010 the attainment gap between the most persistently disadvantaged and their peers has risen and poor mental health amongst children and young people is widespread.

Theresa May claims her Government are "building an education system which unlocks everyone's talents", yet education and skills are often deprioritised by the Treasury and as a result our nurseries, schools, colleges and universities are facing funding crises.

THE NATIONAL EDUCATION SERVICE DRAFT CHARTER

1. Education has intrinsic value in giving all people access to the common body of knowledge we share, and practical value in allowing all to participate fully in our society. These principles shall guide the National Education Service.
2. The National Education Service shall provide education that is free at the point of use, available universally and throughout life.
3. The National Education Service provides education for the public good and all providers within the National Education Service shall be bound by the principles of this charter.
4. High quality education is essential to a strong and inclusive society and economy, so the National Education Service shall work alongside the health, sustainability, and industrial policies set by democratically elected government.
5. Every child, and adult, matters, so the National Education Service will be committed to tackling all barriers to learning, and providing high-quality education for all.
6. All areas of skill and learning deserve respect; the National Education Service will provide all forms of education, integrating academic, technical and other forms of learning within and outside of educational institutions, and treating all with equal respect.
7. Educational excellence is best achieved through collaboration and the National Education Service will be structured to encourage and enhance cooperation across boundaries and sectors.
8. The National Education Service shall be accountable to the public, communities, and parents and children that it serves. Schools, colleges, and other public institutions within the National Education Service should be rooted in their communities, with parents and communities empowered, via appropriate democratic means, to influence change where it is needed and ensure that the education system meets their needs. The appropriate democratic authority will set, monitor and allocate resources, ensuring that they meet the rights, roles, and responsibilities of individuals and institutions.
9. The National Education Service aspires to the highest standards of excellence and professionalism. Educators and all other staff will be valued as highly-skilled professionals, and appropriate accountability will be balanced against giving genuine freedom of judgement and innovation. The National Education Service shall draw on evidence and international best practice, and provide appropriate professional development and training.
10. The National Education Service must have the utmost regard to the well-being of learners and educators, and its policies and practices, particularly regarding workload, assessment, and inspection, will support the emotional, social and physical well-being of students and staff.

Despite her assertions, the actions and policies of the Government clearly demonstrates a lack of any kind of progressive vision for education in the UK. The inability to create a policy narrative that advocates for education has led to years of chaos and turmoil for the sector and it is our children and young people that are missing out.

The National Education Service (NES) seeks to offer an alternative vision for education under a Labour Government; a vision that is built with our members. As such, the consultation posed the question of what the NES should be for and what values it should embody.

Early Years, Education and Skills

In response, members and stakeholders used the opportunity to reiterate the fundamental importance of education. Many of the submissions received, and the discussions held by the Commission over the year, focused on the significance of education to both the individual and the wider society. There was universal agreement that education is a human right, which holds an intrinsic value to the individual and is a public good to society.

“We need our education to work for all, no matter what background anyone comes from or what subjects they are good at. Education is the most important human right”

Laura, South East

“Education can be viewed as a cost or an investment - either a drain on resources or the future of the economy.

The NES must not only portray education as a social right but also as investment with sound economic benefits.”

Unison

Submissions consistently underlined that the impact of education on an individual is much broader than just allowing people to access knowledge and that the National Education Service should recognise this. Indeed, submissions stated that education involves a wide range of skills development that supports people to fully engage in a democratic society.

“Learning and education is more than acquiring a common body of knowledge. It also involves skills development (cognitive, language and communication, emotional, social, physical, life management), meaningful application and needs to address ethical and moral rights and the responsibilities that form the bedrock of living in a democratic society.”

The Association of Educational Psychologists

Many members are concerned that this vital role of education is being lost under the Conservatives and this could be seen in the countless discussions and submissions received on the curriculum. Many feel that the current curriculum, with its focus on “teaching to the test” is having a detrimental impact on children and young people. While the problem appears to be most acute in schools, we heard concerns about the narrowing of the curriculum in early years and further education too. The submissions received highlighted the need for a broad curriculum which supports young people to access, engage and learn a wide range of skills.

“We should be aiming to give students an enquiring mind to help them develop a wide range of skills and knowledge.

The talents and abilities of all students should be recognised and fostered.”

Taunton Deane CLP

“An education system that enables and encourages young people to not only achieve through attainment, but also provides access to build skills of teamwork, leadership, staying positive, aiming high, listening, presenting, problem solving and creativity of character, enterprise and employability, is one that is going to ensure that all young people regardless of postcode or family income are able to build successful working lives.”

Business in the Community

Labour recognises that the issue of curriculum and assessment is something the National Education Service will need to address, which is why the 2017 manifesto committed to launching a commission to look into curriculum and assessment, starting by reviewing Key Stage 1 and 2 SATs.

Members and stakeholders were keen to stress that whilst education is vital for the economy, the National Education Service should have a broader purpose than just supporting people to access the workforce. Submissions outlined how the current direction of education under the Conservatives is focused almost entirely on preparing people for the world of work, and less focused on developing inquisitive, critical individuals.

“We need a clearer and more multi-faceted definition of education that underlines our policy. We should stress that education is not functionalist - it is about the whole person, throughout their life and touches on all their talents, all their social skills, not just the knowledge and skills required for working life.”

Gordon, Yorkshire and the Humber

Throughout the year the Commission also discussed the need for the National Education Service to include the entirety of the education system, and to be understood by the public as such. Many submissions commented on the fact that policy makers and the media often focus on schools-based education at the expense of other parts of the system. Whilst this focus is understandable, submissions stressed the need for the National Education Service to be for everyone, and that equal weight and priority should be given to all parts of the education sector.

“The National Education Service should embody opportunities. Far too often when we think of education we think of schools. The NES should foster life skills so every individual has the potential to success in the 21st Century”

Hackney South & Shoreditch CLP

THE NATIONAL EDUCATION SERVICE CHARTER

This year one of Labour’s proudest achievements, the NHS, celebrated its 70th birthday. Despite the challenges it faces the NHS continues to enjoy unwavering support among the public, which endures across different Governments and different generations. One of the main reasons for this is the British public’s commitment to its founding principles.

The development of the National Education Service is learning from the best parts of the NHS. At Labour Party Conference 2017 Angela Rayner launched a draft charter for the National Education Service, which outlined ten key principles. The National Education Service charter will underpin the development of all education policies in the lead up to the next manifesto and general election, so ensuring the principles reflect our shared values is crucial.

The consultation asked members to submit their views on the draft charter. The submissions and the discussions held by the Commission and members at NES Roadshow events demonstrated that there is unanimous agreement on the need for the NES to be guided by strong values and ethos. There was broad consensus and support for the charter, particularly with regards to ensuring education is available universally, as well as the principle of ensuring education is free at the point of use.

“All members of the Education group warmly welcomed this manifesto and thought it a sound and inspiring document on which to build.”

Canterbury Labour Education Group

“Unite is also supportive of the principles spelt out within the NES charter, particularly those around universality, life-long learning and valuing staff.”

Unite

“We see significant resonance between the proposed NES principles set out in the National Education Service ‘charter’ and our co-operative values. This is something we clearly welcome.”

Co-operative Education

Lifelong Learning

Many of the submissions and discussions in the Commission meetings focused on the importance of lifelong learning, and there was universal agreement that this is a vital and often overlooked part of the education system.

“The NES should be designed to encourage and support more adults to improve and update their skills and to retrain over their working lives. It should also encourage more adults to engage in informal learning opportunities, and to help and support people to progress from there into formal learning that can help them progress in work”

The Open University

“CWU believes that the National Education Service can and should be the harbinger of a learning society, where every individual is encouraged and supported to develop the skills and knowledge they possess – and where they are given the opportunity to use those skills for the betterment of our society.”

CWU

Lifelong learning has been deprioritised by the Conservative Government, which lacks any kind of considered or cohesive strategy for the future of adult education. Submissions highlighted that the number of adults accessing education is in sharp decline. Since changes to the student funding system in England in 2012/13, the number of adults aged 21 and over accessing higher education has fallen by 42 per cent. As such, submissions were pleased to see the principle of lifelong learning enshrined in the charter.

Some submissions stressed that lifelong learning takes place in environments not typically associated with education and there was agreement that the reference to other forms of learning outside of educational institutions in the draft charter is important.

“Value and reward the work of the adult and community sector in reaching adults whom traditional providers find hard to engage. There are thousands of hyperlocal community organisations who play a role in adult learning which is rarely seen or acknowledged by policy-makers... Online Centres are found in community centres, public libraries, village halls, places of worship (churches, mosques, synagogues and temples), cafes, social housing, mobile buses, pubs and much more.”

Good Things Foundation

Different forms of learning

Many submissions highlighted the need to recognise the difference between formal, informal and non-formal learning within the National Education Service. This was particularly pertinent when the Commission heard from Anntoinette Bramble, the Deputy Mayor of Hackney, on the issue of youth services.

Anntoinette discussed the impact of youth services on young people and how this interplays with education. Anntoinette told the Commission that the non-formal education and support young people receive whilst accessing youth services in Hackney means they have seen a reduction in the number of young people entering the formal youth justice system. At the time of writing, the Labour Party are consulting on a statutory youth service.

“We need clarity that education does not simply equate to schooling, and any National Education Service must include provision for informal education (including youth work) with young people outside of formal education”

Tania, London

Early years

Submissions also emphasised the vital importance of early years and welcomed the consultation’s focus on improving the quality of early years education.

Submissions received through the consultation demonstrated the vital importance of early years. The Sutton Trust told us that the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged counterparts is already evident when children begin school aged five, with a gap between them the equivalent of 4.3 months of learning. This gap more than doubles to 9.5 months at the end of primary school, and then more than doubles again to 19.3 months at the end of secondary school.

The volume of submissions received on early years led the Commission to invite Natalie Macdonald from Institute of Education to give evidence on Flying Start in Wales. Natalie told the Commission that a key element of Flying Start provision is the early years workforce. As such, Social Care Wales (SCW) set a minimum level of qualifications for Flying Start practitioners and managers which is above the minimum qualifications set out for day care, childminders and sessional care.

This is in line with many of the submissions received by individual members and CLPs. Members highlighted the need for early years education to be provided by skilled professionals. There is broad agreement that the party needs to focus on improving the quality of early years provision.

“The main priority should be around improving the quality/status of early years teaching – the first three/four years of any child can be crucial to their life chances.”

Blackpool South CLP

The relationship between health and education

Submissions also highlighted the vital importance of the relationship between health and education, and welcomed the focus in the draft charter on the National Education Service working alongside health. Some submissions suggested the principle should be expanded in the charter to recognise the interrelationship between health, education and social care.

Staff within the National Education Service

Members were in agreement that the principles of the National Education Service should explicitly reference staff within the charter. The submissions and discussions had throughout the year underlined that the status of staff within the education profession has been consistently undermined by the Conservative Government.

“GMB welcomes the draft charter. We specifically welcome the commitment in principle 9 that support staff ‘will be valued as highly-skilled professionals’ under the National Education Service.”

GMB

“We welcome the NES principles that set out to value school staff as highly skilled professionals, who should be allowed to exercise their judgment and creativity, based on a sound evidence base, and the intention to have regard for their wellbeing.”

National Association of Head Teachers

Whilst recognising the vital importance of educators and the teaching profession, submissions also made clear that there is a need for consistency in the charter, and it is important to ensure every principle refers to all staff that work in education, not just educators.

“While we welcome a focus on the well-being of students and educators, we believe it is particularly incumbent on the Labour Party to have a principle around the working conditions of all staff - not just academics and educators, and not just education related staff.”

National Union of Students

Academic and vocational education

There was significant agreement in the submissions and discussions of the Commission that there should be more parity between academic and vocational learning, and members were pleased to see this referenced in the charter.

“Those who do not choose the academic route should have ready access to practical skills training, technical and engineering skills and apprenticeships. The FE sector should be recognised for its expertise in this work and properly funded to deliver these programmes to enable a skills escalator to flourish.”

Amin, Greater London

“Vocational education should be more highly esteemed; skills are transferable and valuable to employers. Proper apprenticeships that employers value for the skills they give rather than the opportunities for low pay they provide need to be re-established.”

Rochford & Southend East CLP

The Commission know it is critically important for the National Education Service to address the public perception of technical and vocational education. The Open University told us that the UK suffers from a significant productivity gap that is in a large part driven by a skills gap where many people lack the basic, intermediate and advanced technical skills needed. The Commission believes this is partly due to the perception of technical education in society.

Many members and third sector organisations suggested that improving careers information, advice and guidance and embedding this within the National Education Service could help to improve the status of vocational education and learning. The Career Development Institute told

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the Commission that the Conservative Government has overseen the dismantling of the career guidance service for young people.

“Continuing access to support for developing career management skills, and to career guidance, should be available throughout adult and working life.”

Career Development Institute

Submissions also stressed that whilst it is necessary for the National Education Service to address the status of technical education, it is important to recognise that educational institutions are not linear and that many modern universities provide what is considered ‘vocational’ learning and many further education providers provide ‘academic’ learning.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

The issue of children and adults with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) was consistently mentioned in the submissions received, as well as the discussions the Commission held throughout the year. As part of the consultation Emma Lewell-Buck also held a roundtable with sector experts on the issue of SEND within the NES.

We heard a clear call in the contributions to the consultation that there needs to be an explicit reference to children and adults with SEND in the charter.

“The Labour Party has an opportunity to create a National Education Service that meets the needs of all children and young people, including children who are autistic or who have other types of special educational needs or disabilities, and enables them to thrive and succeed”

National Autistic Society

“The National Education Service should give SEND learners the same level of priority that is afforded to those who are socio-economically disadvantaged, this will ensure that schools prioritise the outcomes of SEND.”

Driver Youth Trust

Many submissions also stressed the need for the Party to continue building on its 2017 manifesto pledge to create an inclusive education system, and so the Commission invited Richard Rieser, Micheline Mason and Navin Kikabhaio to come and give evidence on the issue of inclusion within the National Education Service.

The crisis in SEND, and the need for the NES to address it, was a consistent feature of submissions and discussions of the Commission this year, with many referencing the cuts to high needs funding. The Commission believes that the children, young people and adults with special education needs and disabilities are being failed by the current Government. The Government’s own figures show that over 4,000 children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or a Statement have no educational provision and are not in school at all. This figure has increased by more than five times over the last five years.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE NES

The National Education Services provides an opportunity to bring radical change to the way education is currently delivered and perceived in England. However, it is clear from the submissions that there are a number of issues that the Commission will need to consider and address as our policies develop over the coming years.

A frequent concern highlighted by members was how a Labour Government will address the funding crisis that is facing the education sector. Indeed, the issue of funding, or lack thereof, has formed a central part of the Commission’s discussions this year, as well being consistently highlighted in the written and verbal submissions.

“Essential investment made by previous Labour governments in our schools has been reversed under the Coalition and Conservative governments and massive real term funding cuts to education are damaging the ability of schools to deliver effective education”

South East Cornwall CLP

The Commission understands why funding featured so heavily in submissions.

Over the past eight years Government has cut funding for almost every area of the education sector and this is having a detrimental impact on the education of children and adults in England.

In Early Years, young children and families are missing out on the ability to access life changing opportunities as over 1000 Sure Start centres have closed since 2010.

In schools we have seen evidence that shows budget cuts are placing an intolerable pressure on teachers' ability to provide a high quality education to every child, and schools have been clear that the funding pressures are leading to cuts to support staff and teachers, as well as rising class sizes.

In further education, funding per student is at similar level in real terms to 30 years ago meaning many colleges and providers are struggling to provide young people and adults the skills and qualifications they need.

Labour has been clear that we will provide the education system with the investment it needs. Though, as submissions emphasised, the serious financial challenges facing the sector now will impact the education system Labour inherits and so the development of the NES will need to give this due consideration.

Devolution

Another consideration frequently raised by the submissions was the impact of local and national devolution on the NES. Many submissions underlined the devolved nature of education in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and the impact this will have on how the NES operates. The success of the National Education Service is dependent on working with our devolved counterparts, as well as working with local authorities. This is something the Commission will consider in more detail as the National Education Service develops.

"A future Labour government would also need to be aware of the interconnected nature of education systems in the context of devolution. This is particularly true for higher education, where changes to funding arrangements in England have

significant effects in other nations, particularly Wales and Northern Ireland. Any future Labour government should therefore work with its devolved counterparts in implementing its National Education Service."

Universities UK

Teacher recruitment and retention

Another issue that featured heavily in the submissions and NES Roadshow event discussions was the challenge of teacher recruitment and retention. Members frequently highlighted that the teaching profession is being undermined by the Conservatives, which is causing thousands of teachers to leave the profession and making it much harder for Heads to recruit them.

"Labour must address urgent issues around the professional needs of teachers and head teachers: workload, unreasonable levels of accountability, punitive inspection, recruitment and retention."

Stone CLP

"Teachers need to be held in esteem, treated with respect and recognised for their commitment and dedication."

Montgomeryshire CLP

Earlier this year, the Public Accounts Committee released a damning report about the Government's failures in teacher recruitment and retention. The report stated that the Department for Education has "failed to get a grip on teacher retention", as well as highlighting that workload is a significant barrier to teacher retention with classroom teachers working 54.4 hours on average a week.

The evidence given by NEU and UCU, as well as many submissions, suggested that the teaching recruitment and retention crisis is being exacerbated by the current models of testing and assessment, the competitive nature of the education system and the current Ofsted model.

"There is currently too much emphasis on testing, targets and league tables."

Rochford and Southend East CLP

Early Years, Education and Skills

“Ofsted has to be more supportive of schools before and after inspections and become more of a supportive, community organisation.”

Shipley CLP

We recognise this issue must be addressed as staff are a vital part of our education system. Labour believe that the world's most successful education systems use more continuous assessment which avoids 'teaching for the test', which is why we are committed to removing baseline assessments in primary schools and will launch a commission to look into curriculum and assessment. We will also reintroduce the Schools Support Staff Negotiating Body and national pay settlements for teachers to ensure our education staff get the pay they deserve.

We have heard concerns that the current inspection framework is not fit for purpose and this is something the Commission will look to address as we build a policy platform ahead of the next General Election.

Accountability

The accountability of education institutions within the National Education Service weighed heavily in submissions. Many highlighted considerable concern about the lack of local accountability in academies, Multi-Academy Trusts and Free Schools.

“All institutions should have governance arrangements that represent parents (where appropriate), students, staff and the wider community.”

Socialist Education Association

The accountability of these schools is a growing concern in Parliament too. This year the Chair of the Education Select Committee wrote to Lord Agnew, the Minister for Academies, explaining the Education Select Committee's concerns with Multi Academy Trusts. The letter argued that 'parents, staff and students are in the dark over who is running their schools' and that 'decisions are being taken behind closed doors.' This followed the collapse of Wakefield City Academies in 2017,

which was accused of transferring millions of pounds into its own account before collapsing.

Members also told the Commission they are concerned about the lack of parental voice in academies, highlighting that they were originally meant to be parent-centred but now only 15 per cent of them are. They drew attention to the excessive pay some CEOs in Multi Academy Trusts receive and suggested this is something the National Education Service would need to consider.

A large proportion of submissions reiterated that many parts of the education system are already accountable to their local communities and that there are lessons that can be learned from these sectors. This was particularly apparent in submissions from organisations that work in and represent further education and adult education.

“Adult education providers are firmly rooted in local communities and both student profile and governance structures tend to reflect this. We recognise that the education system as a whole could do more to be transparent and accessible to the whole community – through the use of school and college facilities for example.”

Institutes for Adult Learning

“For the last 25 years, colleges have been funded by and accountable to national government, but they have always worked closely with local councils at all levels.”

Association of Colleges

Labour is clear that all education institutions that receive funding within the NES will be transparent and accountable to the public, communities, parents and children that it serves. Though it is apparent from the submissions and discussions this year that there is more for the Commission to do. As we build our policy platform ahead of the next General Election, ensuring the local accountability of education institutions within the National Education Service is something that will need addressing.

Other issues

Alternative Provision

The quality of alternative provision for those not in mainstream school is a growing concern for many in England. The Commission heard evidence from Kiran Gill, who highlighted that both official and unofficial exclusion rates are rising under the Tory Government, with 40 pupils excluded each day.

In July the Education Select Committee published their report "Forgotten children: alternative provision and the scandal of ever increasing exclusions", which found that the number of permanent exclusions has risen by 40 per cent in the past three years.

The Commission believes that the issue of alternative provision is a topic that needs further consideration in order to ensure that the most vulnerable are able to access the high quality education they deserve. Labour must continue to put pressure on the Government to properly address the issue and hold them to account in the coming months.

Grammar Schools

Despite their U-turn during the General Election, earlier this year the Government announced plans to invest £50 million a year to allow existing grammar schools to expand, either by providing more places or by building new annexes or satellite campuses. Since the announcement it has been revealed that one in five grammar schools have applied for this funding.

In June, the organisation Comprehensive Futures found that since 2016 grammar schools have been awarded £52.6 million from the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) to help them expand. This almost matched the amount awarded to non-selective secondary schools, which received £52.8 million, even though there are 163 selective schools but more than 3,200 comprehensives. This works out at roughly £323,000 per grammar school and £16,500 per comprehensive.

While the Schools Minister, Nick Gibb MP, confirmed in July that grammar schools will no longer be able to use the CIF to expand pupil numbers, it is clear that in the last two years grammar schools have received disproportionate amounts of Government funding.

The Labour Party has been clear in its opposition to this policy. It is completely unjustifiable that the Conservatives are investing so heavily in grammar schools, whilst thousands of maintained schools are facing cuts to their schools budgets.

We know that the Government's continued obsession with grammar schools will do nothing for the vast majority of children and it is absurd for Ministers to push ahead with plans to expand them when the evidence is clear they do nothing to improve social mobility. The Commission will watch this issue as it develops over the coming months and will continue to oppose it unequivocally.

Access to Higher Education

The accessibility of higher education has dominated discussions surrounding HE this year. In June it was revealed that six of Cambridge's 29 undergraduate colleges admitted fewer than ten black British students in five years, whilst the proportion of black UK students admitted to Oxford last year was less than two per cent.

While it is vital elite institutions like Oxford and Cambridge are subjected to scrutiny, the Commission know that the accessibility of higher education to BAME students, working class students, disabled students and other marginalised groups is a problem that expands beyond these two institutions.

The Labour Party are committed to ensuring that higher education is accessible to all which is why the 2017 manifesto committed to abolishing tuition fees in higher education and restoring maintenance grants. The Commission will continue to put pressure on the Government to address the inequalities that pervade the higher education system.

Young people not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs)

In June, provisional participation figures from the Department for Education showed that the proportion of 16 year olds not in education, employment or training had risen for the first time since the end of 2011, and for the first time since the Government raised the participation age to 18 in 2015.

The number of 16 year old NEETs increased by 20 per cent to 23,400.

Early Years, Education and Skills

The rise in the number of 16 year old NEETs is a concern for the Commission. However, we are aware that this is a multifactorial issue that extends into the work of many of the other policy commissions, including Economy, Business and Trade and Work, Pensions and Equality. Labour are committed to improving the opportunities for young people and we will continue to monitor the situation over the coming months to ensure that every young person has access to education, employment or training opportunities.

Brexit

The impact of Brexit on the education system, particularly with regards to skills and apprenticeships, is a concern for many and featured frequently in discussions and submissions this year. The Commission heard from UCU who highlighted in their evidence session that Brexit is already impacting on the education system, as the international standing of further and higher education is being undermined by the process.

The education sector will face significant challenges over the next few years as a result of Brexit. As negotiations continue and the NES develops, the Commission will keep a close eye on the implications Brexit will have on changes to workers' rights, as well as its impact on EU students, lecturers and teachers and EU funded programmes like Erasmus +.

Submissions

All submissions received by the Policy Commission are circulated to members ahead of the next meeting for consideration as part of our discussions on policy development. In 2017/18 the Early Years, Education and Skills Policy Commission has received and considered submissions on the following topics:

- Academy schools
- Access to Work
- Adult education
- A-Levels
- Apprenticeships
- Automation
- Child poverty
- Childcare
- Childcare
- Class sizes
- Closing the wealth gap
- Community ownership
- Comprehensive schools
- Curriculum
- Digital & IT Skills
- Disability equality
- Discrimination
- Diversity
- Early Years
- EMA
- Equality
- Exams
- Faith schools
- First aid
- Free schools
- Funding
- Funding Formula
- Further education
- GCSEs
- Graduate workforce
- Grammar schools
- Green economy
- Higher education
- Inclusive education
- Independent schools
- League tables
- Libraries
- Lifelong learning
- Local Government
- Mental health
- National Education Service
- Ofsted
- Poverty
- Primary schools
- Private School Charitable Status
- Public schools
- Religion
- Research and Development
- Rural communities
- School Admission Testing
- School systems
- Secondary schools
- SEND Policy
- Sexual health education
- Sixth form colleges
- Skills development
- Social media
- Student accommodation
- Sure Start
- Targets
- Teacher training
- Teachers
- Teaching assistants
- Technology and science
- Testing
- The Arts
- Tuition fees
- Universities
- Vocational education
- Work experience
- Young offenders
- Youth workers