



Liaison Committee

Corrected oral evidence: Regenerating seaside towns and communities—follow-up

Monday 20 March 2023

4 pm

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Liaison Committee—members present: Lord Gardiner of Kimble (Chair); Lord Bichard; Lord Haskel; Lord Taylor of Holbeach.

Regenerating Seaside Towns and Communities Committee—members present: Lord Bassam of Brighton; Lord McNally; Baroness Valentine; Baroness Wyld.

Evidence Session No. 2

Heard in Public

Questions 10 - 21

Witnesses

I: Sarah Bone, Member, Association for School and College Leaders Council, and Head Teacher, Headlands School, Bridlington; Russell Hobby, Chief Executive Officer, Teach First.

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

1. This is a corrected transcript of evidence taken in public and webcast on www.parliamentlive.tv.

Examination of witnesses

Sarah Bone and Russell Hobby.

- Q10 The Chair:** Good afternoon. A very warm welcome to today's meeting, which follows up the work of the Regenerating Seaside Towns and Communities Committee. Your evidence will help inform our follow-up report on this vital subject. A list of interests of members relevant to the inquiry is available online, and it is a requirement that members of the committee declare their relevant interests orally when speaking for the first time, so they are on the record.

The session is open to the public, is broadcast live and is subsequently accessible via the parliamentary website. A verbatim transcript will be taken of the evidence and put on the parliamentary website. A few days after this session, you will be sent a copy of the transcript to check it for accuracy. It would be most helpful if you could advise us of any corrections as quickly as possible. If, after this evidence session, you wish to clarify or amplify any points made during your evidence, or have any additional points to make, you are most welcome to submit supplementary evidence to us.

Just for the interest of our witnesses, the third session was with the Minister. The Minister is unfortunately unwell and therefore we will be making other arrangements. It would help if the witnesses would introduce themselves first.

Sarah Bone: Thank you very much for inviting me here today. I am the executive head teacher of Headlands School in Bridlington.

Russell Hobby: I am chief executive of Teach First. We are a charity that is about recruiting teachers to where they are most needed.

- Q11 Lord Bassam of Brighton:** Looking backwards and then forwards, what do you see as being the key educational challenges faced by seaside towns and communities? What progress has been seen in education in those communities since the committee's report was published in 2019? I ought to say we took quite a lot of evidence from teachers and students for that report. We had quite a good grounding and background.

Sarah Bone: To echo what colleagues said in the previous sitting, which I sat through, the lack of skilled economic opportunity in coastal areas remains an ongoing challenge for us. We have run various strategies up in Bridlington at Headlands School to try to fill that gap. We have something called Heads into Engineering; we set up a health academy; we also run something called Teachers Tomorrow.

Those initiatives have come about through positive partnerships in the community, with business leaders and with parents who are also business leaders in the Bridlington community, to try to ensure—Daniel mentioned it in the previous sitting—that talent stays in Bridlington.

One of my key objectives as a leader and one of the key objectives for the governing body has been to make sure young people have access to

a quality education, can go to university and then bring that employability back to the town of Bridlington. Finding GPs, doctors, nurses and porters for our local hospitals is something we urgently want to resolve.

Engineering is a real skills market in our local area. Again, local employers—AB Graphic being one of them, which has worked with us in the Heads into Engineering project—have really helped to try to make sure young people see engineering as a viable option moving forward. Those policies and strategies have come about through people and partnerships, not through funding from government. It is important to say that at the start.

The transient population is one of the challenges in our coastal region. Having worked in an inner city school before I came to Headlands, I have noticed the number of young people and families who move the coast for a fresh start or a better life. We tend to find that we have inner-city problems in the coastal region, but without the resources cities may well be afforded.

We have a very much depleted local policing team. They work incredibly hard. We have really positive partnerships with our local policing team. There are just not enough of them. On social services, again, there are just not enough social workers in the Bridlington area to support these vulnerable families. In the alternative provision on our school site, over 60% of the young people come from West Yorkshire. They face socioeconomic issues that are really difficult to manage in a coastal area where geography is a challenge.

On staff retention, we have worked really hard in the last 10 years I have been at Headlands School to make sure we have a quality workforce. From the 76 staff I inherited in 2013, only nine remain. We have had a massive recruitment drive around every aspect of the school. My job now is to retain those brilliant teachers because they are delivering great results for our young people in our community. My job is to make sure they stay with me and do not leave and go somewhere else.

We have young people in our coastal areas with more and more complex needs. Again, that was echoed by the previous panel. More and more young people are coming out of Covid with complex emotional and social issues. Again, in a coastal community, with that geography, the access to resource is really challenging. When I first started at Headlands in 2013, there were no school counsellors; I now employ three. They counsel 420 of my young people. I have just over 1,000 on roll. There is a significant issue around emotional well-being and support. CAMHS is struggling to meet that need.

Russell Hobby: Schools in coastal communities face all the same challenges that schools across the whole of the country face. Some of those challenges are generally increasing as we speak. We know teacher recruitment and retention is difficult for almost every school in the

country. We know there are funding challenges. We know there are complex needs emerging out of Covid as well.

There are a number of factors that are specific to coastal communities, which may exacerbate those challenges. One of them is that, in some communities, the levels of deprivation tend to be higher than the norm across the country, which means the attainment gaps and destination gaps we see in other places are likewise accentuated.

As Sarah outlined, there are significant challenges in some coastal communities with the jobs market and career prospects. Those are an incredibly powerful force in raising academic aspirations and attainment. That is one reason why we have been able to make such progress in London but have not made similar progress in every other part of the country too. There are obviously communities that are bucking that trend.

Issues with transport infrastructure exacerbate those problems. They make it harder to consider commuting from coastal communities to some cities. Brighton is an exception to that one for obvious reasons. If you talk about the relationship between Blackpool and Manchester, for example, that is much more challenging.

That adds to the other significant distinctive challenge for coastal communities, which is that the recruitment of talented teachers into those communities is harder. The simple fact of geography—half of their catchment area is water—makes it difficult to recruit teachers. Equally, not all teachers want to work in those communities, partly because some of the social problems are intense.

We have not yet been able to persuade all teachers of the value and pleasure of working in these communities. There are prospects for encouraging teachers to come out of the big cities and look for a different lifestyle and different opportunities, but we have not been able to make that pitch.

Your final question was whether we have made much progress in solving any of these since the evidence was gathered. I do not believe we have. Understandably, Covid has disrupted most of the plans people had. It has mainly set the education system backwards in terms of the attainment gap. We have done precious little.

One thing I would draw out is the move to extend careers advice and guidance, particularly into the primary sector, which will take place in some coastal communities. That is a positive step forward.

Q12 Lord McNally: Listening to you, there are two examples around this table, me and Lord Bassam, of working-class lads from seaside communities who did not stay. It is a problem. I still cannot understand why anybody would not want to live on the Fylde coast or down in Brighton or Hastings.

To ask the question I am supposed to ask, are education investment

areas and priority education investment areas effective mechanisms to target education concerns in seaside towns? Were sufficient lessons learned from opportunity areas?

Sarah Bone: Bridlington is not in one of those areas, but we are a short drive up the coast to Scarborough, where I live, which was. When the opportunity areas were set up, we had a lot of visitors who came to see the school, the work we were doing and the initiatives and strategies we were leading. They took those ideas and put them in place in the schools up the coast, with funding.

My challenge is that the money has not been distributed fairly. I have exactly the same challenges around socioeconomic deprivation in Bridlington that are experienced in Scarborough and Filey, but I did not have the resources to continue funding some of those strategies and policies we had put in place.

The governors and I had to make the decision to spend money we do not have. We have a deficit budget, but we believe really powerfully in what Russell is saying about the careers agenda. We are in the top tier of the country for our careers hub and our careers impartial advice and guidance. That is a huge accolade for a school in the community we serve. I am really proud of that, but we had to do that by spending money we do not have because the money has gone elsewhere.

Russell Hobby: I am an immigrant to Brighton so I very much understand the attraction of coastal communities. You do not have to sell me on that one. Brighton is also an hour away from London so I can do this and those other things as well. Again, having the connection to enable people to stay in their communities and participate in the wider national conversation is part of the challenge.

To your direct question, though, building on what Sarah said, over the last 20 years or so we have had a fairly rapid change in the different vehicles we use to target local funding through education. We give them new names and we reinvent them. We have not stuck with anything long enough to determine whether it truly works.

My experience from the opportunity areas is that there was a very mixed picture. Some of them were strong and others were not. This is anecdotal, but the dividing line there was the difference between those who saw it as their job to get funds to the front line as quickly as possible and to make sure they were targeted appropriately, and those who built something of an infrastructure between themselves and the front line, and started absorbing that funding into the committees and the discussions that go on as well. The lesson learned is how we make sure front-line institutions get more of these funds with useful steering and collaboration in the middle.

Lord McNally: The committee visited a number of schools. Since then, in the work I have done with the Fleetwood Trust, I have had contact with schools in Fleetwood. You are left with the impression that the kids are

still bright, but there is this terrible problem that at 16 too many of them disappear and become NEETs.

I just wonder how we can break this cycle perhaps in towns such as Hastings and Fleetwood, where there is not the ambition. That might be from the family or due to the sheer pressure of the social problems that are visited on them. You may say Bridlington, but where are the success stories of places that have taken on these problems and inspired young people?

Russell Hobby: My experience has always been that, exactly as you said, talent and potential is evenly distributed across the country. Our coastal towns have as much of it as anywhere else. Young people begin with high aspirations. They have ambitions. It is not so much the desire; it is the understanding of the journey from A to B. Too early, they conclude that those dreams are out of reach and they lower their sights and their horizons. We do not need to encourage people to aim high. We have to show them the steps it takes for them to get there.

This is why I have always found that careers education is such a powerful driver. It takes their ambition and says, "Okay, if your desire is to become an engineer, these are the qualifications you will need, and we can work backwards from there". We did spend quite a lot of time dismantling that across the country for the last couple of decades, and we are now starting to rebuild it.

One of the silver linings of the pandemic was that, because people could not travel any more, a great deal of work experience, internship opportunities and other things moved online. Although that is not as good as spending a week in an office, factory or shop and understanding the reality of work, it meant that young people in Scarborough, Hastings and other towns were on a level playing field with young people in London for access to those opportunities.

The fact is that what is going on in education is just replicating the unevenness in our country as a whole. The jobs are not there, but we could at least start to show them the path through online education. It is not as good as being face to face, but for someone who could never get face-to-face support it is a good substitute. I would encourage us to try to see how much more of that we can do.

Whenever we are speaking to businesses and other employers, we ask them to reach beyond their immediate territory. I speak to lots of firms in London that are doing great things for work experience. I am saying, "Don't do it in London. Do it somewhere else as well, if you can".

Sarah Bone: To echo what Russell said, it is about making sure young people can see and feel what those experiences of the real world are like. I worked in industry before I went into education. I did five years in industrial recruitment in Hull. I am really passionate about young people seeing and experiencing what work might look like as early as possible.

We introduce employers from year 7 right through to sixth form and make sure young people have work experience in year 10 so they can make informed choices. Two weeks ago, we ran a careers fair with over 100 employers for year 9. Both parents and young people had the opportunity to come in and speak to a range of employers, universities, colleges and apprenticeships about what their next steps might be before they take a curriculum choice.

It is coupling a broad and balanced curriculum in schools alongside what those career avenues might look like. It is making sure that school leaders and governors truly believe in giving young people those steps to success. We are there, as educational institutions, only to give them an education. Their careers education must go alongside what is happening in the classroom so that at 16, whatever their personal circumstances are, they can genuinely make an informed choice about their next step.

Lord McNally: Do teachers have enough perspective on that? Do they understand that part of their job is not just to teach the academic subject but to lift horizons and ambitions?

Sarah Bone: That is a really tricky question. Thank you for that one. If I am really honest, no, I do not think so. We have done a lot of work in my context and in my previous context to make sure individuals who have gone from school to university and then straight back into school have their own eyes opened to what careers are out there and where their subject can lead young people. That is ongoing work.

I would not be speaking out of turn by saying that we are one of the lead partners in the careers hub in Yorkshire and Humber, where I am. Part of the work we are doing is with school leaders to make sure they are on board with the idea that they have to train their staff to make them aware of what an apprenticeship looks like in 2023 and what a post-16 work offer or college offer might look like. It is not just the traditional route of A-levels, university and then back into school. There is a lot of work still to be done around that.

Q13 Baroness Wyld: Good afternoon. I want to come back to recruitment and retention, which we have started to explore. It is not like the Government do not recognise there is a problem. We have talked about the opportunity areas, and now there is the levelling-up premium as well. Have any of these inputs made any difference or are we thinking about things in completely the wrong way?

Russell Hobby: Again, this is not just limited to coastal communities. We are struggling to recruit teachers across the country and, indeed, across the world at this time. That points to some deep trends at work in what people want from this. Of course, these things play off against each other. If other schools were finding it easy to recruit, there would be an overflow of talent that we could direct where we need it. At the moment, everyone is scrabbling for whoever they can get.

It is early days, but the levelling-up premium has potential. There is evidence emerging that, once you make a reasonably significant cash offer, it does incentivise behaviour. It has to be enough to overcome the other things as well. Sam Sims and others, in the research, have talked a lot about this. If you are in the territory of, say, £5,000, that really starts to overcome other hurdles as well. We can get people to relocate.

If we are in a time of tight budgets, which we are, we need to be asking a question about how to distribute what we have to where it is most needed. Trying to channel extra funds into more pupil premium funding or levelling-up premium funding could get it where it is needed. Sometimes the measures of deprivation do not show up as well in coastal communities. It is not just about income; it can be about opportunities as well. Rural and coastal communities do not always show the raw poverty figures that an inner-city area might, but they still face those challenges. We also need to look at what triggers those.

When it comes to retention, though, I am not sure salary is the prime driver. It is important, but we also see lots of teachers who leave for lower salaries. It is very important for attracting people in, but workload then becomes one of the key drivers. Again, it is not so much the volume of hours worked as the purpose and meaning behind the hours. The more time teachers are spending in front of children or providing pastoral care, the happier they tend to be. We need to look at the extent to which administration, bureaucracy and scrutiny is taking away from that.

One proposal we have made, which I have seen some schools use, is to use those funds to provide more PPA—planning, preparation and administration—time for teachers who are serving the most challenging communities because they have a higher workload in comparison to that. We do not want to cut the curriculum that young people are experiencing, so we need more teachers. That is why we need more funding to do that.

We see big improvements in retention in schools that are able to increase their PPA time. Maybe we could seek to target levelling up funds and others at that.

Q14 **Baroness Wylde:** That is really helpful. I have a quick follow-up, and then I will come to Sarah. In your last answer, you said that people did not necessarily want to go to these places; they were not attractive in the first place. In the short term, is the money enough of a sweetener to bring people in do we need to do a wider PR campaign around that? That is my first question.

My second question is on about retention. This is for you as well, Sarah. Say that sweetener does work. How relaxed are you about how much movement there is within the workforce? Do you want people to go somewhere and say, "I am going to stay there for 20 years"?

Russell Hobby: Increasing salaries will just increase the sheer number of people applying to be teachers. In particular, relative salary is the important thing. We often find there is a counter-cycle to the main

economy. When jobs and salaries become more insecure elsewhere, people get more interested in teaching. You can generally increase the applicant numbers, which will help schools in coastal communities as well.

A sufficient incentive will encourage people to move, but I would recommend paying more attention to people switching into teaching later in career than direct graduates. A very large percentage of graduates—I know because we asked them this directly, because we are recruiting them—envisage their first job being in a city. A fair chunk of them envisage it as London as well. There comes a time when they are looking for a different lifestyle. They may want more room for a family; they may want more opportunity to see the countryside or coastal terrain. There is a big pitch that can be made then for people to shift out.

That also helps with careers advice and guidance. We are talking about people who have broader experience of the workforce as well. We tend to think about teacher recruitment as graduate recruitment, but I do not think it needs to be or should be. I will let Sarah pick up on the movement.

Sarah Bone: Yes, to answer your question, you are right about the PR element and the reputation element. Coastal schools in contextually challenging circumstances, whether that is the town they serve or, indeed, the Ofsted rating they have, will struggle to recruit. That is certainly one of the challenges I had for the first three to four years.

That was recognised by a partner, Sir John Townsley from the GORSE Academies Trust. He led a bid with the Department for Education to set up an initial teacher training initiative to come out to the coast. That has certainly been pivotal for my ability to recruit, retract and retain a higher calibre of teacher. We have had 34 trainees in the last three years, and we have retained half of them.

Do I want them all to stay for 20 years? Again, that is another really good point. If they are generating results, yes, absolutely. The school I inherited did have individuals who had been there too long. It is about getting that balance right.

In a coastal town, there is an element of people potentially coming to retire and to settle. That is fine, but I need them to be ambitious for my young people. I am really ambitious for them, and I want them to get the best. If you are not delivering the results, maybe it is time for you to move on. We only want to attract and retain the best staff for the right reasons.

In terms of the motivations around money and the levelling-up premium, staff in my town are entitled to only £1,500. That is not going to pay the petrol to come through from Hull or York for more than three months. Fifty per cent of my staff will travel from Hull for less of a salary. If they are in Hull, they are likely to be able to be paid more because of the academy structure that exists in Hull. The staff who are traveling to my

school are technically going to be paid slightly less and they are paying more to travel.

Why do they come? Going back to what Russell said, I would like to think it is about workload, working environment and making sure, as school leaders and governors, we are taking a balanced view about what a reasonable work-life balance is and offering different opportunities for their staff to stay. Does that answer your question?

Baroness Wylde: That was hugely helpful. Thank you.

Lord Bassam of Brighton: Lord Taylor, it is your moment in the sunshine.

Q15 **Lord Taylor of Holbeach:** I should tell everyone that I am a former chair of the Visitor Economy Subgroup and I remain a member of the Midlands Engine APPG.

I am asking a question on behalf of the group in respect of flexible learning opportunities. This was an element of Lord Bassam's report on seaside towns and coastal communities, which has been significant and useful. We heard earlier that, particularly in seaside towns, where there is seasonality involved in employment opportunities and everything else, schooling can provide a great deal of opportunity, in those times of the year when there is less demand for people to work evenings or part of the day and earn money.

I wondered whether you could give examples of how flexible learning opportunities have been implemented in coastal and seaside communities, in terms of both teaching, at secondary level and in further education and training, and virtual learning.

Sarah Bone: During the Covid pandemic I was inspected three times by Ofsted. On every occasion, they said the quality of our online provision was exceptional. We have continued with that. All the resources, for every lesson and every student, remain available online. If a young person is ill or absent from school, they can still access their learning.

The challenge I have is safeguarding. During the Covid pandemic we were doing between 30 and 50 home visits a day. We were distributing food; we were raising money to make sure young people were fed. In the community I serve, I would be incredibly nervous about not having eyes on my children every day. There are risks around the work they may or may not be doing and the adults they may be working with or working for. Again, it is really important to have eyes on young people on a daily basis.

The resources are available. They can access them through a platform. However, from a safeguarding perspective, the principle for me is that I need to have eyes on them in school every day. That would be where I came from.

Russell Hobby: The online opportunity is to bring in expertise and insight that does not exist in a particular community rather than to

replace the regular care that an institution can provide. As per the previous argument about online careers education, for example, there are real opportunities to do that.

I do not have a lot to add to this one, except that the opportunities for flexible working are less at primary and secondary level and more at the post-16 level, just because of the nature of the school day and what we permit.

The barriers to accessing further education, colleges and workplace learning often come back down to transport infrastructure. There can often be only one further education college serving quite a wide geographical territory. There have been changes to the maintenance allowance and other things to allow young people to travel to these arrangements. We see that appearing as a major barrier to accessing post-16 education.

Lord Taylor of Holbeach: As a member for a coastal community rather than a seaside town—I was born in Holbeach, and I have lived there all my life—I can say that communication and the physical ability to access education is the most important element of all.

Whenever you look at the maps showing deprivation in health, education or any other area, they tend to show that one element of deprivation is poor communication and individuals being unable to get from A to B to take advantage of better healthcare and better educational opportunities.

Q16 Baroness Valentine: I do not know whether I should declare this as an interest, but Teach First was incubated in London when I was chief executive there back in about 2000. My questions relate to the link between jobs and education. There are several hidden in here.

Do you see the provision of technical skills-based training in the form of schemes such as T-levels, institutes of technology and local skills improvement plans as something providing positive and effective steps towards skills-based education? Have pathways been created from schools into jobs in the local economy? How effective have careers hubs been in tackling next steps for school students?

Sarah Bone: Shall we start with T-levels? From a coastal school perspective, the Government's initiative to introduce T-levels and significantly reduce the number of BTECs is really worrying. Looking at the stats from 2022, just over 1,000 young people did T-levels, and 6% did not manage to engage in any work experience. That compares to over 200,000 who have done BTECs.

If we are going to replace one with the other come next September, my concern from a coastal perspective is about where I am going to find all the employers that will deliver quality work experience over a period of two years. BTECs are not broken. I do not see why we are making a wholesale change. For lots of young people, BTECs are an appropriate vehicle to the next step, whether that is employment or university. There seems to be an awful lot of money being spent on another initiative that

could be in spent in schools, providing great teachers, great lessons and great BTEC outcomes.

I have talked about engagement with careers hubs. We are a lead school on careers hubs. It will depend on the feedback we get in our local area. The leadership in schools will determine how far the careers curriculum is embedded organically and authentically in young people's day-to-day experiences. There is still lots of work to do around that. That is a national agenda, is it not?

The other part of your question was about pathways from schools into the local economy. Again, that is about making sure that the local leadership has positive business and community partnerships. It is not about paying lip service but making sure that those partnerships come into schools, so business leaders are coming into schools, but equally school leaders are going into businesses and seeing what it is like to work in a business, be in a factory or be in an office, et cetera.

That is something that I and the team have really invested in, which is why we have had the success we have had. We need to emulate that across the country, not just in coastal regions, to make sure young people have exposure to those experiences.

Baroness Valentine: I am quite often in the position where I am talking to businesspeople about mentoring in schools and Gatsby benchmarks. We find that the process between offering and getting into a school and doing something is very murky. I am unclear whether the intermediaries are financially incentivised in such a way that means they are threatened by an organisation such as Business in the Community coming and offering help. That is how it appears from the outside, but I have no idea whether that is true.

There also certainly seems to be a bit of a correlation between deprivation and schools being less able to take that help from business. It all seems to be a bit more difficult than it should be. We cannot find out what is going on with the Gatsby benchmarks and all that sort of thing.

Sarah Bone: I would agree with you. As school leaders, one of the first things we need to do is make sure the team in the office, that first port of call, is well versed. If you get a phone call from a business leader or somebody in the community, you need to pass it on to somebody who is going to act on it.

This has been one of my frustrations. Again, my team are brilliant, but we had to do a lot of work in the early days to make sure that was not a barrier or a blocker. I want to talk to these business leaders; I want to find out what they have to offer. On the back of that, we have something called the Headlands scholar, where each year business leaders provide £30,000 to a student in sixth form for them to go on to university. That would not have happened if I had not taken that phone call or if I had not trained that front-line person to say, "Yes, let's put that call through", and have a conversation. There needs to be more of that.

As leaders, we can become very bogged down in a challenging context, if a school is rated “requires improvement” or is in special measures. We are worried about lots and lots of things, but ultimately these partnerships are so powerful in their ability to move your school on. The children have the curriculum experience, which they can tie directly to where there might be open doors for them.

We are not saying that, if you choose to join the health academy pathway, for example, you are necessarily going to be a doctor. You might decide, “I’m going to work in biomedical science”. Indeed, that is what happened with one young person. He started on that path thinking, “I’m going to go and be a doctor”. Part way through his mentoring, he went, “No, I think I’d prefer to work in a lab. I’m going to go and do something to do with biomedical science”. That is absolutely fantastic.

It is a really complex field, but, first and foremost, school leaders have to make sure the front-line response to people wanting to come in and work within the school is a positive one. That engagement has to be positive. They have to see it as an open door.

Russell Hobby: I would echo most of that. I have heard from other head teachers the argument about the BTECs as well. They are serving a purpose at the moment and they should not be abandoned lightly.

In terms of access to the local economy, it feels sometimes like there is a clash of cultures between the education system and the business world. They operate on different cycles and speak different languages, with different jargon and so on, so the intermediaries are important. Again, the schools that need it most are the ones with the least time to be able to engage with it.

In coastal communities—again, this is stereotyping—the employers can be smaller than in industrial and urban areas. It is a big burden for employers to take on that outreach work if they do not have a department that is dedicated to that activity.

The careers hubs are starting to do really good work. It is a very promising initiative. We should keep investing in it. They are matched by an investment in careers leaders inside schools as well. That creates the interface between the two: we have a trained member of the senior team inside schools who can access all these resources. It is a promising initiative.

Sarah Bone: My careers leader has been with me from the start. I identified him as somebody who was on the same page as me when it came to careers. He was a local person. He had been to the school and was clearly on the same page. From the start in 2013, as our careers leader, he has been the person who, with me, has led those partnerships in the community.

Q17 **Lord Haskel:** Transport costs are an important factor in keeping young people at school in coastal areas. Has the Government’s action to tackle

transport costs for 16 to 19 year-olds been sufficient to manage that?

Sarah Bone: My answer is really succinct: yes. Our local transport policy with our local authority is completely fit for purpose. The assessment is appropriate. We make sure that every young person who requires transport to and from school, whether that is on a public bus or, indeed, on one of our free minibuses, is able to get to school. In our experience, that initiative has been really positive.

Lord Haskel: It has been effective.

Sarah Bone: Yes, it has.

Russell Hobby: I had better not argue with that clear answer.

Lord Bassam of Brighton: Back in 2019, it was one of our very clear recommendations and points that they needed to improve that. It is good to know the remediation measures have been effective.

Q18 **Lord Bichard:** In terms of interests, I should declare that I was once for some time Permanent Secretary of the Department for Education, although at the time it was the Department for Education and Employment, which may refer to a point that was being made a few moments ago. It was so long ago now that I cannot be held responsible for things that are wrong in the current system. Russell, you might disagree, but I am sure you will be too polite on this occasion to say that.

Mine is a tail-end Charlie question really. From all the things we have talked about, is there one thing you would just love to see happen that would have a positive impact on education in coastal towns?

Sarah Bone: You know what I am going to say. It has to be improved funding for schools, full stop. As a PFI school, my PFI contribution has gone up by about £250,000 in the last two years. The more students I have, the more the PFI management fee goes up. The salary increases in the last academic year, up until this April, have cost the school about £360,000. I will get an additional amount of funding, about £190,000, from this April.

The numbers just do not marry up. If we are going to retain and attract into our profession quality teachers who want to stay and who have ambition of volume people, we need to provide them with an appropriate salary and to make sure schools are fully funded in terms of that ambition.

Lord Bichard: Some things do not change in 20 years. The difference now is that I can agree with you, whereas 20 years ago I had to make the case to explain what was happening.

Sarah Bone: I am glad we agree.

Russell Hobby: All I would seek to do is find a way to spend some of that additional funding.

Lord Bichard: What would you spend it on? What is the priority?

Russell Hobby: Of all the things we have talked about, for coastal communities it would be a pilot to reduce the curriculum time of teachers and to increase their planning and preparation time. They have to be funded to do it; otherwise we are just stretching the resources ever further.

I would take a few of these different communities, both the towns and the coastal areas, and over a couple of years see what this did to retention in these areas, but also to the time and energy teachers can devote to building careers advice and guidance.

Lord Bichard: If we have two minutes, can I suggest something to you? The collaboration between different parts of the education sector, notably between FE colleges, universities and schools, seems to me to be really important to the development of a sense of place in these towns. Is it strong in your experience? Is it something you agree we should be focusing on?

Sarah Bone: Yes, I totally agree. Our health academy partnership involves the University of Hull. It provides people with the opportunity to visit the University of Hull. We have done loads of initiatives with Hull, York and Leeds as well.

It is really important that young people do not only get to go and see the beach. You have to remember that I have young people in my building who have never been to their own beach. They also get the opportunity to go as far as Leeds, York or Newcastle. There are other universities out there, but they have a range of opportunities to go and see what it is like to be a student at university from year 7.

Lord Bichard: They can develop their aspiration.

Sarah Bone: Yes, they can develop their aspiration and see what it looks like to be a student or to be on a campus. It is a phenomenal experience. We dovetail that with also going down to the sea and having a look at the beach they live next door to, which is beautiful.

Russell Hobby: In Brighton there are great examples of the universities getting heavily involved in supporting schools. In other parts of the country, FE colleges have a role to play. They are often one of the largest employers in a particular area themselves.

I have spoken to an FE college down in Cornwall, for example, which was thinking about how to encourage more of its students eventually to take the journey into teaching themselves. They cannot provide the teacher training qualifications, but they can start the journey. If we end up with teaching apprenticeships, there is a possibility that they could start to get involved in that more creatively with other employers. There are huge opportunities there.

Q19 **Baroness Valentine:** Is the Department for Education sufficiently sensitised to local issues in tackling these things? Your answer was about a pilot in coastal towns. Does it feel like they understand things locally?

Russell Hobby: How could they? There are so many localities in the country, and it is a flaw in our system that it is so top-down at the moment. They are wise to the fact coastal communities struggle in many of these things. What does Blackpool need compared to Hastings? Nobody at the centre can properly answer that. We need a system that can have greater bottom-up and middle-tier ownership of the solutions.

Q20 **Lord Bassam of Brighton:** I have a follow-up question, if I may. How can we translate and share best practice in creating pathways from schools to careers? What might be the most effective mechanisms?

Sarah Bone: Crikey, what is the best way of delivering it? You can do case studies, but there are lots of case studies out there with great examples. Is it a case of working with the Department for Education around the careers framework and celebrating that more locally?

Do we celebrate locally, within our regions, the work that is happening in schools around careers and where it is going? I am not sure. I am not sure that has enough of a platform in local regions and hubs. We do not say, "This is what this school has done. This is what this school has done". That needs a little funding, but it does not have to be about money. As long as there is an appetite and a desire to do things, you can do things without a huge amount of funding.

I do not know. Reading more about it is not going to change anything. Introducing a policy about it is not going to change anything. Giving a performance target is not necessarily going to change it.

From a government perspective, we could look at having an ambition around NEETs. For post-16 and post-18, we perhaps need an accountability around what happens to our young people once they leave school and how long we are responsible for them. At the moment I am potentially responsible for them for three years. That is an awfully long time. There needs to be something around what happens to these young people once they leave and where they end up. Does that make sense?

Lord Bassam of Brighton: It is an important question in the end, because we need to raise people's aspirations. We do not want to underuse our workforce. It seems to me that coastal communities are overlaid with underachievers. We need to get the best from them and enable them to get the best from the education they have.

Sarah Bone: Can I just add something else that I have a bit of a challenge with? From a coastal perspective, thinking about those NEETs, some of my young people go into employment in the fishing industry, but they are not categorised as being employed or in training. I find that quite frustrating, because they are working; they are earning a lot of money, but they are not categorised as being in employment or training.

Certainly, my team and I find it a little frustrating that we are held accountable for three years. That is a long time. A lot can change in three years. There are some jobs in our fishing town—Bridlington is a fishing town—that do not count. It would be a useful exercise to have a look at

what should count. As far as I am concerned, they are in employment and they are earning good money.

- Q21 **Lord Taylor of Holbeach:** Promoting success is always important and being prepared to articulate the problem. We were talking about pilot schemes and those sorts of things. Pilot schemes are no use at all unless they are promoted. People do learn from pilots, but they also need to be communicated. What is learned needs to be communicated.

The truth of the matter is that much of education is very much devolved. I live in a part of the world where education, within government guidelines and under Ofsted's supervision, tends to be run by the local authorities. Although there are academies, it is still local authority-based.

We have been too diffident about local authorities crowing about the success they may have had in areas that are difficult. Everybody knows that both inner-city areas and seaside towns are difficult for maintaining the interests of children and attracting teachers. Why are we not finding ways of encouraging the identification of success, where it exists, and communicating it?

Lord Bassam of Brighton: Well, do you have any reflections on that? It is an interesting point.

Sarah Bone: We do communicate the sector's successes. It comes back to what Baroness Valentine was saying about the buy-in from school leaders on the importance of celebrating that careers journey and where our young people are going to end up next.

There is—you alluded to this as well—a disparity across the sector. Not everybody is necessarily as invested in the careers curriculum as they are in academic outcomes. Ultimately, it is academic outcomes that leaders are going to be measured by.

Russell Hobby: It is the case that, whatever challenge we face in education, a school or a college or community somewhere in the country has already solved it and is doing brilliant work. We cannot seem to get the transmission going between them. It is not the fault of the people who have solved that challenge. They are usually proud of what they have done and generous with their time.

The heads who are in the trenches, if you like, are trying to deal with the short-term demands upon them. They need to be able to look up and see this. To your point, it is still the case that short-term academic outcomes dominate the thinking. Until you have got those right, you do not have the space to think about that. The irony is that, if you could step back from that and spend time on the bigger picture, the academic outcomes would probably look after themselves to a certain degree.

Sarah Bone: That is our experience. The two working alongside each other does deliver the results. You are absolutely right, Russell. When you are trying to fire-fight and get better results for young people—we know that is their passport to the next step—it can be very difficult. From

a school leaders' perspective, there is a lot of work to be done to make sure those two things coexist.

The Chair: Can I thank our witnesses for what I would call a very inspiring and dynamic session? It has been very uplifting to hear your thoughts on these important matters.