

**Education Panel – 18 September 2014****Transcript of Item 6: School Places Update and  
the Provision of Support for Children with Special Needs**

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Let us get back to item 6. I have welcomed Frankie Sulke, the Executive Director for Children and Young People in the London Borough of Lewisham. Thank you for being with us and for being so helpful with the work we did last year and thank you for joining us again. Also welcome is Helen Jenner, who is the Corporate Director of Children's Services in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, and to say that we are all signed up fans of one of your head teachers, Bob Marsden, and do give him our regards.

This session one we will focus on school places in London, and we are looking at it as an update, then move on to a second session, and that this about the provision of support for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

Can I then open the questioning to both of you ladies? What is the current school places situation at primary and secondary school level? Where are the main hotspots where places are particularly tight?

**Helen Jenner (Corporate Director of Children's Services, LB Barking and Dagenham):** So there is, as you know, a massive demand for places and continuing school pressure. We will need, we think, an extra 133,000 places between 2013 and 2018; 112,000 of those in primary, but we will start to see the pressure coming through at secondary. So at least 20,000 by 2018 at secondary, but we think that that will increase dramatically. We have already created 47,000 places but there is going to be about another 87,000 needed by 2017/18.

The increase in primary places needed, we think, is going to be fairly stable over the next four years, about 22,500 needed every year, but there is some variability and movement between boroughs, so there are some boroughs experiencing quite a lot of in-year movement, and others less so. That is not always just at reception age; that is across the primary and secondary age range. We think that we needed about 1,700 places last year, we expect that we will need an extra 7,000 by 2017/18.

There are some hotspots, Croydon in particular have a very strong need, particularly in central Croydon. Hounslow needs about 1,400 places, in Newham, Manor Park needs about 1,373. There are slightly different issues in different boroughs for different reasons, but the pupil growth in all of our boroughs across London is higher than the England average, so every borough will experience shortfall in places. As I say, I have highlighted the places that are the most under pressure.

What we do know is that our borough-level predictions for the number of places we are going to need have turned out to be 98% accurate year-on-year, so we have predicted a set amount and we are within 2%. We are usually 2% over what we predicting, so it is not that we are over-predicting, if anything we are under-predicting, so that is quite accurate. That is with the help of London Councils and the information that we get from the Greater London Authority (GLA) projections as well, which is very helpful and which we can then put a local insider knowledge on top of to get that accuracy.

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** I wonder, Chair, whether, as this is an update session, you would find it useful for me to do a couple of minutes on what is the

same as when we came last year, what is different and exacerbated and what the needs are. Would you find that helpful or not?

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Yes, we would, except to say, can I just ask you Frankie; Helen has just given us that wide feel for London. Do you have anything to add to what she has just said?

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** No, but I think if I get to the category about what has changed and what is different you might get a sense of how the difficulties are being exacerbated, so what lies underneath the numbers. I do not know whether that is useful, but I just thought if I were in your position I might, because of your excellent report<sup>1</sup> that came out yesterday, want to discuss the “So what?” question that comes next.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Yes, that is fine, but if I could just ask Helen a question. In terms of what you have just said, does that factor in the places provided by the academy and free schools programme? That is what I am not clear about.

**Helen Jenner (Corporate Director of Children’s Services, LB Barking and Dagenham):** Yes it does. It includes all of the free schools and the academies. Going forward where we know, those projections, many of the new places will be in free schools or academies. The capacity that we have had for adding on to previous schools and putting in bulge classes will start to run out, because we have used up all the space. Particularly when we are looking at secondary schools in the future we will need new secondary schools and new primary schools, which will be academies or free schools.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Right, and so then it is critical that the provision of any new academy and free school is really matched up to where growth is?

**Helen Jenner (Corporate Director of Children’s Services, LB Barking and Dagenham):** Absolutely. Where we have had the opportunity -- so in my own borough, we have been really fortunate in that we have been able to work very closely with people who are interested in opening free schools about where the best places were. That has enabled us to work with them and we have got two, and hopefully soon three free schools, and those are situated exactly where we needed them. I think one of the things that some of my other colleagues are faced with is free schools being parachuted in without that quality of discussion about where the best places for them are, and that is really difficult. As the newspapers pointed out, one of the issues for our, particularly inner, London boroughs is that we cannot necessarily easily build where the density of families is. If you do not get that right you end up with families with very long journeys.

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** Just to add to that, there are also some boroughs, particularly in inner London - and Lewisham is one of them, where we have not been able to access the free school money, because the money for free schools is only for new schools. Because we do not have any land and, therefore, no flexibility to actually build new schools, we have been relying on expanding creatively - on the roof, up, down, sideways, grabbing little bits here and there. All of our expansion has had to be through expanding existing schools. I have managed to get one free school on the car park of an existing secondary school. We did try to get one on a Sainsbury’s car park at one time, but that did not go very well. So the issue around free school projects, there is a whole load of money that is tied up in the free school pot that a number of London boroughs cannot get their hands on because it is not coming through the Department for Education (DfE) grant that we need then to get the money. That is one of the issues about the shortfall.

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<sup>1</sup> *London Learners, London Lives*, London Assembly Education Panel, 16 September 2014:  
[www.london.gov.uk/mayor-assembly/london-assembly/publications/all-publications/london-learners-london-lives](http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor-assembly/london-assembly/publications/all-publications/london-learners-london-lives)

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Thank you. Then did you want to add anything else?

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** Very quickly. I was interested, because I came here last year, I dug out my notes and I thought, "Oh my goodness, this is all the same as what I discussed before. What is new?" Let me just quickly summarise what I think is the same.

What is the same is that we still have an extreme budget shortfall in London. Between 2011 and 2017 that shortfall is £1.86 billion. That is the number, that is the amount that boroughs have actually funded themselves because they could not get it out of the grant. In Lewisham alone that shortfall for primary is £27 million to 2017, and if you add in the secondary need it goes up to £53 million, so we still have a budget shortfall.

As we have already talked about, we still have the huge challenges of expanding in London, given that we have the lack of space and various other issues, which I will come to. Clearly part of those challenges is that we still have much higher costs than the rest of the country. We were given a London uplift in the formula last year, it was 3%. Our view is that that was insufficient. We are doing some work looking at out-of-London costs and in-London costs to try to get a better sense of what that uplift actually should be.

We still have, as I said last year, a need for more upfront funding, because actually if you are going to try to open a secondary school then you need to start at least four or five years earlier, and even if though we now get two-year funding it still does not give us that surety, and of course because it is not enough that is still a problem.

The other thing that has not changed is the magnificent response that London has made, in the fact that our children are still all getting a school place by hook or by crook. Helen and I jointly lead on this for London and we hold a half-termly meeting of all the London places planning people and they are an extraordinarily creative bunch. I think they are probably our favourite kind of network, they are amazing. Finally what has not changed, as part of the funding shortfall, is the grant that is given to us by the Government has only covered, in London, 52% of what is required; so 48% of what has been spent has come from precious other resources within local authorities, which of course has then meant that other things cannot happen in local authorities.

**Andrew Boff AM:** On 48% of what figure are we talking about?

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** So 48% of the amount that has actually been spent, which is --

**Andrew Boff AM:** Spent on?

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** On creating new places.

**Andrew Boff AM:** On creating new places. Sorry, I misunderstood that.

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** It is about £3.86 billion that has been spent overall. Only £2 billion of that has come through grant and £1.86 billion has come from the boroughs themselves.

What is different, what is new, is that – incredibly! – our children are getting older and we are all looking at them getting bigger and bigger. The first real bulge started coming through in 2008 and they are going to be secondary aged in 2016, but we are OK for that, we have enough around. 2017 is when we are going to start seeing the pinch and there is not going to be a single London borough that is not massively underprovided in

secondary provision in 2018, and that presents the new challenges that are facing us around expanding secondary schools, which are very different from expanding primary schools, you cannot just put on another bulge class. They are much more expensive to build and of course they have greater costs. The bit that I think gets us to lose a bit of sleep is also around the costs and ability to acquire land, and that is not covered in terms of some of the basic needs grant.

The second thing that has become much more acute since last year, and it links with the rest of your agenda today, is around our SEN children, because that costs more whether it is in mainstream or if we need new special schools. I think all of us are now at the point where we are trying to open new special schools as well because of the growth in population for those children.

The thing that has particularly exercised us this year is that the changes to the funding formula that the DfE and the Education Funding Agency (EFA) made, have disadvantaged London significantly. Even from last year, where we had a shortfall, we have now a less fair funding formula, in our view, and the actual fall has been exacerbated considerably.

The other thing that is different this year is that the market has hardened and, therefore, delivery --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** What do you mean 'market'?

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** Sorry, the building market has hardened.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Property.

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** So delivery has become harder, because when we started there were loads of construction companies who were desperate for work and we had the pick and we could drive costs down. Now, they are being used to build houses, quite rightly, for our housing shortage, and it is harder to get that leverage over the market. Of course that goes to the costs and other things. Also our whole financial situation is, "Well, who knows what will happen tonight?" as we move towards the general elections, as well we are moving towards a Comprehensive Spending Review and, therefore, the financial position is obviously much less stable.

That is what has stayed the same and what is different and I am happy to summarise later perhaps what it is, therefore, that we think we actually need.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Just to get the drilldown with some of those figures, you are going on about a Lewisham budget shortfall of £53 million, is that the figure that you are using?

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** Yes, for Lewisham the primary budget shortfall for 2017 is £27 million. If you put the need for the secondary schools on top of that it goes up to £53 million.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Right.

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** That is what we have not got, because we do not know what our grant will be in December.

**Andrew Boff AM:** On what you have budgeted that you wanted to spend you only have resources of that minus £53 million?

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** Yes, I would put 'need' as opposed to 'want', but yes. What we need to spend to do the expansions, yes.

**Andrew Boff AM:** This what I am trying to understand is whether or not this budget figure is something that has been come up with, so it could vary from borough to borough.

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** Definitely.

**Andrew Boff AM:** The way in which the budgets have been created varies from borough to borough. For example, if you wanted in Lewisham to buy lots of computers with some revenue or something, then the budget shortfall would be greater.

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** I think the budget shortfall is the same. I think how you then need to, and what else you cannot do -- the numbers will be different borough to borough of course and different boroughs have taken different approaches, particularly to borrowing. There are some boroughs that have done less borrowing than others and tried to live within the grant, and those boroughs have got more what we would call bulge classes, so partial expansions of schools. A school that has an extra class started in reception, has worked its way up, it is about to go off to secondary school, then you can reuse that room, so that bulge class.

**Andrew Boff AM:** One of the things that would be fascinating for us, I think, is to see a budget per pupil for each of the local authorities, so what each borough has budgeted per pupil, because that will give us more of an idea. Otherwise it is quite variable depending on which borough you are in.

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** What we have is a sense, and we are doing more work on this and our London colleagues are supporting us to really look across London at the costs per place for pupils and we have those numbers.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Great.

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** Of course it very much depends on whether you are saying, "Right, you can't have a computer room anymore" or, "a music room anymore" and that becomes a classroom in a primary school, which is pretty cheap; or whether you are doing a permanent remodelling, which is at the other end and very, very expensive. To give you an example on the Lewisham figures, our cost - because obviously it is very difficult within the kind of constrictions that we have, for a permanent place - the average costs, if you are permanently remodelling, is around £20 million, whereas for a more temporary cost is more between about £12 million and £15 million. Those costs do vary borough from borough depending on how much land a borough has, how easy it is, and there are variances with whether you are putting in a modular approach or whether you are doing it differently, so there are all sorts of areas of cost.

What we also know is that up until last year, if you see what those costs are, in the grant that we received we only got £6,000 per pupil per place when we needed the kind of figures that I was talking about. It has gone up this year and that is to be welcomed, it is still not enough for London.

**Helen Jenner (Corporate Director of Children's Services, LB Barking and Dagenham):** I think one of the things that we found is that as the costs are going up, that has driven us into less choice about structures, so we can only afford to use the modular structure. There is nothing wrong with the modular structure, but there is a knock-on impact of that, in terms of how inclusive schools can be and the sorts of spaces that you would create if you had more pupils with SEN, for example.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Sorry, what do you mean 'modular structure'?

**Helen Jenner (Corporate Director of Children's Services, LB Barking and Dagenham):** Modular structure is kind of like concrete blocks come in and are deposited in a set structure created at a factory.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Modern prefabs.

**Helen Jenner (Corporate Director of Children's Services, LB Barking and Dagenham):** They are better than old Portakabins, but they are not bricks and mortar and you have only a limited range of ways in which they can be designed.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Flat roofs leak after two years, yes? That kind of thing?

**Helen Jenner (Corporate Director of Children's Services, LB Barking and Dagenham):** That kind of risk, yes.

**Darren Johnson AM:** In terms of the 45,000 extra places that were created over the past five years, could you just say a little bit more about how that was achieved and also why it is going to be more difficult to achieve similar in future years?

**Helen Jenner (Corporate Director of Children's Services, LB Barking and Dagenham):** One of the things that has really been crucial is the good-willed nature of our heads and our governing bodies. These places have been created, many of them, through great levels of creativity, expanding existing schools, through building new schools, through creating partial development. In some cases we have added on single classes, rather than building the whole school, because it takes two years to build a whole school and you need to deal with the problem now.

We have converted spare rooms into classrooms. In my own borough we have converted our adult college into a school, we converted our teaching centre into a school. We have gone and found land which was contaminated land and we have got that cleaned up and built a school there. You heard Frankie describing the fact that they are thinking about whether they can persuade other schools to let their car parks be used. A number of boroughs -- Tower Hamlets have built a school, and they have been able to afford it on the back of having flats above it. People are being very creative. The trouble is that the scope for creativity is running out.

**Darren Johnson AM:** There are less tools now; as Frankie was saying the money is not available for brand new build as opposed to expansion?

**Helen Jenner (Corporate Director of Children's Services, LB Barking and Dagenham):** I think most of us have used up all our spare capacity. We have mostly used up our spare building space, if we had any. Some places did not have any in the first place. We have certainly used up our goodwill with our local authority schools. A number of our free schools and academies are very happy to work with us but, understandably, when they open a school they want to open that from the bottom up, so they want to open with reception and then wait to take in year one and then wait to take in year two. I have a new free school in my own borough, lovely free school, great relationship with them, but actually where we have additional pressure in year one and year two, the free school is not as willing to be flexible about taking that on, whereas if it was a local authority school, in the end --

**Darren Johnson AM:** That is not directly addressing the shortage in the most appropriate way then?

**Helen Jenner (Corporate Director of Children's Services, LB Barking and Dagenham):** No. I think local authorities can bring greater persuasion to bear on their own schools than other schools. That said, I have described that there are some very good relationships going on. If I was the head teacher of any school I would rather grow my school and not have children coming in at different ages, it is not brilliant for the children either.

**Darren Johnson AM:** Are we setting ourselves up with an impossible task now to try to repeat that?

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** Yes, I mean that is why I keep using this word - which Darren, you will know from Lewisham I do not think you ever heard me use before - which is 'magnificent' in terms of how the creativity has been used. I think the big challenges that face us are around the secondary expansion: how we meet the numbers, because finding a little spot here and there to put in an additional primary class room has been challenging but also you can bring a lot of creativity to it. I think finding a site for a secondary school you are then talking about land massing, you know, maybe the local authority owns this bit, this bit and this bit and there has to be compulsory purchase orders on that bit, however long will that take. If you do all of that, how do we then do the free school when we do not know whether that policy will continue. There is a lot of uncertainty around how we are going to get our secondaries built.

To expand a secondary school in the same kind of way as putting a bulge class in primary to say, "OK this year you will have a three form entry and then the rest of the school is a two form entry" that is much harder to do when you need to science labs, the design and technology facilities, the cooking facilities and all of that, in a secondary school. I think we are still at the nursery slopes about how we are doing that, and we are staying very closely together about how we can be creative about that. We are also going to have to get a lot better in the capital about working across borough boundaries around our secondary school planning.

Where Helen comes from in the east of London they have a very long tradition of working together around that, which some of us in the rest of London have not yet got and we are building that capacity, working with London Councils. We are hoping also that the GLA's figures will support us in doing that cross-borough planning, because then we can pool money and try to get things which are available to others. I think the whole new world we are going into around secondary expansion is what makes it also a very complex picture going forward.

**Darren Johnson AM:** I can understand that. Are there any big new ideas on the horizon then for secondary expansion, or is it early days yet?

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** I thought I did quite well just then! They were my new ideas. I think the only other thing that I probably have not said in terms of the borough sharing is what Helen hinted at about getting cleverer, about how we join up things like housing and schools. If you have a site and you put housing on the top and a school on the bottom, or a school on the top in the thing and then a cinema and then a supermarket and then, you know -- but then of course you get into planning issues around what you can do were in terms of how creative you can be around a particular plot of land.

**Darren Johnson AM:** Presumably the local authority could get real leverage in the planning process in terms of building that in for major new development plans right from the start.

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** Yes, and of course that is something that local authorities can do, but of course local authorities also have the local planning frameworks, and the kind of development that I just talked about is not something that is going to be part of that framework and, therefore, has to be looked at.

I do think that at this point you then get to the issue, which I think we did raise last year with you, which is actually the population explosion in London - and this is mostly around the rise in birth rate - has to be looked at strategically across transport, schools, housing, health, it is not just a schools issue. Therefore, it needs that in-the-round kind of look, and local authorities of course are up for that.

**Darren Johnson AM:** It is clearly not just a housing issue either, although that is the first thing that people think of. Do you feel that local authorities are being joined up enough at the moment in terms of looking at all of the aspects of the growing population?

**Helen Jenner (Corporate Director of Children's Services, LB Barking and Dagenham):** I think it is a variable picture, and I think one of the things in the recommendations from the new [Education Panel] report that would be really very helpful is linking and getting that information about housing and transport, those links, pulled together with the schools planning.

In my own neck of the woods, across the east London boroughs, we do some of that work and Transport for London have been very happy to talk to us. We have not actually done business necessarily, but they have been happy to talk to us about the possibilities. I think there is a need for more of that work. Where people are going to have to travel to go to school you need to plan on bus routes, you cannot just send them somewhere where they are going to have to change the bus three times to get there. So, absolutely.

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** I would say though that I think these are issues that we have rehearsed with the Deputy Mayor [for Education and Culture, Munira Mirza] and also with officials in the GLA as well as elsewhere. I do not think any of these issues are new and I think they are very well engaged within that debate. In general, I think the answer to your question, Darren, is yes, I think local authorities are being creative, but I think that all of us are recognising that there is a lot more that we have to do.

**Darren Johnson AM:** That is very helpful, thank you.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** I just wanted to pursue this issue of secondary school places, because obviously the scale of building new secondary schools is very different, as you have outlined. How helpful have boroughs found working to try to release land from other government departments, where it is Ministry of Defence, National Health Service (NHS) land and so on?

I have been, with a self-interest, helping my local councillors who are campaigning for a new secondary school and trying to get NHS land released seems to be a mighty task, so I am wondering if that is a pattern across London and what representations London Councils are making to the appropriate Government Departments?

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** I think again the answer is patchy, Caroline. I think that everybody is talking about it. There is more scope in some boroughs to do that than others. We have had closure of fire stations, we have had all sorts of things and right now people think of everything as just land. You know, "What can we do? How many houses can we get on there? How many school places can we get on there?" So I think the whole culture and approach is now much more about that. Most London authorities do work very closely in partnership with the rest of the public sector. Not just outside the education sector, because there are further education colleges that will have land and let you do things. We are certainly talking to them about their asset strategy and the council's asset strategy. I think there is more and more of that happening, but I think we are too early in the stage. Ask us next year how that is going. It is on everybody's agenda.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Can I just follow that up and say I was doing some reading about the Swedish school model, and a lot of learning that we got about free school and academies came from there.



They would have had a population explosion similar to ours and there is not a shortage of land there, but is London Councils looking at other cities to see if there is any learning there?

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** I am not sure that Sweden did have that kind of population explosion, but that is just my view, so I would not want to answer for that. I think the population explosion in London, Chair, is extraordinary.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Uniquely London.

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** It is the increase in the birth rate, and do not forget there were two main things. A lot of people talk about inward migration, and that has certainly affected some London boroughs, particularly around Helen's in the east. For most of us we have always had high inward migration but it has not gone massively up. The two things that really impacted on us around 2008 was this massive rise in the birth rate, and the second thing was where families used to leave London when their children were under five, to go out and have their children then grow up outside where there are sheep, they do not do that anymore. They could not sell their houses in 2008 and also they did not have to because London schools were so good, so there was not the push factor. That has happened more and more.

Whether the current recovery is such that people will start to sell their houses again is above my pay grade, but it was those two things coming in a perfect storm that has given London its problem.

**Helen Jenner (Corporate Director of Children's Services, LB Barking and Dagenham):** I think the one place we have looked, certainly in east London, is to Barcelona, because some of those models around building on top of schools have come from Barcelona. The other place that I think certainly some of the free schools have looked to is the studio schools in New York, and looking at those sorts of models. In our borough, that has worked quite well for smaller alternative provisions, but it does not really work for whole schools because you need play space, well, I think you need play space for primary school children and secondary children. Those are the two places that I know we have discussed.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** If I can be clear, Frankie, I think the dynamic about growth in cities is more common across capital cities than we think. That is just like a world phenomenon. Maybe the countryside is not as green as it used to be.

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** I should go to Stockholm.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** I will come with you!

**Andrew Boff AM:** I am interested in what you are saying about data. You are right. Over the last ten years London has grown more than it has under any previous period. It is historically unprecedented, the growth in London. I am concerned that actually we have known this for ten years, since 2004, the birth rate increased in 2004 and yet the Government took out 200,000 primary school places. In 2007 we saw a 16% increase in the demand for school places and yet they carried on the programme of removing places.

I am really worried that we are trying to project into the future and we just seem to be making mistakes about what the requirement actually is. How confident are you that we actually have now got the data right? May I say, as personal information, when I was in Hillingdon [as Leader of the Council] I closed four secondary schools? Do you know what I mean? That was the data that was coming to us.

**Darren Johnson AM:** We all did it.

**Tony Arbour AM:** We all did it.

**Andrew Boff AM:** The data that was coming to us was saying, “You are going to have huge surplus places. It is really expensive, and the best thing for all the pupils concerned is to close a few secondary schools” and within a relatively short period of time we needed more places. How confident can we be on the projections now?

**Helen Jenner (Corporate Director of Children’s Services, LB Barking and Dagenham):** I think one of the things that we have got better at is the longer-term projections and the cycles. So the planning that goes into that if you have got more 30 to 39-year-olds, you are going to have fewer children being born than if you have got more 20 to 29-year-olds. That projection work that the NHS do is then fed into things like the GLA projections. Now when we are looking at projections we are looking in detail up to 2020, but we have projections information that goes right the way up to 2040, so I think you see cycles.

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** Yes, I would say two things. One to repeat what Helen said earlier, that if you look at our predictions now and compare that against actual kids pitching up - and I have to say 14 January is one of the most scary days of the year, that is the closing date for primary school applications - and we have a figure, this year it is 3,974, it is ingrained on my mind. I am standing over our admissions team saying, “How many have we got? How many have we got?” As Helen said, across London we have been 98% accurate with our primary school data.

In the very bad old days, the GLA data that we all used to use, or all used to not use, was massively over-egged. That led to quite a lot of people mistrusting that data. That was a long time ago. They have got much better. We do not just use the GLA data. We find it a very useful guide and a sense check but we also use a lot of local data around our planning and developments and try to think about what the child yield of every development will be and we do a lot of work around that. That has now got - in primary schools - to be a very sophisticated model.

Now of course we are looking at how the secondary numbers will work. We are obviously taking in to account the cross-borough movements, because there are far fewer cross-borough movements at primary. Mostly kids got to their local primary school, but in secondary there is much more movement across the capital, we have to take account to that. I think the systems are quite robust and I think that the work that London Councils are doing -- I should say I can hardly bear to talk about this, but Helen may want to say more, we are required by the DfE and the EFA to submit now every year our absolutely detailed projections. It is a very thick document that goes in. We have got all of that information that we can then look at and say, “Were we right? Where were we wrong? How did it go? Did some people get it more right than others?” We have all of that information. We take that, which is what London Councils bases all of its *Do the Maths*<sup>2</sup> publications and everything else on. That has been the really accurate more short-term, five-year type planning.

The GLA is trying to look broader, so that you get a strategic view going forward about what is happening to London. At the moment we really want to work together with the GLA to make sure that we are making best use of measuring two different things.

I think it is more of an art than a science, but - oh my goodness - we are so much better now than we used to be.

**Andrew Boff AM:** You would have to be really!

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<sup>2</sup> *Do the Maths 2014: London's school places challenge*, London Councils, 16 July 2014: <http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/policylobbying/children/publications/dothemaths2014.htm>

**Darren Johnson AM:** Damning with faint praise!

**Andrew Boff AM:** We do need to find out a little on what you think the Mayor is doing well. The Mayor has a programme, for example, of trying to find land for free schools. How successful do you think the Mayor has been in that endeavour?

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** Can I just leave the free schools out of there for a minute and just go back to the Mayor generally in terms of what has been done and some of the things you have raised in your report? First of all I think that we are working very closely with GLA in order, as I said, to try to get the projections and to look at how we can work together. I think the thing that would be most helpful for us is if we can lobby jointly together. I do not think it helps if we are not absolutely at one, in terms of trying to get a fairer funding formula and more money. A formula that is based on realistic costs for London and real projection data, a formula that gives us money upfront so that we can build our secondary schools and sufficient money, including releasing the money in the free school pot, so that inner London boroughs can actually benefit from expansion.

I think the best thing that we can do is to go forward lobbying on those points. That will be more helpful than anything else to try to get money. A lot of the things we are talking about, we can be a creative as we like, we can build flats and cinemas and supermarkets on top of schools, we can do all of that stuff, but if we do not have the money to do it we cannot.

In terms of the other stuff on land and assets and free schools, I think I can only repeat what Helen said, which is we welcome all help to look at the assets to be able to find that land, but we do think, and we agree with you in what you have said in your report, that actually we should be planning strategically and we should be building our free schools in areas of greatest need. That should supersede any other kind of considerations. I think that the GLA and the Mayor actually understand that very well and I think that we are working together well on trying to tackle that, so I think that is where I am.

**Helen Jenner (Corporate Director of Children's Services, LB Barking and Dagenham):** The only thing I would add is joining with us in heightening the importance of SEN provision.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Which is what we are going on to. We are on the same page with you on that one.

**Andrew Boff AM:** I take what you say that there should be a joint effort on behalf of the Mayor and London Council educationalists to represent to the Government and to get London its just desserts. I do not think anybody would disagree with you. Is that consensus a little difficult when some councils have taken a rather ideological position with regard to free schools?

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** I am not sure that ideology does come into it in terms of free schools. I do not have the evidence that there are any councils that are saying, "No, we will not build schools for our children", particularly when it comes out of a separate pot. I think actually on the contrary people have been desperate to try to get the money out of the free school pot in order to make that happen, so I do not think I have any evidence of ideological stances against the free school moment.

Helen, you might, you are full of land. You have built some preschools.

**Andrew Boff AM:** You have got the lovely Riverside School, which I love.

**Helen Jenner (Corporate Director of Children's Services, LB Barking and Dagenham):** We have indeed.

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** Yes, I am so jealous.

**Helen Jenner (Corporate Director of Children's Services, LB Barking and Dagenham):** I am not aware of boroughs being completely opposed to free schools. I think the issue has been when free schools arrived without it being jointly planned. We are really fortunate in Barking and Dagenham that our free schools like Riverside have been jointly planned from the beginning, and where they are located has been discussed from the beginning.

A number of my colleagues in other boroughs, I know, feel that the school arrived and there was not that debate. I know there are debates like the Southwark debate around what was right and wrong, that is about there not having been sufficient early planning, not about a complete - as far as I am aware - objection.

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** There is one issue about free schools that does worry us significantly, and that is that there are a number of free schools in London, I am sure we can get you the exact number, where they get approval from the DfE and parents are then told it is opening, say in September 2014, we say, "Phew, that is 60 places we do not have to find, goodo!" and they do not have a site, they do not open and in June or July the children are told, "Oh sorry, you do not have a school place". Those parents have then missed the boat in terms of the applications for other schools, and then they are allocated all over the place. That is a real problem. We are advising all of our colleagues not to bank on any free school opening, so to oversupply, if you like, so that we do not get parents in that position, because we do not think that is fair on them. That is a real issue for us on free schools.

**Helen Jenner (Corporate Director of Children's Services, LB Barking and Dagenham):** Just one other thing on the free schools, I think the criteria applied by the DfE has become much more rigorous than previously. Rightly, the DfE now do contact the local authorities and ask our opinion on the bidder, so there is a more rigorous role.

**Andrew Boff AM:** You talked about the free schools being where they are needed. Could you define the difference between where they are needed and where they are wanted? Where there is a demand for them and where education is –

**Darren Johnson AM:** There is a real actual numerical shortage, rather than a whim.

**Helen Jenner (Corporate Director of Children's Services, LB Barking and Dagenham):** For me, where they are needed would be defined by the shortage of places, where they are wanted would be about sometimes a lobbying group, and that is a different issue.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Yes. We got some letters earlier on, Andrew, from lead members where a school had landed in the wrong part of the borough, where the need was --

**Andrew Boff AM:** That is a subjective view, you see.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** No, it was based on their projections. It was about travel from home to school. I think it was some real issues there.

**Tom Copley AM:** You talked earlier about money being tied up for new schools and for free schools. Would you find it easier in terms of places if money was also available for you as a local authority to be able to establish where it was best spent?

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** If I am just a bit clear about it. We get basic needs grant every year. That is something we are very concerned about, the formula that has been used has been grossly unfair on London and we have lost out significantly and that has led to part of our shortfall. We can use that money to build new schools if we want to. They have to be academies or free schools but we could use that pot to open new schools. We are not restricted in how we spend that money. We are restricted in the kind of school we can do. The issue is that that free school pot, which is bigger than what we get for the basic needs grant, is not in our purview. We would have to really work to try to get that money. In a borough like Lewisham, were we do not have sites, we cannot get it, and we still have the needs in terms of places. It is a money issue about the pots, and what the solution would be is to actually have that free school pot money put through the basic grant so that we get the money that is right. To be honest, that is more important than what you then do with it. I do not mind being told I have to have a free school or an academy, I just want the money to be able to give our four-year-olds and our 11-year-olds the ability to go to school.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Just one last question. Frankie, can you just briefly tell us about this 75% rule?

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** Just briefly?

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** It is a bit like have you read the Maastricht Treaty? How important is the 75% rule to you?

**Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People, LB Lewisham):** Let me tell you. I am going to tell you two things about the formula - the first I think you will find very easy to understand - which hit a lot of London boroughs. If you are going to open a new school then you have your reception children in it. What the DfE said was that instead of just counting those, say, 60 kids, in two forms of entry, they said that you had actually done all 210 and they took it off your figures, even though those kids are older and do not exist. OK? That was the first thing they did that stuffed us.

The second thing that they did that stuffed us was the 75% rule, which really was unfair to London. What they did was that they introduced this rule to say, "We are going to assume that with the money we have given you for the places you said you needed, we are going to assume that you have already done 75% of what you said" from the last round of funding.

The reason why that was difficult for us is that they were only giving us £6,000 per place, and you have already heard me say that actually the cost was more than double that. For us, I will just speak for Lewisham, we did not have enough money to get everybody into school by creating permanent places for all of those, we had to do it through bulge classes just to get kids into a school. Then a bulge class does not exist the next year. So in essence, we have not made those 30. We have made it for that year but there is still the 30 places there for the next year.

Because our need was greater than the money they gave us, we were physically unable to meet, through no fault of our own, this 75% which was a completely arbitrary figure that was plucked from the air. It is made worse by the fact that last year they significantly increased the amount of money per place and they gave £15,000 per place. That meant they took off money, they gave it to us at £6,000 and they took it off at £15,000, so it was basically like losing two places. Of course those boroughs, nearly every London borough, whose need came early were much more disadvantaged than the local authorities up in the north, or wherever, whose need has just started to come through now, because they did not have any 75% to meet. It was grossly unfair to London and has led to his shortfall - part of the reason is the DfE just have not asked the Treasury for enough money and part of the reason is that the 75% has really disadvantaged London.

I hope I explained that. You all nodded in the way that I nod, when I do not know what anybody is talking about!

**Andrew Boff AM:** It is good of you to say it.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** We had read it ourselves in the briefing, and we are looking for these key positions, as you have both said, where we can all be on the same page and lobby together on behalf of Londoners. Thank you for explaining the recommendations that you can identify with. What we would hope is that our Mayor will identify with those recommendations as well, because just from the heat from the passion in here, this is an issue that affects us all, whether we are mums or dads, or grandpas or aunties or what-have-you.

Thank you very much for again working with us and your contribution today. I know that Helen is staying with us for our next session.

Whilst you make yourself comfortable and get yourself water and stuff like that, can I just make the first comment and say just looking at you, you just warm my heart, because one of my day job challenges is to ensure that we as an Assembly get diverse panels. In the first instance let us start with gender. I think this is a record line up, this is the first time for me where we have had eight witnesses and there has been seven women and one man. Thanks for that, that is lovely.

Tara, can I ask you to introduce yourself but before can I thank you for the conversations that you have had and your patience with us, because when you contacted us we had already got a remit, which was for all children and the crises that we found ourselves in with places. I know that you had a first conversation with Darren over a year ago and that we said we would be looking to put this session on. Thank you for contacting us and working with us and thank you for your patience. Can you introduce yourself?

**Tara Flood (Director, Alliance for Inclusive Education):** I am Tara Flood. I am a director at the Alliance for Inclusive Education. I will probably call it ALLFIE from this point; it keeps it short. We are an organisation based in London, but we have a national remit. We are run and controlled by disabled people and we campaign for disabled learners of all ages to be included in mainstream education.

**Lysanne Wilson (Director of Operations, YoungMinds):** I am Lysanne Wilson. I am the Director of Operations for YoungMinds. YoungMinds is the voice of young people's mental and emotional wellbeing. We have a national remit and we work as activity organisation, but also we have a parent helpline, a free and confidential helpline for parents to ring up and we work with young people who have mental and emotional wellbeing problems. We train them up to get their voices heard at all levels.

**Holly Morgan-Smith (Project Manager, SEND Reforms, LB Ealing):** Holly Morgan-Smith. I am the Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Reforms Project Manager at the London Borough of Ealing.

**Gary Redhead (Assistant Director - Schools, Planning and Resources, LB Ealing):** Gary Redhead. I am Assistant Director - Schools, Planning and Resources at the London Borough of Ealing.

**Gillian Bennell (Head of Special Services Planning, LB Wandsworth):** Gillian Bennell. I am the Head of Special Services Planning at the London Borough of Wandsworth.

**Helen Jenner (Corporate Director of Children's Services, LB Barking and Dagenham):** Helen Jenner. In my previous role, I was the Head of Inclusion and Access for the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

**Linda Jordan (Regional Coordinator, Preparing for Adulthood):** My name is Linda Jordan. I am currently working on a programme called Preparing for Adulthood, which is a DfE contract to support the implementation of the SEN reforms across the country as they apply to the 14 to 25 age group, but I have also got a number of other roles that are connected to SEN. I have got a daughter who is 32, who has been through the current system, and I was previously a Member of Newham Council and led the inclusive education policy through the 1980s and 1990s; Newham has the least number of children in the country in special schools.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Helen, can you set out for us how schools and local authorities have up to now sought to support children and young people with complex needs, and in addition to that, do academies and free schools support children with complex needs in exactly the same way as the local authority provision?

**Helen Jenner (Corporate Director of Children's Services, LB Barking and Dagenham):** I think I have to start by saying it is a variable picture, so some local authorities have a very strong inclusion policy. We know from the recent data that actually there has been less inclusion in recent years than previously, so a number of authorities - and Newham I think is probably a very strong example - have included children in mainstream schools as much as possible and have moved children into special schools only when that has been absolutely the right thing for that child. So that picture over the 1980s, the 1990s, the beginning of this century, was a picture of a journey towards including more of our children in mainstream provision, because after all, we need our children with SEN to grow into adults that are part of our community. That picture has always varied across different authorities.

I think one of the things that I am concerned about in terms of pupil place planning and the money for building schools is that actually, because money is tight, the quality of building schools to make sure that all mainstream schools address inclusive needs and SEND, there is less financial flexibility and so more people are going to say, "Let us look at a special school with additional monies" because it is not factored in properly to the building programme. I think it would also be true to say that there is great variability between academies and free schools and whether or not they include children. I think certainly many of us, as directors of children's services, are finding it increasingly difficult to challenge for children to be in mainstream schools when that is their parents' wish.

It has got harder, in my view. I am taking more decisions to the level of Secretary of State [for Education] more than I did previously. Certainly a number of my colleagues have talked about exclusions being higher from some academies - not all - and some free schools than they would expect, and I think the level of what I would call hidden exclusion - so not where children have actually been formally excluded, but where schools make it clear that they are an academic school, so might not be best placed to your child's needs - I would say is becoming more commonplace.

**Linda Jordan (Regional Coordinator, Preparing for Adulthood):** I think it is true that there are more children going to special schools now. Bit vague about that timescale, but in general it is true, and I think it is only partly about money. I think that the standards agenda has made it more difficult or it is perceived to be more difficult by quite a lot of schools to include children when we have moved away from mixed-ability teaching and a very open agenda for differentiated teaching and learning. I know that lots of families that I work with in my current job have said that they feel that their children in mainstream schools are less included because the curriculum has changed and is more hierarchical now. Children are often taught together if they have got low ability rather than previously there would have been much more inclusion with mixed-ability groups. I also think that more children with behaviour difficulties, which obviously include children with mental health needs, are finding it more difficult to maintain places in mainstream schools, partly because of resource issues where support services have been cut.

**Gary Redhead (Assistant Director - Schools, Planning and Resources, LB Ealing):** Just that in Ealing we have got quite good data on where children have been over a long period of time, and in 2009, for example, there were 600 children in mainstream settings that had a statement of SEN, and in 2013 there was 700, so the number has gone up. In our special schools, there was an increase from about 530 to 623, so proportionately there is probably more children going in, but in terms of actually raw numbers, the numbers are going up. One of our schools, 5% of its population has got children with statements, and those statements were not just issued in year 6, but they were children who had had statements much earlier. So I think some parents have been very good at using the legal framework to actually get inclusive places, but I am sure the picture is quite varied. I would agree that as a local authority, we are finding a greater reluctance because of the standards agenda for children, particularly children who present very challenging behavioural issues to schools, to get them to accept children or maintain them in those mainstream settings.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Just for clarification, is it true to say from what I have heard so far that if you then wanted to get some real strong data, somebody would have to go from borough to borough, because there is no pan-London monitoring facility?

**Gary Redhead (Assistant Director - Schools, Planning and Resources, LB Ealing):** The data exists nationally, yes.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** The data exists but it has just not been done, it is within boroughs?

**Linda Jordan (Regional Coordinator, Preparing for Adulthood):** No, it is available as a whole. The DfE have all of the data about the whole country, yes.

**Andrew Boff AM:** What you say is quite an accusation against heads and governing bodies, is it not?

**Helen Jenner (Corporate Director of Children's Services, LB Barking and Dagenham):** No. I actually said there is variability in local authorities and there is variability in schools and there is a variety of different reasons why that might be the case, so there are resources issues, you have also heard some of the reaction to the standards agenda, so I think it is a mixture of things going on.

**Andrew Boff AM:** I understand the reasons that those decisions may be taken, but fundamentally, the people who make those decisions about the access to schools and the nature of schools and the ability they have to cope with a range of abilities, is that decision not down to the heads and the governing bodies?

**Helen Jenner (Corporate Director of Children's Services, LB Barking and Dagenham):** Not just so. I do think that there are some heads where that is the issue, but also parents will feel very nervous about making choices as well, so I think parents are changing what they choose. I am not saying that there are not schools where there are issues - and I did make that clear, that there are some schools where there are issues - but there is a range of different factors and there is a range of different decision-makers as well.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Linda, your response to that?

**Linda Jordan (Regional Coordinator, Preparing for Adulthood):** I think the fundamental issue is that we have a bit of a muddle in terms of policy around where children with SEN should be educated, so in law, it is a parent's choice whether they choose a mainstream or a special school. That is a bit crude, but that is generally the law. However, if a family goes to a local school and the school is not welcoming, that choice is not a real choice. Some people will go beyond that and say, "I want my children to come to this school. I will use the legal framework to get that" but the majority feel, "I do not really want my child to go to a school where they are not wanted". What has happened is I think probably over the last 15 years there has been a lack of, what I would call, leadership in policy terms around what direction we should be going. As Helen said, from the 1981



[Education] Act, which came in in 1983, through the 1980s and 1990s, there was not really a nationally-led explicit policy for inclusion, but I think nationally there was an understanding that we were moving towards more inclusive schooling.

As I said earlier, I think the standards agenda came on and there was a sort of national silence around what we should be doing around educating children with special educational needs and disabilities, so for about 15 years, there has been a lack of, "What should we be doing?" and I think that the standards agenda has worked against more inclusion. Local authorities vary enormously. Some local authorities are still pursuing inclusive policies, some are not, so in some places a child with a particular disability will not get into their local schools, whereas exactly the same child in another authority would. It is extremely variable and it is about a local authority's policy and support and direction, and within that, individual schools.

**Andrew Boff AM:** OK, I understand. We have got to realise where the problem is occurring. It is not some bloke sitting in a desk in Whitehall that is determining this, it is the schools themselves, their own ethos and policies, which I understand - from what is being said - are excluding children from mainstream schools when they could be going there. I get what you are saying about the agenda. The trouble is would you not say that if you tried to set a national policy on inclusion, you are going to upset an awful lot of people? From years ago I know that parents would struggle for their kids not to go in a special school, and then when they were in a special school, they would struggle for them not to go into the mainstream school and then they would struggle for them not go back, because for each child, the needs can be substantially different.

**Linda Jordan (Regional Coordinator, Preparing for Adulthood):** I think our experience in Newham is that where a school is inclusive and the support and whole school ethos is in place, people do not choose special schools so often. I think the crux is, in law, people should have a choice and I think my point is that that that choice is not a real choice for a large number of families and children.

**Tara Flood (Director, Alliance for Inclusive Education):** I absolutely agree with the issue of choice. Choice is said to be something that parents just naturally have, do they not? The truth of it is, choice only happens if it is a choice that you accept as the option that is being offered to you. I did not say that very articulately, but you know the point I am making.

**Andrew Boff AM:** We know exactly what you mean.

**Tara Flood (Director, Alliance for Inclusive Education):** I really worry when parents think they have a choice and then when they present as wanting their young person included in a local mainstream school, that choice does not exist. The point I wanted to make though is I think it is impossible to say that it is head teachers making the decisions and that Whitehall has nothing to do with it, because head teachers are not operating in a vacuum. The point is, as competition increases between schools, particularly between academy chains, the opportunities to share good inclusive education practice has diminished. Now when I go to visit schools and colleges, when you see some really very good inclusive practice happening and I say, "Who else knows about this?" they say, "Where would I share this information?" and I think there is a real concern.

**Andrew Boff AM:** That is interesting, because we are forever told that within the boroughs that the schools are all sharing information, they are all talking to each other, exchanging good practice, but you are saying that is not happening?

**Tara Flood (Director, Alliance for Inclusive Education):** No. Where I think the real information is being shared - and where the power is - is between parents. I met an excellent group of parents yesterday from five different London boroughs, some of whom are represented here today, and what they rely on is that connection between parents in finding out where good inclusive schools are, where the good practice is happening, what sort of support they can get and how to get that. There is a real power within that because

those parents have felt that the system - I use that word broadly - is not providing them with the necessary support.

**Helen Jenner (Corporate Director of Children's Services, LB Barking and Dagenham):** If I may, I think the funding for the SEN parents' forums to get together and support each other has been absolutely fantastic. It has made a huge difference in our borough, that actually there is then some capacity for parents to do the networking and get people around the table and it has been very helpful then for us as a local authority to hear that collective voice, because people have got a better capacity to pull it together.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Can we just move on to some questions now about the Children's Act 2014? There may well be some other questions that we have to go back to, because I am just interested later on about the change in the cohort of children and their complexity and how that is changing and how that is being monitored.

**Tom Copley AM:** This is about the Children's Act 2014. How will the new legislation affect the way that support is provided and are schools ready for the change?

**Gillian Bennell (Head of Special Services Planning, LB Wandsworth):** I think that the key thing that will happen for parents, hopefully, is that the support will be much more holistic and they will be much more engaged at an individual - and hopefully strategic level as well - in determining their child's outcomes and how those outcomes are going to be achieved. Different boroughs are doing things very differently, but in Wandsworth, for example, we are trialling the education, health and care plans, we are having multi-agency meetings with parents, they are sitting in the room. In fact, for the trial, we have three multi-agency meetings. They are contributing to their child's plan, they are agreeing the outcomes and hopefully this will lead to a reduction in the confrontation that sometimes goes on when they feel left out of the process.

We are also trying to involve schools at an earlier stage. Under the old system, you named the school at the end and said, "This parent wants a place, and by the way, it is you". Now, where we can, we are trying to engage schools into that debate at the beginning so that we can start working out what support they need and what will happen. I think there is the potential there for huge change. It is a developmental process, it is not going to happen next week, but it will happen for some parents next week, and we will all be working towards it. In Wandsworth - and I am pretty certain this is happening in every other borough - we have been engaging very extensively with our special education needs coordinators (SENCO). They are very on board with the change and actually looking forward to it, I think. There is a lot more transparency for parents, a lot more information about the choices that they have got, the local offer.

**Tom Copley AM:** Again, the word 'choice', is it meaningful choice?

**Gillian Bennell (Head of Special Services Planning, LB Wandsworth):** Choice is always a difficult one to call. Parents do not have a choice if they do not know what there is, so the first thing that we are trying to do is tell them what there is. In theory, they could have found that out before, but it was more difficult, so the local offer. We will explain the range of support that is available and the options within the borough.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Is it choice or preference, because we know when we allocate these places, it never is parental choice, it is parental preference.

**Gillian Bennell (Head of Special Services Planning, LB Wandsworth):** In terms of whether it is mainstream or special - except in very restricted circumstances, and that is where placing a child in a mainstream school would affect the efficient education of other children - parents can say, "I want mainstream". It is very rare for a council to make that argument. In terms of the actual mainstream school, it is preference. We can name them, but the reality is, as everybody here has acknowledged, parents will not

choose a school -- they do not say, "I prefer this school that does not want my child" and schools have subtle ways - we all know this - of leading that debate. Other schools, the parent network will inform them are very inclusive, a child will have a good experience, more parents will go that school. In some respects, you would like to be able to push the agenda with the full range of schools, because I think once schools step outside their comfort zone and realise it is not that complex sometimes, they would be a lot happier. But you cannot force a parent to force a child to go to a school that has not been welcoming.

I think there is a real prospect for change here. I think parents are involved much more at a strategic level. They certainly are in Wandsworth, and I know that is being replicated elsewhere, but it is not going to happen immediately. I think you are right as well, there is this shift. Ten years ago we were talking really heavily about inclusion. I sat in some very difficult meetings where we were closing special schools. There is this shift now, even amongst parents, particularly with the very complex children, to look more to SEN and it would be nice to feel that this legislative change is going to shift that balance again.

**Holly Morgan-Smith (Project Manager, SEND Reforms, LB Ealing):** I would just echo what Gillian said in terms of the true partnership with parents, between the local authority and parents. Parents have to be partners from the beginning of the process with the new legislation. It is impossible to do it properly without that, and trying to break down all of that mystery that has existed so much has been a big challenge around things happening behind closed doors and faceless panels that make decisions about your family and your child or you as a young person. Parents will not be ready to accept that things are in true partnership this week. Some will, some will not; because the barrier-perceptions that have been put up over many years still exist, but I think starting to work much more closely with parents and much more openly has been only positive over the last few months in the start of SEN reforms.

In that though, there is quite an expectation on parents during the process of assessment, and during the process of review of provision for their children, in terms of what they are expected to know and what they are expected to provide. The role of independent supporters in the voluntary sector and agencies to help parents through that process is crucial, because you are putting a lot of expectation on those parents to be a partner in a process with many different professionals. It is a difficult role for parents, I think, in the new world, but a welcome one.

**Tom Copley AM:** What support are schools receiving from local authorities and from the DfE?

**Holly Morgan-Smith (Project Manager, SEND Reforms, LB Ealing):** Schools have been a key partner. There has been lots of training, but schools that feel that they are doing a very good job now and that children are progressing very well in their schools, for them it is business as usual, "We will continue to do a good job and we will continue to make sure our children progress and they are in right settings". As we talked about earlier on, there is a variable picture across schools, but if schools are doing a very good job, they should continue to do that and they will. I think that their view is that --

**Tom Copley AM:** But do you have schools that are not doing a very good job, but think they are doing a very good job? That surely is a problem.

**Holly Morgan-Smith (Project Manager, SEND Reforms, LB Ealing):** We have got to constantly monitor. In Ealing, our special schools are good at providing inclusive education, so we do not have those concerns at the moment, but the monitoring of progress and the monitoring of what interventions you are putting in place for children is key. Without that, you will never be able to tell whether, yes, it is just some person's say-so or the school looks lovely and parents are quite happy, but is actually what you are putting on and what you are doing for that child actually working and helping them progress towards kind of successful adulthood? So you have to monitor it and it will be a variable picture everywhere, I think, and it will change year to year. Staff come and go.

**Lysanne Wilson (Director of Operations, YoungMinds):** I would just like to focus a bit more on whether schools are ready for the changes around mental health, and by mental health I do not mean mental illness, I mean the whole spectrum of mental health and emotional wellbeing. I think it is always a “Cinderella” service in this situation, because for the first time mental health has been included in the reforms. I do not think schools know very much about it, I do not think there is any training for teachers in mental health or how to identify problems early or how to address those problems, certainly not in continuing professional development. We do a lot of training and a lot of teachers come on our courses just for that simple reason, so I think there is a real danger of mental health being lost in this process.

In terms of being able to get support, YoungMinds submitted a request under the Freedom of Information Act and it showed that of the people who responded, 60% of local authorities had actually cut what we call Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) tier 1 and tier 2, which is the early intervention, the stuff that goes into schools to support emotional wellbeing has been cut, so again, there is that problem. Then that comes back to choice and what support there is in schools and what choice do parents have around those children that might have all sorts of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), behavioural issues and children who are self-harming. We know from the Chief Medical Officer report and from all the facts and figures that we get through that mental health is decreasing in our children. I can give you the statistics in terms of increasing self-harm, increasing anxiety, depression, the risks; the impact of living in the 24/7 world is really impacting on our children and young people’s mental health.

**Tom Copley AM:** This is a particular challenge for --

**Lysanne Wilson (Director of Operations, YoungMinds):** I think it is a huge challenge for schools, yes, because they do not really understand, they are lost in terms of how to approach that. Many times, there is not the training and the support externally. Schools now have a role as commissioners, they are supposed to commission those sorts of services to support. It is a very new role for schools. How do they know what is out there? How do they know that the counselling service down the road is good quality, good standard, what standards are there, just how do they do that? I think it is a real problem for schools.

**Tom Copley AM:** Where could the support come from for schools?

**Lysanne Wilson (Director of Operations, YoungMinds):** I think it is about being able to understand the risk profile of their whole school and the vulnerable children and being able to get in there early. There are lots of organisations that can help them do that nationally as well as locally. I think it is about getting the school to be able to understand where their vulnerable children are, doing various audits, being able to understand the data, bringing together lots of different audits and information and having a whole school approach, so you are able to get in there early across the whole school and put in preventative confidence-building, resilience-building measures across the whole school. I think it is building the resilience of the whole school and the teachers to be able to cope with that.

**Helen Jenner (Corporate Director of Children’s Services, LB Barking and Dagenham):** One of the things that has changed is a few years ago there was a national programme around social and emotional aspects of learning and that was very helpful, I think, in helping schools --

**Tom Copley AM:** I am very keen on that, yes.

**Helen Jenner (Corporate Director of Children’s Services, LB Barking and Dagenham):** Right. That no longer has the same status as it used to have and I think that is unfortunate, because when schools are looking at their local offer, each school should be considering what they are offering and they should be able to say what they are offering as a universal resilience, prevention, what they are offering at the next level and how they are then linking into CAMHS. None of those three bits are resilient any longer.

**Tom Copley AM:** When did the emphasis come off that though, because I had not appreciated --

**Helen Jenner (Corporate Director of Children's Services, LB Barking and Dagenham):** Curriculum changes.

**Tom Copley AM:** Right, OK. I think that is a shame.

How will schools ensure that different partners are working together where there is joint working?

**Gillian Bennell (Head of Special Services Planning, LB Wandsworth):** I think that is something that is not just for schools to do. I mean, in terms of where they are locally, drawing in the resources that are available to them, yes, but in terms of the different partners, if you are looking at it across the council in terms of the engagement with health and the other agencies, that is something where the council has to take a strong role and work with them and draw the schools in. Where schools are beginning to act as commissioners, if they do that in partnership and with support from the council and with support from the Clinical Commissioning Groups and their commissioning teams, it will go a lot better than if you leave them just to think, "Oh, what shall I do? I do not like that, so I will go and try that lot down there". Where we have got schools, for example, who commission therapies, we tend to try to work with them so that they commission the therapists that they need through agencies that operate. I do not know if I am hitting the spot for you, but that is how I would see it, broadly.

**Tom Copley AM:** OK, so it is about local authorities essentially --

**Gillian Bennell (Head of Special Services Planning, LB Wandsworth):** And schools.

**Tom Copley AM:** -- and the schools working together?

**Gillian Bennell (Head of Special Services Planning, LB Wandsworth):** And the agencies in partnership with the parents.

**Linda Jordan (Regional Coordinator, Preparing for Adulthood):** The 2014 Act requires local authorities and the local NHS to jointly commission services for children with SEND. I think the understanding for what that means is fairly low level at the moment and that a lot of work needs to be done, and we are certainly supporting local authorities now to do this. Joint commissioning really requires strategic leadership from both the local authority, education and social care, children and adults with the NHS to look at all of the budgets - I suppose all of the element 3 budgets, all of the budgets available to support children with higher-level needs so that there is a local area view of all of those budgets and then think better about how to use them to support the best outcomes.

I mean, at the moment I think - and it is getting more important with less and less money - a lot of money is not used to best effect. The Institute of Education recently completed some longitudinal look at how schools use this to support children with learning assistance, for example. There is quite a lot of evidence that we are not always providing the right kind of support, so the joint commissioning requirement is a fantastic opportunity to build relationships and partnership strategically, which will be helpful to schools, so rather than having this sort of bun-fight about how does the school access CAMHS or how does the school access speech and language therapy, we should be working towards a situation where there is much more coherence in a local area about the level of resource available, who it is for, how you get it, much more clarity.

That is the combination of the local offer and the joint commissioning requirement at the strategic down to the school level. That is easy to say, but it is going to take quite a long time to embed, but at least we have got the opportunity. If I just add one thing, I think the reforms offer amazingly positive opportunities. The big bit

missing from the reforms is they are silent on inclusive education, and the new code of practice regurgitates the current legal framework around inclusion. It quite strongly sets out that inclusive education is a good thing, but there is nothing beyond that to say, "We expect more children to be able to be included".

**Tom Copley AM:** Is that what you would like to see behind it?

**Linda Jordan (Regional Coordinator, Preparing for Adulthood):** I think it is necessary, because the reforms have got a lot of very positive stuff and I think that in general it is a really good act. You have heard people talking about better partnerships with families, we have got much more requirement to involve young people themselves, listening to young people and acknowledge that at 16, people should be making their own decisions and so on. But if we continue with the kind of muddle around inclusion, that is not going to improve, so we can have much better partnerships for families, much better support, we can jointly commission services, but if we are not clear what our position is on inclusion, that aspect is not going to improve. So people can still choose.

The other thing that the code of practice does not go into enough - and I have spoken to DfE colleagues about this, and I think we do need to pick it up once we have got over the initial work - we need much more thinking about the quality of teaching and learning. We were talking earlier about the actual pedagogical issues, because I think that is something certainly when I was teaching in mainstream and special schools, there was a national expectation that teachers and other workers in schools would be having ongoing development around continuing to develop their skills to include children with different disabilities. That has very much changed. I think local authorities are still providing CPD for staff, but I do not get a sense from SENCOs - we have been meeting lots of SENCOs over the last couple of years - that they are really gaining skills to include children with more complex needs in the way that perhaps 15, 20 years ago we were. People are still scared. If a parent turns up with a child with quite complex needs, if they have not had a child with that level of need before or the school is not particularly inclusive, they are a bit scared because they do not really know and because local authority services have been cut, there may not be somebody to help them.

**Tom Copley AM:** Is it that the teachers are not getting the training or the training is not at the right level?

**Linda Jordan (Regional Coordinator, Preparing for Adulthood):** It is variable. Some local authorities are still running quite robust training programmes around SEN, but again, because of various pressures, they are not all, or it is quite minimal, so it is variable.

**Tom Copley AM:** So you are getting a very patchy framework?

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** I think what we need to flag up is that we will not be able perhaps to get full answer from all of you, but maybe what we can do is write out to you and then if you can then submit some written evidence, because as ever, we are limited with time, but this is such an important area.

**Tara Flood (Director, Alliance for Inclusive Education):** Just wanting to respond to everything, really, but the point is that we support a group of head teachers called the Heading for Inclusion Network, and they would say that the real issue with the training is that it focuses on SEND rather than, "What skills do I need to have inclusive teaching practice? What skills do I need as a teacher?" I think that is missing. I think what the code of practice has done, the new one has brought together the old code of practice and what was called the inclusive schooling guidance, but what the new code of practice has done has pretty much ignored the inclusive schooling guidance, because what was in that - although it was far from perfect - were some really clear examples of what inclusive education practice looks like, because I think that is what people need.

It also gave a clearer understanding for schools about the impact on the efficient education of other pupils, because I have to disagree with Gillian, I think it is not rare now for young people and families to be dissuaded

away from mainstream, it is on the increase. DfE's own statistics demonstrate that, and my worry is that as there is a mushrooming of new special academies, special free schools, mainstream schools will feel less inclined to support a more diverse range of learner in the classroom. Resource is a particular issue, but this idea of, "I do not need to worry about it, because someone over there will" I think is something that we have to really worry about. This is a country that has signed to the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which is obliging us as a system to build the capacity of mainstream schools so that inclusion does become a reality for a wider group. I worry that we are starting to shift back, because we are saying there is not enough money, there is not enough training, but there is a huge amount of practice out there, it is just not being valued, it is not being shared and teachers are not getting access to the right support.

**Holly Morgan-Smith (Project Manager, SEND Reforms, LB Ealing):** In relation to joint working, in Ealing, we have a quite well-established integrated service which includes health, social care and education for children with additional needs, so the structure is there, and our decision-making at joint funding panels, for example, is there, but that does not necessarily mean the cultural change is there automatically. There is still a way to go on both fronts, but I think if the structures are there, you are on the way, but it will take some time for the cultural change to catch up.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Do you think that the new changes will significantly reduce the complexity in processing times for those applying for help?

**Holly Morgan-Smith (Project Manager, SEND Reforms, LB Ealing):** In terms of the bureaucracy of the process particularly?

**Andrew Boff AM:** Yes.

**Holly Morgan-Smith (Project Manager, SEND Reforms, LB Ealing):** It should do, being more open and having more discussion rather than posting letters and asking for a response. There are still timescales, and the 20 weeks as opposed to 26 weeks is going to be quite challenging, because there is a lot to do in those 20 weeks. For example, in Ealing, you would expect to have three multi-agency meetings potentially with parents, if needed, during those 20 weeks, so it is a big challenge, but having face-to-face discussions and trying to record actions at those discussions, trying to avoid reams and reams of reports that are not necessarily as useful, for example. So trying to focus discussion and make decisions together should make it less bureaucratic, but it is not tested enough yet, I do not think, to say that it will definitely be so.

**Helen Jenner (Corporate Director of Children's Services, LB Barking and Dagenham):** Just three quick things, because I think that there is a risk as well around the resource, funding regimes for schools, and the fact that schools do not always understand how that funding works. There is something called the High Needs Block, which is what people think of as the SEN money. They think that if they take children into their schools with statements, then they will get High Needs Block. I think where children do not have education and healthcare plans any more, how schools will fund children with SEN, with additional educational needs that do not reach that threshold, is one of the reasons that puts schools off keeping them there. I think we have a risk that there is some potential perverse indicators there. The 20 weeks is good, because you want to move things through quickly, but there is a risk that in order to meet the 20 weeks, people short-change the richness of the discussions and the meetings that should be in place. I think these are things we have got to watch very carefully.

**Gary Redhead (Assistant Director - Schools, Planning and Resources, LB Ealing):** The new funding regime has meant that in Ealing we have had to put £350,000 aside to support those schools who have got a high proportion of children with statements of need, because otherwise the perverse thing would have happened: in meeting the first £6,000 of a child's statement, the more children with statements you have got, you did not necessarily have the funding through the funding formula to meet that need and that has been a big issue.

**Gillian Bennell (Head of Special Services Planning, LB Wandsworth):** It has been a really big issue for us as well and it has caused a lot of anxiety, particularly amongst those schools that were inclusive - or still are inclusive, actually, let us be clear - where they feel they are being unfairly penalised.

**Linda Jordan (Regional Coordinator, Preparing for Adulthood):** It pushes people to getting statements rather than changing the quality of their teaching.

**Darren Johnson AM:** Yes. I will start with Helen again, because in view of the discussion we were having earlier about the overall provision of places in London, we have currently over 140 special schools. Are local authorities looking at establishing more special schools within the overall increase in the number of places that are being planned or is the emphasis still more on mainstreaming?

**Helen Jenner (Corporate Director of Children's Services, LB Barking and Dagenham):** I think that the emphasis has shifted back towards more on special schools. It is variable in different places, but I think because there is not the money to design the kind of school building that really is inclusive, that is another factor in how hard it is to do, and then when you have free schools and academies --

**Darren Johnson AM:** The space issue that we talked about also, with schools losing specialist areas and so on and everything being turned over to basic classrooms, is that affecting --

**Helen Jenner (Corporate Director of Children's Services, LB Barking and Dagenham):** Absolutely. The DfE figures for the size of classrooms that they use for calculating what you need to do are building smaller classrooms again. Smaller classrooms make it harder to include a wheelchair user or a child who needs a safe space within the classroom to go to, so that does make it harder to include them in mainstream, in my view. Therefore, a number of places I think are looking to expand special schools, where if there were better funding, they could push inclusion in mainstream more.

**Darren Johnson AM:** Is that a view shared by our borough representatives from Wandsworth and Ealing?

**Gary Redhead (Assistant Director - Schools, Planning and Resources, LB Ealing):** In terms of in Ealing, we have expanded special schools, but on balance, I was just looking at the figures, it is about 50:50, so we have increased. We have increased some of our schools, we have actually got them to accept additionally-resourced provision, which does provide some extra spaces. Actually, it is essentially much cheaper for local authorities to do that. The cost per place is much cheaper, because they are doing it as part of a bigger scheme. But particularly there has been a growing need, children with more challenging behaviour and ASD, and basically we have had to increase our provision in our specialist schools for those children. We have spent overall, including Additionally Resourced Provisions (ARPs) units, just short of £31 million expanding SEN provision, for which we do not get any form of grant. So yes, it is a mixed picture. We have increased ARPs and we intend to do that more specialist provision. I know, for example, in Hillingdon they have been doing the same, but we have also increased our special schools, so we are trying to get a much better mix of provision within schools.

**Darren Johnson AM:** Funding pressures, a shortage of places overall across London: this is all meaning a step back for inclusive education, is it not?

**Tara Flood (Director, Alliance for Inclusive Education):** Yes, it absolutely is, and can I be the only person in this room that feels sad about that? I think there is something very wrong when young people who have a right to be educated are being refused access to a particular school because suddenly the school is not big enough. That really is quite shocking. Yes, so it is a massive step backwards, Darren, and I think we would certainly be wanting, as we asked the Mayor to do in our manifesto for London, to look at any decisions that



are made in terms of future schools in London to try to stop that very damaging reversal of what has been 30 years of really good, solid development of inclusive education practice.

I think the thing to understand is that inclusive practice is one of those expressions that everyone thinks they know the meaning of, but if you ask ten different people, they would all come up with a different definition. I think for us, it is about a fundamental shift in the way that education is delivered rather than squeezing particular groups into an existing system.

**Darren Johnson AM:** I absolutely share that sadness and believe that this should obviously be a genuine choice of inclusive education for all parents and pupils, but with the sort of pressures that we are facing in terms of funding cuts, in terms of pressure for school places in school buildings and so on, how do you think we in London can respond to that challenge and make sure that inclusive education still remains a serious option?

**Tara Flood (Director, Alliance for Inclusive Education):** I would really question whether or not it is cost-effective to be running two separate education systems, because the special school system is in addition to the existing mainstream education system. For me, in a time of austerity, I find it very odd that we are now looking to build what is an expensive system, rather than thinking creatively - someone used that word before - about how we build the capacity of the existing provision, because it is not just about bricks and mortar, it is about skills and resources, and how do we ensure that the mainstream offer for parents is one that parents will feel confident supports their young person? I worry that the money will be found to suddenly expand a special education sector when that money that has suddenly been found could be used much more effectively to build the capacity of mainstream.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** We really broke down this issue in terms of parents have the choice between mainstream and special needs schools. That seems to me to be quite OK, but from what you are saying, Tara, from your point of view, there should not be that choice because the issue about the particular school, that is a preference that every parent is involved in. Are you saying that from your point of view, there should not be the choice?

**Tara Flood (Director, Alliance for Inclusive Education):** That is a scary statement, I accept - radical. But absolutely, because what parents need to have is confidence that their young person will get the right support in their local mainstream school. Now, it might not be the one that is a walk away, but it does need to be local if you want your young person to feel part of the community way beyond their educational years.

**Linda Jordan (Regional Coordinator, Preparing for Adulthood):** I do not think we should leave the meeting thinking that the pressures are the reason that inclusion is going backwards and is not progressing, because if that were true, you would find an even pattern across the country, but we have local authorities who have 2% plus children in special schools and we have local authorities who have less than 0.5%, so if these pressures were genuinely against developing inclusive education, I think we would see more evenness. I think that it is fundamentally about the ethos and the vision and what decisions have been made about developing the inclusion. For example, quite a lot of authorities under Building Schools for the Future used that programme to build new special schools where they could have, at the same time when they were building new academy mainstream schools, planned for those to be built together, for example. I think the opportunities have been there and could have been taken and have been taken where there has been a local vision for inclusion. I think the things that have been mentioned are real challenges, but the --

**Darren Johnson AM:** The real pressure has been through the local momentum.

**Linda Jordan (Regional Coordinator, Preparing for Adulthood):** The fundamental issue is we are in a muddle about disability, in a way.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** But also it speaks to Andrew's point that he raised earlier and that is to some degree that leadership comes at that school level and that planning for the future.

**Linda Jordan (Regional Coordinator, Preparing for Adulthood):** It is all levels. They all link together.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Can I just ask, I have got concerns with Tara said. It goes back to the debate that has been going on for decades, and you have said there is a right answer and there is a wrong answer. I must say - my knowledge of this goes back decades, so it is out of date - but at the time when we had been having debates for decades about the place that special schools have within the education system, we found it incredible that you could at that time, for example, in a mainstream school, have teachers that were trained to know about portage, Makaton, Halliwick swimming method, all of that, they had it all. It was just at some point there was a justification for having a special school that was a resource centre for excellence in dealing with the very many challenging needs that young people may have. I just find it really hard to say, "Actually, that is wrong, we do not need any of them and it can all be in the mainstream schools". That is my concern, at the risk of starting a longer debate.

**Tara Flood (Director, Alliance for Inclusive Education):** The list that you have just given, Andrew, are all things that are in addition to education that support education. I guess it is about how do young people who require those kinds of additional services access them as part of their education? Do they honestly need to be in a separate building to have their education to be able to access those services? Could they not have a more flexible arrangement where they were able to receive their education in school and then receive the additional services that enable them to access education as part of a community support?

**Andrew Boff AM:** The final report from the Mayor's Education Inquiry did not include any specific recommendations on how to support the provision of education for children with complex needs. Do you believe there is a strategic place that the Mayor should step into and what would you want him or her to do? I am saying him or her because we are not just talking about this Mayor, we are talking about the actual strategic role.

**Gary Redhead (Assistant Director - Schools, Planning and Resources, LB Ealing):** I think one of the areas in particular is around employment, because essentially, at the end of the day, employment and being in employment is really important, it gives people access and status. We have been working with some local employers, as an example.

**Holly Morgan-Smith (Project Manager, SEND Reforms, LB Ealing):** Feedback from young people recently, throughout the reforms and the discussions we have been having for years, has been that they want to talk much earlier on, at a much younger age, about their futures and their employment prospects and their independent lives. We have got a number of projects going on in Ealing, for example, the one at the Hilton in Heathrow, where we have got ten apprentices doing a year-long placement on the job, they started last week, and that should be a really good opportunity for them to then progress into permanent employment. But opportunities with big business or small business could be something that we would welcome. We can make some of those local links, but never quite enough to provide the range of choice probably for young people that they deserve.

**Linda Jordan (Regional Coordinator, Preparing for Adulthood):** Yes, I think that in a sense it is part of the equality and diversity agenda for London. I know it is a very difficult subject, it is an emotive subject and it is a very controversial subject, but essentially segregating children because of particular - I think we would say - socially constructed criterion is actually a result of discrimination. The reality is that the outcomes of special schools are not good. The DfE figures that are no longer published on the outcomes in terms of narrow educational attainment for children are much lower from special schools. The more important issue is that young people, particularly those with learning difficulties and complex needs, leaving special schools do not go

into employment, do not move into independent living, are socially isolated, have a higher level of mental health needs and so on and so forth. If we want to have evidence-based practice, we need to start from the point of what the outcomes are of a system that is very expensive and prevents children being part of their community.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Just think about the strategic piece and if you were to meet the Mayor what something would you ask him to do. Tara, we know you think that the Mayor could do more, because we have seen your press release, and it is a nice link to you because it seems to me that Linda is just totally in support of you, that it is the mainstream school that should be the starting point.

**Andrew Boff AM:** This is the Diane Abbott [Labour Member of Parliament for Hackney North and Stoke Newington] school of education though --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** No, sorry.

**Andrew Boff AM:** -- that schools should be good enough, and if they are not good enough, you have still got to send your kid there.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** To some extent I think that is what Tara, as I understand it, is saying, that a child should be able to go to the school and that the education should be there and that any extra needs that that child wants should then be then brought to that child at that school.

**Tara Flood (Director, Alliance for Inclusive Education):** Into that community, I think.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Community or wherever, and it can be done, because it has been done elsewhere.

**Tara Flood (Director, Alliance for Inclusive Education):** It has been done a lot.

**Andrew Boff AM:** But not everywhere.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** No, Andrew, it is not everywhere, but it could be.

Tara, we have got your manifesto, but what else would you want from the Mayor?

**Tara Flood (Director, Alliance for Inclusive Education):** It is really that if the Mayor wants - and he does, I have been to a number of these meetings before - to support the development of academies and free schools in London, then one of the absolute caveats for the development of those is that they have an inclusive education ethos. Short and sweet.

**Helen Jenner (Corporate Director of Children's Services, LB Barking and Dagenham):** May I make a specific suggestion, because with the Gold Club schools, that has been very focused around attainment issues. I wonder if there is scope for having three or four Gold Club inclusive schools somehow.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Oh, that is a lovely idea, isn't it?

**Andrew Boff AM:** Fabulous idea.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Three or four Gold Club inclusive schools. Yes.

**Lysanne Wilson (Director of Operations, YoungMinds):** Can I say that 50% of adult mental illness starts before the age of 15, and 75% of adult mental illness starts before the age of 18. If we do not start putting in

resources in early intervention and prevention, we are just building up a time-bomb. That has got to be a change and I would expect the Mayor to be lobbying for that, resilience in schools.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** It seems to me that what we have heard is by 2018 every borough will be struggling to meet the needs of new secondary school pupils. That was in the first part of our session. However, we have heard again that the funding system is not fair to London and that the funding available is insufficient. The creativity of school planners has been remarkable and we commend them, but the challenge is intensifying on so many levels; at the most basic, in some boroughs there is no land to be had to build. Personally, I think there is only so far up you can go in terms of putting schools on top of buildings, which is a city special.

Recommendations in our report were endorsed by London boroughs here today, and we thank you for that. We would also ask any of the guests to look at our report and really just get back to us in terms of what is missing in that report and anything else we can do, and then we will then pursue those recommendations with the Mayor. What we also heard is we have got more children now needing more additional support. We have got more children in special schools, but funding is falling behind that need.

We have a new Act and I welcome the fact that the majority of our guests who spoke welcomed this Act as a new opportunity, as key to that was this aim for integrated care, which is so essential, but many of you identified - if not all of you - that there are key challenges to ensure that partners work co-operatively together and it is always that partnership piece, isn't it? That is the challenge that we hear time and time again as scrutineers, but we know that if you can identify the good practice that you can replicate that, you can get that goal, it can be delivered, it can be done and it has been argued most effectively at all levels, so that is strategic, national and local working together. When I say 'local', at the school with the child and the parent, so it is the child and the parent that is our starting point.

We have heard very disturbing news about how the funding arrangement tends to create or has the potential to create perverse incentives, which I think would lead some schools to be less inclusive. It just seems that inclusion in mainstream schools does seem to be going backwards. That is the sense I have got, just in my conclusion, but we will be able to firm that up more with your help.

**Andrew Boff AM:** You cannot strip out the role of the governing body and the head and the ethos of the school, which is set by the governing body.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Absolutely, and I think we take that on board and that we will need time to do some unpicking as to the reasons why this is happening. I say 'we', it seems to me everybody engaged, and we will be staying with everybody involved in this challenge as long as we are here and we are enabled to by the GLA Oversight Committee and our Assembly, because this is just so important to our children; it is important to our children, our families, our communities and our cities and our special city of London.

Thank you very much for your time and contributions and thank you for all the hard work that you do.