

Education for 11-16 Year Olds Committee

Corrected oral evidence: Education for 11-16 Year Olds

Thursday 15 June 2023

11.25 am

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Members present: Lord Johnson of Marylebone (The Chair); Lord Aberdare; Baroness Blower; Lord Baker of Dorking; Baroness Evans of Bowes Park; Lord Knight of Weymouth; Baroness Garden of Frognal; Lord Mair; Lord Storey; Lord Lexden.

Evidence Session No. 9

Heard in Public

Questions 83 - 91

Witness

[I](#): Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester.

Examination of witness

Andy Burnham.

Q83 **The Chair:** Good morning. We welcome this morning Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester. Thank you for taking the time to appear.

Andy Burnham: No problem, Chair. Thanks for the opportunity.

The Chair: Your intervention in this debate in recent weeks has been very timely; it speaks to many of the issues we are considering. We wanted a chance to discuss with you directly what motivated you to come up with your proposal for the MBacc and to give you a chance to set out how you think it would work in practice and what you want to achieve with it, were you in a position to take it forward.

Andy Burnham: Great. That is exactly what we need: to explain it in detail. Does the session start at 11.30 properly?

The Chair: We are public now.

Andy Burnham: Oh, I am sorry. I thought we were going live at 11.30.

The Chair: No, I am sorry to have surprised you. We saw you were ready and we got going. We are being recorded and I should have said at the start that there will be a transcript and the opportunity for your team to correct it, if necessary.

Andy Burnham: No problem. We are really excited about this proposal. It is something that Greater Manchester has long wanted to do. We believe that we need to give all our young people a clear path forward from school. We need to give them the sense that school is taking them somewhere. That is where the idea of the Greater Manchester baccalaureate or MBacc comes in, to mirror the English baccalaureate. While it is right to give all young people a clear and equal path in life, at the same time the growing Greater Manchester economy demands it. If we do not do that, we will end up with faltering growth because we cannot meet the ever-diversifying skill needs of our modern economy here in Greater Manchester. It is the right thing to do for multiple reasons.

The Chair: Great. How would you characterise the response that you have received to date to your proposals from the Department for Education and the system in England?

Andy Burnham: First, it was positive. In the trailblazer devolution deal that we signed with the Government earlier this year, the Department for Education accepted the proposal for a technical education board across our city region, co-chaired by the department and Greater Manchester. That was a significant step forward. The idea of an integrated technical education system, moving away from the fragmented landscape we have at the moment, is also progress. I certainly felt that the nature of the conversation that we had with the Department for Education had changed from my early years as mayor. There is now an understanding of how devolution can add value to education.

I would go further: if you want to fix technical education, you must have devolution in the mix. The labour market needs of Greater Manchester are different from the Liverpool City Region and different from the West Midlands. You must have a localised approach if you are to match qualifications to the precise needs of the local or regional economy.

The arrangements we are putting forward—the concept of the Greater Manchester baccalaureate—obviously start at 14 but then build through into a post-16 system that is more streamlined, locked on to the needs of our economy as guided by the thinking in the local skills improvement plan. That will not work if you do not have a good degree of devolution in the mix. One reason why this country has never fixed technical education, in my view, is that it has tried to run it from the top down. You will never succeed by doing that. Another reason it has never succeeded is that we have collectively, as a country, allowed the university route to dominate English education for decades. Let us be honest: there has been a degree of snobbery about that.

As a country, we have underplayed the importance of technical education for a long time, in a way that countries like Germany never have. This proposal is not about making a second-class route a bit better. It is absolutely about making two clear, equal routes to the future for all young people. If you take the technical route and the MBacc as opposed to the university route and the EBacc, you could still end up at the same place, with a degree via a degree apprenticeship, but you may also have a degree with no debt and I can tell you now that that would be an attractive option for many of the young people growing up in our 10 boroughs.

Q84 Lord Baker of Dorking: I very much admire the initiative you have taken in education. For a major mayor to speak in this way is revolutionary.

Andy Burnham: Thank you, Lord Baker.

Lord Baker of Dorking: I agree entirely with devolution and was glad to hear you say that this MBacc must start at 14. On the board that was set up to join with you, the whole emphasis from the present Government is that technical education should start only at 16. That is their whole philosophy at the moment. That is why in your area, as you said, a third of students do well with Progress 8 and EBacc but two-thirds do not. How will you inject into that two-thirds a technical stream?

I do not think many new schools will be built in the next 10 years because of student decline. Although I would like to see another 50 UTCs, I believe there will be only a handful. What we have devised is a method in which I think you could achieve what you want, which is to have a UTC sleeve in an ordinary school for 11 to 18 year-olds. We now have 20 schools that want to do that. We have put that to the department. I suggest that that is the way you want to do it. It would work like a school deciding its own specialisms. A school in north Manchester would be different from one in south Manchester. They must choose what they want to do. They must first determine the curriculum and get the support of local employers, which most schools have no idea how to do but the UTC movement will help them on that. Then you can get money by accepting T-levels at 18. A lot of capital goes with T-levels for buying equipment and making workshops, and they can be used for the 14 to 16 year-olds as well. I hope that is the method you might try to develop. It is the only way you will be able to inject technical education into our schools.

Andy Burnham: Lord Baker, thank you very much for what you said at the start. The fact that that came from you is tremendously important to us here in Greater Manchester because of your track record in promoting technical education. I was a supporter of the concept of UTCs, but they have not fulfilled all their potential because they have not been in a structure that supports their development. The reform we propose can finally bring through the UTC concept because it places a supportive system around it.

The UTC sleeve idea is absolutely one that we would be happy to work with; more than that, we would embrace it here in Greater Manchester. It is about schools specialising, but colleges, too. There would then be a clear route for those who want to take particular qualifications, knowing the right places where they would naturally go. I am very confident that our proposal in many ways creates the same structure and clarity on the technical route as we currently see on the university route.

I want to make it clear to the committee at this stage that in no way am I denigrating the university route at all. It is one of the great strengths of this country, as are our universities. It is tremendous that so many people are on the university route—more than when I went to university in the 1980s—but it is not right for everybody. When we have a situation in our city, which you alluded to, where 36% of young people achieve the English baccalaureate, which is a good thing, we then have to ask ourselves, “What about the 64% who do not? Don’t we need something much more ambitious for them, and much more structured that mirrors the clarity of the university route?” That is where our thinking is. Obviously, some criticism has been expressed from the Department for Education this week, but I think it is misplaced. I do not think the department understands what we are saying. We are about making the policies the Government are trying to achieve work in a regional context. I hope the committee might support us in building that argument.

Lord Baker of Dorking: I have one short comment. In the sleeve system, some will go to university. At UTCs, 24% or 25% become apprentices but 50% go to university to do STEM subjects—they do not do the humanities. Your sleeve will also let some go to university as well. Do not miss that out.

Andy Burnham: Yes.

Lord Baker of Dorking: Finally, will you get extra money for education from the Government as a result of the initiatives you are taking? Have they said that there is a possibility that you will have some money to spend on education?

Andy Burnham: On the money side, we had to negotiate the trailblazer deal on the premise of it not being about additional funding. I hope that we will be able to change the Government’s mind on that once we develop a system with full industry buy-in and employer support. We will be able to make the case for funding once we have made a compelling proposal.

On the first part of your question, it is important that I build what you just said into what I am saying. It is not about two rigid routes and never the twain shall meet. It really is not. We should have as much commonality as possible between the EBacc and MBacc. We should encourage young people to do EBacc subjects as much as they can, but then allow the MBacc to have different subjects brought in—for instance, engineering. That is a tough GCSE and in high demand among employers here. Why is it looked down on?

I have never been able to justify the marginalisation of creative subjects in secondary schools. They are critical to a creative economy like ours. They build so many other life skills in young people. This is not about two rigidly separate routes. We should encourage as much commonality as possible and I think it is perfectly possible for somebody to have done the MBacc route and still apply for university, as you just described, Lord Baker. Alternatively, somebody could do the EBacc route and go on to an apprenticeship or degree apprenticeship. It is not about rigid separation at all. It is about giving all young people a path. The figures I have from my team at the moment tell me that all young people do not have that. Too many young people at years 10 and 11 feel that the school system does not give them a clear sense of where they are going in life. That cannot be right.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We are going to bring in some other Members now.

Q85 Lord Knight of Weymouth: Andy, it is really good to hear from you. I, too, am a huge fan of what you propose, but I want to voice two potential criticisms to get your response. The first is that the technical route into employment is an overly utilitarian approach. There is an enrichment of the mind and cognitive development for the individual through the more academic EBacc and that should be consistent up to the age of 16. That is one potential criticism about the distraction of creating a second route.

The other would be that the proposal sounds great but, in the end, the more aspirant parents will still want their kids to do the academic EBacc GCSEs so that they can do academic A-levels and go to academic universities; and in Greater Manchester as much as anywhere else, they are trapped culturally in a mindset of wanting their kids to go to university. How do we counter that and sell the technical route as something that aspirant parents as well as those currently losing out might want their kids to do?

Andy Burnham: It is good to see you, Jim. Again, that is a very good question. Parents already find themselves in something of a dilemma at the options stage. They know the talents and passions of their children, but the EBacc does not cater for all of that. I made reference a moment ago, to Lord Baker, to the exclusion of creative subjects from the EBacc. I think that inhibits the wider cognitive development of young people and the softer skills that employers find so valuable. I can illustrate that through personal experience. As my own youngest daughter came through the system—she is doing her last A-level tomorrow, incidentally—she wanted to take drama. These days, that has been a bit pushed to the side. I strongly supported her in that, because a course that teaches young people how to present in public and gives them the confidence to do so is absolutely a wider personal development life skill that will stand them in good stead, whatever they do in life.

The MBacc better answers what you are saying than the EBacc, which is backward-looking in some senses. I do not think that saying ancient languages are in and creative subjects are out is about allowing the wider

personal development of young people, with the creative expression and the confidence that comes from the performance involved in the creative subjects. Our proposal adds that to a system from which it is currently missing. It is about a path for everybody. The value of schools having all young people on a path that takes them somewhere will be good for everyone in that school.

Lord Knight of Weymouth: Very quickly, so as to let others in, despite all the fine words we heard initially about the EBacc, are you in the end arguing that we should have a single Bacc that recognises a broad and balanced curriculum and the application of knowledge, rather than offering these twin tracks, and kids at 14 having to make a difficult choice about which route they want to take?

Andy Burnham: I take you back to when I was shadow Education Secretary and the English baccalaureate came in; I made precisely the point that you have just made. As Mayor of Greater Manchester, I am not in a position to devise an entirely new curriculum, but I can look at what is currently there and add something that is missing. The missing piece is not trivial. I come back to the point that 64% of young people in Greater Manchester do not take or achieve the EBacc. The same figure is true of university. I am not sure that they are all the same kids, but 36% of young people in Greater Manchester go to university, meaning that 64% do not.

I do not see how, as a country, we can carry on sending such a signal to kids at 14 who do not take the university and EBacc route. They already feel a sense that the system is dis-investing from them and they are somehow a second-class student because they are not in the system that the school prioritises, which it has to do because of the way Ofsted measures school performance. In many ways, it would strengthen the EBacc if it were supplemented by, in our case, an MBacc. It would improve levels of attendance and a sense of more young people in the school being constructively engaged. I look at the figures and notice increasingly worrying signs in the system in Greater Manchester and nationally. School absences are up. Suspensions are up. Exclusions are up. There are complex reasons for that, but in my view one of them is the feeling of many young people at 14 and 15 that they cannot see where school is taking them. They start to disengage.

Q86 **The Chair:** Using your current powers as Mayor of Greater Manchester, what can you do today to make progress on this agenda, in particular in incentivising schools, colleges and pupils to start taking the idea seriously and putting it in place?

Andy Burnham: We have put in place some of the building blocks of the system I am describing. One of the first things I did as Mayor of Greater Manchester was to introduce a free bus pass for 16 to 18 year-olds in Greater Manchester. I know that it is common in London but it is not outside London. I did that as a move to raise aspiration across our city region, to send the message that all young people can plan for what they want to do at 16. I always talk about that as being our statement of

belief in them and our investment in them as a city region. It is very much a mechanism designed to lift aspiration levels and open up the excellent colleges in Greater Manchester to everybody. We are lucky here to have an outstanding post-16 provider base. You will know the sixth-form colleges—Loreto, Xaverian, Winstanley. I am being unfair because I could name them all; they are all excellent and so are our FE colleges. The Our Pass is about opening up the choice of that excellent system to all our young people.

Secondly, I brought in a system called GMACS, which was always intended to be an alternative to UCAS—a UCAS system for apprenticeships as we originally called it. It is about line of sight. You give people the means to get around the city region and then give them a line of sight to opportunity. You have a single portal where young people can look for work-related opportunity. GMACS—the Greater Manchester Apprenticeship & Career Service—is now used by way over 100,000 young people in our city region looking for those opportunities. What is missing in the system is a clear line of sight to their future. We are trying to give it to them. The whole concept of the MBacc and the measures we want to put in place at 16—I would like to talk a bit more about those later—is to create a structure for that pathway so that they can see the opportunity and then have a credible path towards it. We are already putting in measures, but they will only support the introduction of the Greater Manchester baccalaureate.

Q87 Baroness Garden of Frognal: Andy, I worked for City & Guilds for 20 years and saw at first hand how empowering it is to give credit to people who gain technical and vocational qualifications, particularly if they have effectively been written off by schools because, as you suggested, they are not academic. How can you ensure that your MBacc, the technical pathway, is suitable for the wide variety of young people? How can it relate to them? How can you convince parents, who can sometimes be the most difficult people in the mix, that these pathways are as valuable for their own youngsters as the academic ones, and probably more valuable?

Andy Burnham: Thanks, Baroness Garden. The answer to the first part of your question is that I think we need breadth in the MBacc so that it offers a route for everybody. The aim, from my point of view, would be a situation where every child in every school in Greater Manchester is either on the EBacc or the MBacc, and that there is as much commonality between those two routes as possible. Obviously, there is English and maths, but there would be encouragement for kids to take EBacc subjects if they wanted. No one is in any way saying that that is not a good thing; it is a good thing. Beyond that, we would build breadth into the MBacc and allow creative subjects or more vocational subjects. I mentioned engineering. Business studies would be an obvious one to be in the MBacc. My daughter did PE GCSE. Again, why do we not support that? It was a rigorous qualification, as far as I could see. You would also allow qualifications in the field of construction to come into view. We want to create a route for everybody.

To answer the second part of your question, the point about the MBacc as opposed to the EBacc is that it is not just me plucking subjects out of the air. In the end, the content should be decided by employers in Greater Manchester. What qualifications do employers in our city region most value? The EBacc was created via the subjects that universities most value. That is what it says on the government website; that is the justification for the choice of subjects in the EBacc. The MBacc is about the subjects that Greater Manchester employers say that they most want to see on young people's CVs. That answers your point about parents.

We found with our early experience of T-levels, from feedback from colleges, that people like them because of the sense that they are going somewhere. The work placement builds a feeling that the qualification is actually leading somewhere and is not a dead end. The whole success of the MBacc would hinge on the extent to which it is employer and industry-led. You could say to parents, "This is what people in the Greater Manchester economy say they most want. If your child is on that route, it is about meeting the needs that are out there". We have put in place early thinking about seven gateways at 16. The MBacc would steer people to seven gateways, and I could go through those for the committee if it is of interest. They have been chosen on the back of our LSIP as having the most plentiful sources of jobs and opportunities beyond them, and are the areas where the Greater Manchester economy is strongest. That answers that parental concern. This path is not a dead end. Employers tell us that young people who follow it are most likely to get good jobs because their qualifications are the ones employers want.

Q88 Lord Mair: I speak as an engineer. I am very interested in what you have been saying about the technical route and your ideas about MBacc. I want to ask about the engagement you have had with employers, which you have already mentioned, in shaping the MBacc proposal. How could employer engagement contribute to 11-16 education to an even greater extent? Could you say more about how you engaged with employers?

Andy Burnham: Thank you, Lord Mair. I see this as an employer-led or industry-led system. A paradigm shift is implied in how we organise technical education in this country. I say this in no way to minimise what our colleges do, or colleges anywhere in England do, but there is a sense that they do everything everywhere and qualifications are not necessarily linked as well as they might be to opportunities in the wider economy. This proposal is a different approach. At the Greater Manchester level, employers would articulate clearly the number of places they felt they needed. That would be communicated to the integrated technical education system. Those colleges would then work out who would deliver what to meet the needs as expressed by employers. It is a paradigm shift from a quite fragmented bottom-up system to one where there is a clear articulation of the GM economy's needs to the system and the system then works out how best to meet those needs.

I mentioned a moment ago to Lady Garden the seven gateways that we propose at 16. Briefly, they are engineering and manufacturing; financial and professional; digital and technology; creative, culture and sport; and

construction and green economy. Then there is public service: education and early years, and health and social care. Those are our gateways. In each case, I propose that an industry steering group would sit over the top of those gateways to steer qualification content and work placements and articulate to the system what is needed. I hope that answers your question. I am currently looking at it.

Today, there are names in Greater Manchester that simply were not here 30 years ago when I left university, came back to Manchester and tried to work here. In that era lots of things had left our city region and it was a pretty low point. Today, we have the BBC, GCHQ and Bank of New York. We have companies like Raytheon, which is huge in the cyber sector. We have Booking.com with a major headquarters. I could go on but you see my point. We have businesses here with huge numbers of highly sought-after jobs. The ambition and aspiration comes into the system when the kids in Greater Manchester have visibility of those names and paths and towards working for them, in the same way that the names of our universities lift aspiration. When people see the members of the working groups across the seven gateways, they will say, "Wow, okay, there are opportunities in these organisations if I follow this path". To answer earlier points, in my view this in no way is an inferior route—in no way at all. That employer-led system in the end gives parents and young people confidence. It all comes from that.

Lord Mair: Would you go as far as to say that the employers you have been interacting with favour the MBacc idea more than the EBacc route?

Andy Burnham: I would. That is not to cast any aspersions on the EBacc, but it is a university route. The government website says that very clearly. To be honest, I have been taken aback by the level of employer support for what I am describing to the committee today. I have not heard any voice in any business in GM speak against it. I was in a room in Manchester the other night with some of the biggest investors in the country. Again, there was unanimous approval for what we are trying to do.

I have seen some negative commentary come out of the Department for Education this week. I would say to them, "Just because this was not invented there in your building, do not assume that it is bad". Lots of people support what we are trying to say. We are not perfect. We accept that it could be improved, but the core prospectus of the proposal we are putting forward is supported by businesses, parents, students and schools. I was at a conference of secondary head teachers in Greater Manchester yesterday. Again, there was huge buy-in in the room. They said, "Stick to your guns because we need this to make our schools more successful than they currently are". I hope you can feel the passion coming through. I feel so strongly about this. How can I improve the life chances of the young people in Greater Manchester? I do not think there is anything more I could do to change young lives in Greater Manchester than to fix this issue and give them clearer paths.

Q89 **Baroness Evans of Bowes Park:** This all sounds fantastic. One thing

we heard from quite a lot of school leaders previously is that the language between businesses and schools does not quite work. They almost talk in different ways. It sounds from what you said about how you work that you find a lot of synergy. Could you talk more about your technical education board? You have spoken about employer engagement. As you roll this out, how will you bring the two sides together to make sure that all the great will in the work you are doing delivers and stays in synergy as economic needs change, et cetera? Do you have a vision for how you will bring that all together to make it work and roll out?

Andy Burnham: Yes, absolutely. At the moment, businesses engage a lot with schools but it is in many ways quite frustrating or haphazard because the structures are not as strong as they should be. In our organisation, we have a successful operation where business people volunteer to become enterprise and careers advisers and go into our secondary schools. We have a system of workplace safaris where groups of young people can go into a workplace setting for a day or part of a week. We have work shadowing. We have done a lot of that stuff, but it is not as structured as it should be. That is the point. Once you get a system of the kind I am describing, schools and business will move closer together in a more structured way.

I am a big believer that the proposal would also allow a richer form of work experience than we have ever managed in this country, whereby the members of the working groups I mentioned would be encouraged not just to shape the post-16 offer but to provide work experience to the 14 and 15 year-olds on the MBacc route. The answer to your question is that, if you create a structure as opposed to what is a quite fragmented landscape, you bring all the partners together and everyone has clarity about where to go and how to access the opportunities they need. The lack of that has bedevilled the whole ability of businesses to work with schools. It happens, but in quite an unstructured way.

Q90 **Baroness Blower:** Hi Andy. What you have said is very interesting and we can definitely sense your passion for it coming across, even through the screen. I have a slightly philosophical question. To what extent should a school's secondary curriculum be tailored to its locality? I am interested in this because, although clearly you are talking about Greater Manchester and the opportunities in Greater Manchester, there is also a national curriculum and we have to make sure that there are opportunities for people everywhere. You cannot necessarily influence that, but do you have a sense of the extent to which the secondary curriculum should be affected by its locality? Is there a risk that parameters and aspirations are closed down if it is tailored too much to locality?

Andy Burnham: That is a good question. I come back to the point about breadth in the MBacc and a permissive approach. We must not move too far from the notion that this is what employers here say they value. For a young person growing up in Greater Manchester, it is important that they know and have clearer knowledge and understanding of what is actually

out there in the Greater Manchester labour market. They are then perhaps more likely to stay engaged with what is happening at school because there is the sense of a path leading somewhere real that they know about. It is in their area so it is real to them. The sense of localisation of this route is important because it will then mean something to young people. They do not necessarily have the sense at the moment that it leads to something that they can credibly do.

To answer your point, it is quite right to import breadth into the MBacc offer, as I said, and make sure that there is the opportunity to provide a route for everybody. If we followed the logic of that in other areas, if there was an LBacc in Liverpool or London, it might be 80% or 90% the same but it may have something different in it. Obviously, in Liverpool it might be linked to transport and marine operations, et cetera. That would be different from ours, but it would still point people towards a real opportunity within their reach, therefore enhancing the chances of keeping them engaged at school.

In the current situation, what is the message to kids who do not take the EBacc? That is the worst of all worlds and risks people becoming disengaged and, as I said before, becoming absent from school, suspended or whatever. That then potentially affects the performance of the kids on the EBacc. No one seems to profit from that approach, as far as I am concerned, so you maintain breadth but you allow localisation to make sure that there are credible pathways to real opportunities in the world that the young people inhabit.

Baroness Blower: What you are really saying is that the MBacc will work brilliantly in Greater Manchester but there is a need to look at this kind of localisation everywhere. Clearly what is happening in coastal towns and rural areas will be completely different from the opportunities in Greater Manchester, but they should not be second-class by comparison with what is available in our great cities.

Andy Burnham: That is absolutely what I am saying. Technical education in this country will never work unless there is an element of devolution and an ability to shape it linked to the real circumstances of different regions. I would go further than that. The reason it has not worked is that there has not been sufficient devolution in the arrangements for technical education.

Q91 **Lord Aberdare:** I have a specific question related to Lady Blower's question. I am very struck by what you said. I was involved in the passage of the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill, where the whole concept of LSIPs came up. You mentioned the involvement of LSIPs in your seven gateways. Where does the LSIP fit into this and how central a part is it of the process as a whole? Obviously, that would very much relate to how other cities or areas might approach the same sort of challenges that you have been addressing in such a thoughtful way.

Andy Burnham: Thank you, Lord Aberdare. This is the logical extension of the policy direction that you contributed to in the *Skills for Jobs* White

Paper. What we are doing amplifies that and accelerates its impact, making it more likely to succeed. T-levels will be at risk if they are too much designed from 200 miles away. They work if there are high levels of employer engagement, a plentiful supply of good work placements to support them and an ability for employers to shape the content of the courses. This proposal aims to bring forward what that tried to do.

The LSIP was a great exercise here in Greater Manchester, led by the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce. Everything I am saying to the committee today flows from that. Clive Memmott, chief executive of the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce, who led that piece of work, is a strong supporter of what I am saying. Everything I am putting to the committee is rooted in the evidence of that LSIP process. I do not think I am at odds with anybody in the department. I simply say that providing the opportunity for localisation of the system and creating it more as a system that employers can shape is what will actually make all the ingredients successful.

T-levels may struggle if they are left in a sort of no man's land, where no one has real ownership of them at regional level. I am happy to put T-levels at the heart of the system and see if we can knock them into shape a bit, if I can use that phrase. They need a bit of that but, alongside that, do not defund BTECs or other qualifications. I am quite happy for T-levels to bring the ambition to this, alongside A-levels. No problem. We feel that we can make them work, but do not defund other routes in doing that. That would not be fair. Some people might do BTECs and then T-levels.

Lord Knight of Weymouth: I have a related supplementary question. I am sold on what you are saying. Is there not an extension of it that, ultimately, if you are properly responsive to your employers through the different pillars you set out, you are likely to have to develop qualifications that have the ability your employers need? You will then also need the capability, capacity and resource to develop the workforce. Attracting lecturers to teach electrical engineering apprenticeships is a real headache because they are paid about half what you get as an electrical engineer. There is a workforce challenge and a qualification challenge as you roll this out. Are you trying to work through that?

Andy Burnham: It absolutely is, Jim. That is what the industry working groups around each of our gateways would do. Let us be clear about this: every employer in Greater Manchester worries about the issue. It is not about dragging them to the table; they are running to it. They say, "Let's get our hands on this and be involved". Honestly, the level of enthusiasm among businesses and employers for what we are saying is unbelievable. It is huge. That is not a politician's claim but a reflection of reality. They are worried about workforce, as you know, and about skills shortages. They say, "Let's do it". They get frustrated by trying to work around an unstructured system where they expend huge amounts of time and energy trying to get what they want from the system and often find that they cannot. This is about making it much easier for them to work the system, and make it work. To answer your question, it is so important to

them that I can imagine some of the big players seconding people to work in colleges in the teaching roles that you described.

Lord Knight of Weymouth: You could supplement qualifications like the T-level with certification of the skills they might need more readily.

Andy Burnham: Correct. I also think that in the modern economy you must have a slightly dynamic approach because skill needs change so fast. They are really changing. Let us talk about Britain plc for a moment. If we do not do this and get a proper solution to technical education, growth in the regions of England will be even more at risk than it is already. I go around the world and speak to potential investors in Greater Manchester. They really only want to talk about talent and people. That is the only thing that guides investment decisions. Of course, they look at tax and other things, but they are most worried about whether they can access talent: "Have you got a skills system that gives confidence?"

Lord Baker of Dorking: Lady Blower raised a very interesting point. Can you spread your idea across the country? I think you can. It may not be called MBacc somewhere else. We have been approached by a school in the north-west of England where the whole area is totally focused on agriculture and horticulture. They only want to do agriculture and horticulture and the farmers all want them to do it. It is, if you like, a farmer Bacc. That is what could happen across the country, and various groups would emerge.

What is so encouraging from all that you said is your understanding that employer engagement is key. However, if you are to succeed, you will do so through employer engagement of people in Manchester who are totally and utterly committed. One proposal of UTC sleeves is an advisory board for each sleeve comprised of employers in the majority. You would have that automatically with the sleeve. In all UTCs, the majority of the governing bodies are employers. We expect them to bring in projects for students to work on, to take them into their business, to explain the latest machinery and most sophisticated equipment, and all that sort of stuff. You are already switched into employer engagement. That is excellent.

Andy Burnham: Absolutely and completely. Let us take a more rural area close to me, such as Cumbria or Cheshire. Of course, there could be a CBacc. Again, you would want a lot of commonality between the MBacc and the CBacc without it getting too technical, but there would clearly be a higher horticultural or agricultural component in areas where there was a bigger agricultural sector. The model is completely transferable to all parts of England. It would allow regions to tweak a bit and say, "We wouldn't put construction in because it isn't as big here and we will put something different in its place". The whole point is that it is industry-led because then you guide people to real opportunity, rather than what can happen in the current system where young people get qualifications that do not give them what they need to access local opportunity.

The UTC sleeve idea fits perfectly with it. As I said, I supported the original UTCs. On the point about young people changing school at 14, the lack of a system of confidence around it was probably what held that reform back. Your reform of a UTC sleeve combined with colleges in the system specialising more, with collaboration between FE and schools with specialisation, is a good thing. Here in Greater Manchester, the University of Salford has just been awarded an institute of technology. We are really pleased and proud about that. I see the University of Salford sitting atop the system and guiding the pyramid beneath it, where you have FE colleges and schools specialising more, making the ecosystem work and building in expertise right down the system. We are on the same page. For me, the systematising of the whole thing makes it work, with the ability to bring a local or regional emphasis where you need to.

The Chair: Mr Mayor, thank you very much for your explanation of the MBacc. It has been a fascinating session and we are grateful to you for sparing the time to be with us this morning. Thank you again.

Andy Burnham: Thank you very much, Chair, and thanks to all the members of the committee for your interest in what we are proposing. It has been a really good opportunity for us.

The Chair: Thank you.