

Education Committee

Oral evidence: [Left behind White pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, HC 85](#)

Wednesday 19 May 2021

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Members present: Robert Halfon (Chair); Fleur Anderson; Apsana Begum; Jonathan Gullis; Tom Hunt; Kim Johnson; David Johnston; Ian Mearns; David Simmonds.

Questions 412-482

Witnesses

I: Dr Tony Sewell CBE, Chair, Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, Martyn Oliver, Commissioner, Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, and Professor Steve Strand, Professor of Education, University of Oxford.

Written evidence from witnesses:

– [Add names of witnesses and hyperlink to submissions]

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Dr Tony Sewell, Martyn Oliver and Professor Steve Strand.

Chair: Good morning, everyone. We are pleased to have some of the commissioners and experts from the Government's race disparities commission. I am pleased to have you here today. There has been a lot of media noise about your report. Having read the education section very carefully, clearly it is a very important piece of work. Can I ask you to introduce yourselves and your positions? I will start with you, Tony.

Dr Sewell: My name is Dr Tony Sewell. I was chair of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities.

Professor Strand: I am Steve Strand, professor of education at the University of Oxford's Department of Education. I contributed some analysis towards the report.

Martyn Oliver: Good morning. I am Martyn Oliver, a commissioner on the commission, and I chaired the education section. I am also a headteacher and leader of a multi-academy trust.

Q412 **Chair:** I will start off with a number of questions, and then I will pass over to my colleagues for their sections. You will be aware that we are doing a long inquiry into the lack of attainment of disadvantaged White working-class boys and girls. You highlight that in your report. What are your views on why White working-class disadvantaged pupils are doing worse than most other ethnic groups?

Dr Sewell: Thanks for that introduction, Robert. Quite clearly, we pin it really around this whole issue of socioeconomic disparity; we see that as a key driver in this. If you think about it, of the 20 most deprived neighbourhoods, 19 are in the north, and a high proportion of White pupils will be in those areas. So social deprivation is a key driver.

There are other things around that, which Martyn looked at in more detail. But I think that, for us, there are also family aspirations and quality of schools, and we go on really around that area. But we do really feel that there is that whole issue of being socially deprived.

That is interesting, because when we look at ethnic minority groups or other groups who may have similar socioeconomic issues, these things are not necessarily coming through. So there is something key about geography—something key about where you live. Martyn, I don't know if want to pick up on any of that.

Martyn Oliver: In the commission, and my own professional expertise in this, one of the things that we want to be very clear about—it was a piece of evidence presented to us by Her Majesty's chief inspector—is that good schools are good for all types of children. So we know that good leadership, good governance, good curriculum, good teaching, good behaviour, good culture, good pastoral support and high aspirations are



good for all children. We absolutely know that good schooling is critical to the raising of aspirations.

But it is clear when you look at parents' professional backgrounds, family income, the geography and the employment opportunities that all these factors affect schools. They affect the ability of schools to attract staff in the first place to achieve that good education. Really interesting, and a big part of this education chapter, is the work of Professor Strand, who teased out these areas, not to explain away ethnic disparities but to go upstream and find the root causes, so that we could make in this chapter six positive recommendations and a number of other recommendations to try and improve things and level up.

Q413 Chair: Thank you. I will come on to you, Professor Strand, because my next question is related, and I will come to you to answer it first, if that is okay. In your report, you referenced what you call an "immigrant paradigm", where "recent immigrants devote themselves more to education than the native population because they lack financial capital and see education as a way out of poverty". In fact, you link the lower attainment of Afro-Caribbean pupils to being here for a longer time than other immigrant populations.

In essence, the theory is that if you come from nothing, you are more likely to see the value of education. So why do you think this does not also apply to disadvantaged White communities, who may also face significant deprivation?

Professor Strand: I guess the bottom line is that the longer that you have been exposed to poverty and disadvantage, maybe the more stupefying the effects of it become. So those communities that have experienced intergenerational unemployment, and the closure of huge heavy industries such as coal, shipbuilding and steel, maybe don't see that education has delivered very much for their parents and maybe don't have the same belief in the transformative power of education. That is true for both White British and Black Caribbean and mixed White-Black Caribbean young people; these communities are very closely tied. It is important to always bear in mind that the overriding impact here is that of social class, and that it is both White British and Black Caribbean young people—boys in particular—from those disadvantaged backgrounds who have the lowest attainment.

Dr Sewell: When we look at disparities, we often look at things in a very negative way, but what we could call the immigrant paradigm—an optimism that they had—*[Interruption.]*

Chair: Could you start again, please?

Dr Sewell: Yes. I think we need to see this as a very positive attribute in immigrant communities, particularly communities that have come here recently. It was there in the African-Caribbean community in the early days as well; this is not to say that they do not have that. What is really interesting about it is the London factor, in particular. Often, people have talked about the London success in education, but that has to be



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attributed to a lot of immigrants coming into that space and really doing well educationally. If you look at the numbers, they really drive that.

- Q414 **Chair:** In your section on education, you recommend that “the Secretary of State for Education, in collaboration with the government’s education recovery commissioner, urgently consider phasing in an extended school day”, which is something I support. Would you not agree, however, that the focus cannot be purely on academic tuition and catch-up, but should also be on enrichment activities such as sports, music and the arts if we are to ensure that we engage the most disadvantaged children? We know that extra sporting and wellbeing activities increase educational attainment, which is something we all want to do. We have a high rate of persistent absences, at just under 11%. Surely the extra school hours and activities on offer, including sports, mental health and so on, would actually bring these children back into the fold, as well as academic catch-up.

Martyn Oliver: Absolutely. A great deal of expertise is doing this. In my own organisation, we offer tens of thousands of hours of enrichment to children involved in those cultural and artistic events. Those social events, where different groups come together, and perhaps even different age groups, provide a sense of social cohesion. We are absolutely not talking in this recommendation about extra English or extra maths. We are talking about getting involved in not just school events but local community events. We think that is a massively important part of this recommendation.

To be clear, we made this recommendation for all time, not just for this time; it is not a covid response. We were thinking about this as an important part. We know that many schools offer additional time, but we know that there are significant and very serious challenges for the Department for Education in carrying this out. We list those very real challenges, but they will actually not negate the quality of the profession and their working conditions.

- Q415 **Chair:** Could I ask you about careers guidance? In your report, you say: “Male White British pupils eligible for FSM are the least likely of all the main ethnic or social groups to progress to higher education by age 19, at just 12.7%.” You talk about better careers guidance in schools and university outreach programmes—absolutely—but are you really confident that careers guidance alone will plug this gap? Given what you have said previously about the cultural gap, how do you address the issue of cultural capital—the idea that some disadvantaged pupils may have that university or further education just isn’t for them, and that better-off families will have access to a network of contacts and employer links?

Dr Sewell: One thing that inspired us to look at this area was the comparison with independent schools. Employing a teacher in a school is a very expensive investment. They would employ maybe one or two teachers solely devoted to getting lots of their pupils into Oxbridge and other top universities—that is their work. They do that from year 7. You



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have in those schools children running around, in a sense, with a real academic confidence, almost knowing which Oxford college they want to be in when they are in year 8. Why should that just be for one group? What we want in our recommendation is maybe those kinds of teachers, or that kind of resource, in our state schools, maybe shared within an academy or whatever, but really working with those young people from upstream, beginning to build that aspiration with them, and particularly with their families. That is another intervention: that you work with the families to understand the real value of higher education. We think that would work, particularly with White pupils from poor backgrounds.

Q416 Chair: The Secretary of State is going to announce this morning that there will be £14 million extra for family hubs, which is good news and something that you have also supported—£14 million is obviously welcome, but it is not a massive sum. Given what you have said, where would be the best place to put these family hubs around the country? How would you target it?

Dr Sewell: Martyn already has some of them in his schools. Martyn, do you want to address that?

Martyn Oliver: Yes, I will address that and the previous question at the same time. Looking at one on its own won't solve any of the disparities that we found for all of these groups. Whether it is teacher representation; moving the access funding—I think it is something like £800 million that the universities have on access funding; giving the Office for Students greater powers to target that; or bringing that up or downstream to earlier-age children, all of these are really important.

I think your last question, on where family hubs should be, is tied to what we are talking about regarding funding. We are saying, do not look blanket at regions and areas—don't be crude in the way that you measure disparities. For example, I am sitting today in Wakefield, and there are some areas of Wakefield where results are exceptionally high, and others where they are exceptionally low. Therefore, targeting Wakefield would be a crude measure, but you can drill down into more local data within regions and say that there are clearly pockets and disparities in the performance of children. That is where those family hubs should be co-located.

Q417 Chair: I am glad you mentioned micro-targeting, because I have a couple more questions before I pass to my colleagues. You call for new, additional funding to systematically target disparities. Would the funding replace or reform the existing funding mechanisms, including the pupil premium and use of the IDACI in the national funding formula? Are you calling for additional resource—new money—or redistributing the existing funding through one metric for disadvantage? If it is the latter, do you favour a particular metric to measure disadvantage? It seems to me that the pupil premium, while very welcome, is not necessarily targeted—it covers pupils over 6 years. It is also not ring-fenced, and the Sutton Trust has shown that a significant amount of pupil premium money, meant for disadvantaged pupils, is often spent on other problems that the



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school may be having, such as literally fixing a leaking roof, or whatever it might be.

Martyn Oliver: I agree with all your points, and the answer is really complex—it is both. The beauty of pupil premium funding is that you are getting it, as you say, over the six years, and you are fairly stable in the amount of pupil premium children that a school has. Therefore, you can actually start to rely upon that income as part of your structural fund, and then you can start to employ people based upon that.

The Department for Education are absolutely the best placed to look at this. To be clear, the national fairer funding formula has only just been introduced, and we haven't seen the true impact of that. We are asking for the Department for Education to introduce long-term funding. In one way, opportunity areas offer some sense of long-term funding and bring in different actors. The trouble is that the funding does not go for long enough. You cannot employ attendance officers or mental health support workers for more than one, two or three years before the funding runs out, and then the school is left in a deficit budget position and it can no longer afford those core key places. It makes it hard to attract great staff in the first place if you are not offering permanent employment.

We are asking for the Department to use that same micro-vision of disparity, drill down, and then put funding in place for the long term so that structural change can happen. It should target the funding not just at schools but at all the services. For example, if attendance is low in a region, that should be the work of the police, social services, family hubs, schools and education welfare officers as part of the local authority; all those actors should be galvanised to focus on that one problem. That funding should be targeted and should have very clear key performance metrics so the Government can hold it to account.

Q418 **Chair:** Thank you. Finally, evidence from the United States shows what they call the significant positive role model effect, which is the idea that pupils engage better in their lessons when they identify shared attributes and characteristics in their teachers. Do you think there would be more merit and better pupil outcomes if the Government were to incentivise a more diverse teaching workforce? When I say diverse, I don't mean just by race or ethnic minority; I mean also by economic background. How can we encourage more people from disadvantaged backgrounds to enter the teaching workforce? At the moment, we have a postgraduate teaching apprenticeship, and the take-up is very low. Should we not perhaps offer a teaching degree apprenticeship and set up very localised teacher training recruitment agencies in areas of significant disadvantage?

Dr Sewell: One of the problems that we have is that, if you think about the graduate outcomes for ethnic minorities—particularly people from a Black background—a highly qualified graduate in, say, STEM is not likely to go into teaching. The struggle that we have got is the amount of push-through from that space. That is one of the reasons why you see a gap. Organisations like Teach First should be focused more on trying to get



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more of those types of high-performing ethnic minority graduates, even if it is a two or three-year platform, inside their programme so that we can have more diversity. I think that is one way. Martyn deals with recruitment data, so—

Q419 **Chair:** I think Professor Strand wanted to answer. Can you just respond to that? Should there be teaching degree apprenticeships, not just postgraduate teaching degree apprenticeships?

Professor Strand: It is important that it is a high-quality, high-status profession, which means that a university-based route is generally a very effective one. There is sometimes an assumption that, if it is university-based, those trainees are not in schools, but they spend two thirds of their time in schools during their PGCE year, so there is a lot of practical experience. Certainly, I think we need to diversify the workforce to a larger extent. In London now, of course, a very high proportion of the workforce is from low SES and ethnic minority backgrounds. It is very variable across the country, which is something that the commission brought out.

Q420 **Chair:** I was also talking about income background, not just diversity. At the moment, as I understand it, you do not have that many teachers from a working-class background. Is that correct?

Professor Strand: There is a difference between primary and secondary. You can do a first degree in education at primary phase. It is a postgraduate qualification, predominantly, in secondary, so because you are drawing from graduates, you have all the slants that you might expect for those who have gone in to do a degree.

Q421 **Chair:** Martyn, did you want to comment on that?

Martyn Oliver: Yes. It was not part of the commission, but the DfE are currently doing an ITT—initial teacher training—market review, and they are looking at some of these areas. I know that they have got some really exciting and innovative groups, like, for example, the institute of teaching, that they are exploring.

In our commission's report, we talk a lot about the importance of representation of the community. We think that having teachers and staff who can relate to the children is a massively important aspect of this. However, it is really important that I go back to what Her Majesty's chief inspector said: a good teacher is by far the most important influence. You have to put these things into the right order.

Q422 **David Simmonds:** Stepping back from some of the detail, I would like to ask the panel its view on the current state overall of ethnic disparities within the education system and what the Government's key priorities in addressing those should be.

I am aware of the research done by Professor Shamit Saggar, which highlights that if we look at groups of children, those in the system who come from a minority ethnic background of Indian heritage or Chinese heritage tend to do extremely well in our current system, whereas



children from Bangladeshi heritage, for example, tend to do less well. How should we approach the overall position knowing those nuances and how they affect individual communities and people?

Dr Sewell: I do not know if Steve has any data on that.

Professor Strand: Yes, what was important about the analysis I did for the commission was that there are three key aspects in equality law, which has been attention to race, to sex and to class, and what has happened in a lot of the recent debate is it has become very funnelled—people are either interested just in ethnicity or just in gender or just in class—so that kind of nuancing has been missed.

One of the things I was able to do was to say if we look at race, sex and class together, we get two things. First, we get a relative feel for the size of these gaps. We can see that the social class gap is eight times bigger than the Black-White achievement gap and the gender gap is three times larger than the Black-White achievement gap. That gives us an important sense of the wood, if you like, but we also see the details of the trees, which is that, in most of the comparisons that you then draw between ethnic groups of the same social class and gender, in most cases—in fact, almost all cases—those young people are doing as well or better than comparable White British young people. There is only a very small number of incidences where there is evidence of underachievement. You mentioned Bangladeshi young people there. In terms of their achievement, they do incredibly well—significantly higher than White British young people.

Largely, ethnicity is a positive aspect. It is a facilitator of educational achievement. It is something that is protective, particularly in young people from disadvantaged backgrounds; it is a protective factor, because of issues about aspiration, motivation and engagement with education.

Dr Sewell: I would like the research community to do more investigation into that success factor and have some celebration—have some news stories about how great, for example, Bangladeshi girls are doing. Why can't we have a great news story about their success? They are doing so well—in London. But if we go outside, there is another story. That is the other issue with the disparity that we need to look at.

I would love us to have Steve's community delving more into the reasons why these groups are doing well. Again, we are not putting aside the reality of racism and poverty as real hardship, but let's find out why they do well.

Q423 David Simmonds: The second part of the question was about what the Government's priorities should be in addressing those disparities. What has been described very much feels right. I was around at the time of the London challenge and all the research the DfE did about that. You could see the improvement in schools in London that was arising from the diversity of our capital city. Do any of the panellists have any initial thoughts—not final policy proposals—about how the Government might



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learn from the research and what that might mean in policy terms, for example about the way in which school admissions are managed or the way in which investments are prioritised in particular areas?

Dr Sewell: On a policy level, I would like the Government to really begin to now take these lessons from London, in a sense. It is not about simply lifting it up and putting it somewhere else; surely, there have to be things that we can learn about how we do well. One of the factors is family influence—how you motivate children upstream to really drive success. You can turn that into a policy. This commission is the first time we have looked at race and family. We have to try to see how we can strengthen families and give them more resources so that they can really help their young people. Early years is another factor that we might want to think about in terms of good policies.

David Simmonds: Thank you, that is very helpful and clear.

Chair: I am going to call David Johnston now. Today we are going to follow the list.

Q424 **David Johnston:** Tony, I would like to start with a specific question for you. Many years ago I read your book “Black Masculinities in Schooling”. I am sorry to say you wrote that about 25 years ago, so you have been working on this for some time. To what extent do you think the problems you identified in that still apply? The exclusion data show that Black boys, particularly Black Caribbean boys, are still disproportionately excluded. Do you think there is the same problem that you identified back in the 90s? Has the nature of that changed?

Dr Sewell: I think the same issues are going on. It is interesting that we may begin to see a turn now, because of the success rate of African pupils coming along. That really does focus the mind on where the problem lies. There are some real issues about culture, peer groups and family strain. I think that, in a sense, that helps us to find a policy that will support families, not condemn them or stigmatise them. That is the shift in the thinking. We have a situation where you are 24 times more likely to be a victim of homicide if you are Black, compared with the White group. That is a huge disparity.

Q425 **David Johnston:** Absolutely. In your Generating Genius work, have you seen any schools that you think are particularly good at that, which do not reach for exclusion immediately, and have created a more supportive or more encouraging environment?

Dr Sewell: A number of schools do that. Their models seem to work around having a culture and leadership in the school that is driven by success. Also, it is very important to talk about discipline and behaviour. That is the key element in the school dynamic that seems not to work for different pupils. In the schools that I have come across that have a culture where there are high expectations of pupils, where the discipline and the rituals in the schools are there from an early age, you can begin to see that children are happier.



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Those are the elements inside schools that work. We have great models of how to do that. If we were to roll them out further, we would find fewer exclusions. We recommend Tom Bennett's work on the teaching of behaviour. I did the programme that was funded by a teaching union called Learning to Succeed. It is a strange thing to do, but you almost teach the children how to manage their teachers. It was almost a reverse logic. It is not that you are blaming the student, but you give scenarios, such as how to manage their peers. For a lot of students, the conflict management area is difficult. Schools that teach behaviour—in how they work and interact with students—is a great way forward.

- Q426 **David Johnston:** Broader questions now—I do not mind who answers them. One thing your report suggests is that the Department should consider what additional data is needed on the variations that we have seen to have a more holistic definition of need. Will you be a bit more specific about what you mean by “holistic definition of need” and how that would help us to understand disadvantage?

Dr Sewell: Martyn is good on that.

Martyn Oliver: Let us look, for example, at attendance rates in an area and funding attached to poor levels of attendance. If you are not in school, there are issues of safeguarding and the ability to educate in schools. It becomes a vicious cycle, because now schools are chasing children and spending time chasing children into school, rather than spending time checking on the quality of the education that is on offer.

If you go right down to early years, we have children coming in, in our most deprived communities, who are still not potty trained—they are in nappies. You start to look at that as an issue. You think, “Hold on a minute, we now have holistic levels of need here”, which we can identify from the early years work and the family hub work.

You then look at family breakdown. There is some good research in the report about the issues of family breakdown—again, not to blame families or single parents, but to say that raising a child is a really difficult thing to do and to ask what support can be given to a family to make sure that the very best help is offered. You then look at exclusion rates as another area, another set of data to focus on, regarding the clear take of education—or not—within a community.

When you look at all those holistically, rather than looking at how many people are passing English and maths, or how many people are achieving an attainment 8 or progress 8 score, you can start to go upstream and target that funding. You can move the funding not only away from just being given to schools, but to all actors within a community that can improve education.

- Q427 **David Johnston:** I can see that. Do you think that the Department should be encouraging greater scrutiny and debate of the issues? It could put data prominently in the public domain. Departments often have a tendency to put it somewhere on the website, so if you know how to find



it, you can. It could more actively be saying, "Here's the data. Let's have a debate about what is behind it and what we can do to fix it."

Martyn Oliver: Education is rich in, and probably has more, data than any other sector we looked at as a commission. Steve has some good points on this.

Professor Strand: If we start to look at race, sex and class together, we see two instances of underachievement: one is Black boys from high socioeconomic backgrounds; and the other is Pakistani girls from high socioeconomic backgrounds. We then start to ask such questions as, "Why only boys, not girls, in the case of Black pupils?", and, "Why high socioeconomic backgrounds, not others?" In that sense, we have to get a bit more forensic about what the need is, identifying more directly the groups and the particular intersections of race, sex and class where there are issues with achievement at 16.

Martyn Oliver: But we know that some interventions are good for everyone, so early years, and involving in literacy and reading are hugely important. If there is a significant focus on that, all groups benefit.

Dr Sewell: On that, David, one of the things that has come out of this is that, although there is a need to go for very specific targeting—we talked about that as well—if you look in this country over the past 10 to 15 years, it has also been the bigger kinds of educational policy interventions, like academies, free schools, the whole area of school autonomy, the inspectorate and things like that. Those bigger things seem to come in and help ethnic minority and poorer outcomes. It seems to be that that is the area—we need to be in the macro picture as much as in the targeted picture.

Q428 **David Johnston:** You propose interventions from early years all the way through to careers guidance for older students. Do you have any sense of how much funding is needed across the various interventions? If you don't—I understand if you don't—would you put a weighting on one particular area? Certain people think it is all about early years; I personally think that that is very important, but by itself it doesn't propel you through the rest of your life. Do you have any sense of how much money is needed? If not, where would you focus the funding across the lifecycle?

Dr Sewell: Martyn might have another idea, but I have one figure: £800 million. That is the money that goes into the wider participation activities of universities. I think that could be used upstream.

David Johnston: That is a very diplomatic way of putting it.

Chair: It is clearly not working. It is a lot of money that goes down the drain, in my view.

Dr Sewell: You guys said it; I didn't. What I am saying is that it is a contested area. I think we need to shift some of that resource into schools and begin to get some of those teachers pushing it the other way, so that



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we push working-class White boys and certain ethnic and Black Caribbean pupils towards those universities—it is the other driver. Rather than pupils coming in, we push them, which is what happens in the independent schools. I would like to see that kind of figure. The OfS have asked if they can have some; at the moment they feel that they can scrutinise universities, but they would like to get their hands on some of that cash. Maybe we could do something for them so that it is much more targeted to that in-school support.

Q429 David Johnston: One final quick question. A couple of weeks ago I met my local police. One thing that they would really like—I think this is true of a lot of police forces—is access to attendance data at school, because a lot of the people who are regularly truant end up as people that the police have to deal with. It is a strong indicator that you will be interacting with them if you are absent from school quite a bit, but they say that schools and local authorities are often very secretive about this data because they think it reflects badly on the school. You might not have a view on this, but would you support school attendance data being more widely available to the police, given the connection with truancy?

Chair: Martyn, you were nodding.

Martyn Oliver: It is not something the commission looked at, but in my view the work of the safer school partnerships' police officers is massively important. My personal experience is that we have had brilliant officers—sometimes we have even employed these officers full time. They can have a tremendous impact on a community, so the sharing of that data is hugely important, but there are other agencies we are working with—housing associations, local authorities—where everyone is focused on that. Again, it should not be seen as a school problem. It is actually a community issue if children are not attending school. All of those actors need to be involved and energised to tackle that problem.

Q430 Tom Hunt: The foreword to the report mentions various factors as being important in explaining disparities: culture, socioeconomic background, geography. Another point mentioned was religion. I want to get a sense from all of you of how important you think religion can be in explaining some of these disparities.

Dr Sewell: It can have a positive effect, particularly for ethnic minorities. It is interesting. David might agree with me. Sometimes there are stereotypes around the fact that we are not used to rituals and that if you send an ethnic minority pupil to Oxford University they will feel isolated, but culturally, if you come from a religious background, you are used to ritualistic backgrounds. Having dinners, standing up and down and putting your hands on your head and things that you would do in a context that might be difficult, I find that in fact we are very good at that. It helps in discipline as well. I can see how, in a very positive way, religion is part of that immigrant optimism.

Martyn Oliver: Can I come in on the back of that? I think that, equally, being part of a cohesive community group is hugely important. We talk in



the report about a particular experience: one of our witnesses was picked up by somebody walking down the street who was asking them what their school day had been like and how well they were progressing in school. Once you feel part of a community, that provides additionality to the family hub. You have other people who care about you; you have the community who are working together. That, hugely importantly, gives children greater exposure to adult interactions. Too many of our most disadvantaged children have too much time just in their own peer groups; they do not interact with adults of a different class and therefore learn those social structures and boundaries. All those things, as well as just a deep personal faith, are hugely important.

- Q431 Tom Hunt:** Thank you, that is very useful. In terms of making sure we have the best teachers possible in the areas where they are probably needed the most, in the most deprived areas, there is an appreciation that, to many, going into a deprived area as a teacher would be an inspiring thing to do, and it is something that many would want to do, but I guess we also need to recognise that it is a very stressful job and perhaps more stressful than it would be in a less deprived area. The report does say how important teachers are to overcoming these disparities and talk about the role that Teach First plays and so on, but, in a very practical way, what steps do you think could be taken to help recruitment and retention of high-quality teaching staff in the most deprived areas? Would you envisage something like financial incentives potentially playing a role?

Martyn Oliver: Again, I do not want to pre-empt the independent DfE review of initial teacher training and the work that that is doing, but you have strong groups of schools. I have spent my entire adult life—the last 26 years—going into some of the most deprived schools and actively seeking to work in them. I think that if you have a group that is focused like that, you can deploy teachers. There are many instances where I am struggling to recruit to the more deprived areas for my organisation, but we recruit centrally and can then send those staff into those areas and give them a good career.

I also link that back to the extended day and the funding, which you quite rightly pointed to. In our recommendation, we talk about the extended day being an opportunity for the teaching workforce to modernise. As you can probably hear in the background—I apologise—the bell rings in a school and you move from one lesson to another; you have to be there at the start and you have to be there at the end. It is very regimented. I think that, actually, the profession can embrace part-time working and flexible working. There is no reason why you cannot start early, finish early, start late, finish late and still be paid under your same terms and conditions. I think there is an awful lot that can happen and we really do need to modernise big parts of the profession.

- Q432 Tom Hunt:** There was something that concerned me slightly about the report. There was a comment about trying to improve ethnic diversity with regard to teaching staff, and there was a point that there may be some pushback from the ethnic majority group to ethnic minority



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teachers, which is clearly something of concern. I just wanted to probe that a bit further and understand more what the report meant by that, what evidence there is of it and how widespread it is.

Dr Sewell: I don't recall that. We just advocate—we want—a more diverse workforce in the classrooms. That is a key recommendation and we think that is important. We know it's difficult. Martyn has come up with some ideas to make that happen and we have come up with some recommendations around that, but our key thing in looking at that area is that we just want pupils, wherever possible, to see a range of teachers in front of them.

The point about teachers coming from different socioeconomic backgrounds, poorer backgrounds, is, I think, a key one, as is more males in nurseries and primary schools. This is another key factor that I think would help to make things more diverse. How do you attract those people? That is a hard one, but I do think it is important.

Q433 Tom Hunt: I have a final question. We have quite a large Roma community in my constituency. There has been an issue where one school in particular with a high number of Roma pupils was doing a really good job of getting them engaged in the education system, and their attendance was high; unfortunately, when they had to go to remote learning things changed. There was a distinct difference between the children from the Roma community and the other children in terms of how engaged they were, and getting them back to school when the school reopened has been a real challenge. To what extent is there going to be research on the Roma community, because there are particular cultural factors there that may be contributing towards this?

Martyn Oliver: Again, when you come on to Professor Strand's work, you will see how small the data sample was, so that was a difficult area for us to interrogate from a national point of view, but we were aware that the Department for Education was looking at this area very specifically. We welcome those views, but yes, we agree that when we go to what works we also need to look at those smaller groups where we have to identify really good policy interventions. I think the Department is on that.

Q434 Kim Johnson: Good morning, panel. Mr Sewell, the report states that "all pupils should be equipped with a wider understanding of the UK which encompasses the contributions made by different groups, cultures and regions." Should that also include how racism impacts on Black people, and how do you react when this is often referred to as "political activism" and "ideological dogma"? Should the Government intervene in how schools and other publicly funded organisations delivering services for children talk to children and young people about contested topics such as racial hierarchy?

Dr Sewell: I agree that pupils should be debating, and should be engaged in these areas. Where the curriculum has space for that, yes I do think that that should happen. We need to help our teachers, though, to make sure that they obey the law and also the instructions of the DfE, so that they do not end up in a situation where they might get themselves into



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trouble in terms of what they say. That is difficult for teachers, so they need guidance, and some help and support there, but I agree with you. I do think that these areas should be in the curriculum and we should discuss them.

Q435 **Kim Johnson:** Thank you. You will be aware that a group of MPs have written to the Charity Commission regarding some of the teachings and some discussions that have been had about this whole debate around White privilege. As a Black working-class woman I have experienced racial hierarchy on a regular basis. I would just like to get a take on your understanding of this whole debate and narrative at the moment.

Dr Sewell: As I said, I think that teachers need guidance. In classrooms and schools we have to be careful in terms of supporting our teachers, but once teachers have been given the guidance of the DfE on the ways in which they can handle these areas, and handle them sensitively and carefully, I think that it is fine. Pupils should be engaging in a wide range of topics, as they are at the moment. One of the areas that we want to really think about is pulling people together and bringing communities together. The curriculum around “The Making of Modern Britain” is one area that we think could be very positive in that regard, but I am in agreement with you.

Q436 **Kim Johnson:** Okay. The commission seemed to fall back on socioeconomic status over racism as an explainer for disadvantage. Can you explain why you did not recommend enacting section 1 of the Equality Act to make socioeconomic status a protected characteristic? I know that you have called on the EHRC to be funded more.

Dr Sewell: Steve has some better data on this. Can I refer to him first on that?

Kim Johnson: That is fine. Thank you.

Professor Strand: When we were looking at what young people achieve at 16—what qualifications you leave with at 16 is the bottom line for education, because that determines all sorts of subsequent outcomes for young people, including their health, their wealth, their wellbeing, and their enjoyment of life—it was really clear how you have to think not about using one factor to explain another factor, but about how these factors interact. You have to think about what the intersectional relationship between race, sex and class is—not saying that one trumps another, but thinking about the patterning that is there.

In the submission I have made to this inquiry, there is a graph that looks at achievement at 16 separately by three levels of social class, for boys and girls, and for each of the nine major ethnic groups. That really reveals and teases out how these factors work together, so in that sense it is really important to think about all three of these legs of equality whenever you are looking at any set of data. Obviously, I have just looked at achievement aged 16, and what that reveals is that the big issues in terms of low achievement are with both White British and Black Caribbean boys from disadvantaged homes. Actually, girls from those communities from



disadvantaged homes are the lowest-achieving groups of girls as well, so it is not just the boys on their own, but those two groups—low socioeconomic status White British and Black Caribbean pupils—really stand out as the particular groups with low achievement.

Q437 Kim Johnson: Thanks, Steve, but my question about why socioeconomic status was not included as a protected characteristic has not been answered. We know that poverty impacts on great swathes of our society, so was there a reason why that was not put forward as a recommendation?

Dr Sewell: Can I come in here? We have asked the EHRC to look at their practices, and it may be something for them to review; it may well come up. We did not look at that in detail, I admit, and it would be great for them, because we have asked them—as you rightly said—to look at the way they work, to strengthen their powers and to challenge policies. It might be good for them to look at that area, because if that protected characteristic is something that they feel they strongly want, maybe we should go there, but we did not particularly look at that. What we have maybe done is to give them wider powers and wider resources to look in that area.

Q438 Kim Johnson: Mr Sewell, you have spoken this morning about how ethnic groups have closed the attainment gap in education, but can you explain what is going wrong between education and work when Black people are twice as likely to be unemployed as White people? The recent ONS report states that Black unemployment went from 5.8% to 9.5%, despite achieving equally at school, so do you acknowledge that there is some structural racism in the labour market?

Dr Sewell: Yes, I think there is racism. We have acknowledged it, we say it is there, and I am sure it exists. What is more interesting, though, is to look at one disparity—this is one that you cited—in the employment factor for Black outcomes, which is the take-up of apprenticeships. There is a big disparity in Black Caribbean and, in fact, Black African take-up of apprenticeships.

If you look at all the jobs and the skillsets that you need, one of the things we have found is that a higher proportion of Black young people are going to what we call low-tariff universities, and the drop-out rate is miserably high for that group. What you have now is a situation where, had that group of students been given careers advice upstream—we come back to this—so that apprenticeships could have been attractive for them, that would have meant a higher number of skilled Black young people coming to the market. What is actually happening is that too many of our Black youngsters are going into these low-tariff universities, staying there for one or two years doing business studies or whatever, and then dropping out and adding to that number of unemployed. So what we have recommended, and it is a good recommendation, is that we want more open access for that whole apprenticeship programme, so that in fact what you are doing is saying, “Look at construction—look at that as a more positive way of working, because you need it. It’s not a bad place to go.



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You are going to get money, you can get an apprenticeship, you can get paid to do work and study.” Give those young people the information, particularly in colleges, so that they go towards that outcome.

- Q439 **Kim Johnson:** In the report, you have identified that there is significant under-representation of Black teachers and governors. How do you explain this and what are your recommendations to redress those major disparities? Whoever wants to respond to that one—thank you.

Martyn Oliver: We focus on teacher representation. As we said, we know that a good teacher will have the biggest impact on children’s outcomes. But we also know that it’s really important to have representation.

We also understand that teachers often travel quite long distances to their schools and that they rely upon support staff, and support staff, who often live in the community, can have the greatest impact when it comes to the pastoral and social support of children. But we want to see that greater representation in senior leadership.

If we get this right and we are actually going upstream and getting children into the right universities and into the right FE skills and jobs, we should see more people coming through in the labour market.

The challenge then is to get more governance. It is a real issue for schools to get good governance and to get representation in their communities, at a local level as well as in greater areas such as trust boards and boards of multi-academy trusts. We want to see that happen.

Kim Johnson: Thank you, Chair; those are all my questions. And thank you so much, panellists.

- Q440 **Chair:** Tony, you were talking about apprenticeships—something dear to my heart—and I completely agree with what you said. We talked about the £800 million earlier. Why not use a significant amount of that money to fund apprenticeships for the kind of individuals you have just been talking about? Would that not be a much better way of spending that £800 million?

Dr Sewell: I absolutely agree with you; I think we should be using that money for that area, absolutely. We recommend that that money be used. But it is not just about cash; it is also about information. It is talking to parents about the different routes to jobs; it does not necessarily have to be a university route.

- Q441 **Tom Hunt:** I was one of the MPs who signed the letter about Barnardo’s, because I just didn’t think it was appropriate for them to be sending out “White privilege—a guide for parents”, probably to lots of White families from a low-income background. I just didn’t think it was an appropriate thing to do, so I make no apology for signing that letter.

I note in the report that when it discusses this term “White privilege”, it says that it is a term that is quite alienating, and it would be quite alienating for many White working-class families who are from a low socioeconomic background. Using a term like—I think it was “affinity



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bias”—could be less polarising.

It is interesting that in one of the earlier sessions we had, one of the panellists giving evidence said that with a lot of White families from disadvantaged backgrounds, when it comes to the school system they may not be aware of their own disadvantage. In a sense, it is hardly surprising, when we have terms such as “White privilege” being bandied around on a daily basis.

Do you think that this term “White privilege”—obviously, there are more important structural reasons to explain this disparity that we are discussing today—and the whole culture around the use of the term, and misunderstanding about it has contributed in a small way towards the problem with disparity that we are discussing today?

Dr Sewell: Can I be very brief and just very pragmatic? On this panel here, we have people from constituencies from very poor backgrounds, where the issue for a lot of those families is not all this academic stuff about “White privilege”, or whatever. They just basically want to get their kids into a job. Some of those single mothers and single fathers just want to try and get childcare sorted out. These are the very pragmatic things that face ordinary working-class people. What this commission is doing is trying to get practical answers to those parents. On this academia thing about White privilege, I will put it bluntly: it is a fair argument you put forward, but let’s focus on the real needs of real people.

Martyn Oliver: It is important that we focus on bringing communities together. Using terms that might be divisive is not going to help. We want to focus on teaching shared knowledge and shared understanding, and building the community, not creating a division.

That is what schools are really good at. Social support and a shared understanding and knowledge create community cohesion. Going back to an American position, that was said by the very first schoolmaster in America in the 18th century. He said that is what schools can do. We followed that route.

Q442 **Tom Hunt:** To pick up on the answer given to one of Kim’s questions about why there is likely to be a high level of unemployment for ethnic minorities compared with White people. I sympathise with the point Tony made about apprenticeships not being promoted enough and some people potentially going to university when it is not the right thing for them and then dropping out, but I think that is an issue for all people. I don’t know why that would be a particular issue for Black people as opposed to those from a low-income White background. The lack of promotion of apprenticeships has been a problem across the board.

Dr Sewell: I absolutely agree with you. It is only the fact that we have just had some data that show that Black students are taking it up less than White students. That is the only reason I mentioned it. These recommendations are for all young people, for sure.

Q443 **Chair:** As an aside, when I was Skills Minister a while ago, every time I met BAME communities, they wanted to go to university rather than take



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apprenticeships. It seemed to me that the culture of those groups was to go to university, not to do an apprenticeship. We need to change that.

Dr Sewell: I need to be very careful; I don't want any misrepresentation. There is an issue about Black pupils getting into the higher-tariff universities. There are still not enough of them going there. We still have that conundrum. There are also degree apprenticeships, where you can go to university and do an apprenticeship programme.

Q444 **Chair:** As those who know me know, I describe "degree apprenticeships" as my two favourite words in the English language. That is why I was asking that we support teaching degree apprenticeships because that would include the university experience. You seemed to be against that view for teacher degrees. You think it should be just academic education, which I think will deny lots of disadvantaged pupils, as you describe, the opportunity of becoming teachers, or of having the hope of doing so. If you do a degree apprenticeship you at least get paid at the same time.

Dr Sewell: I agree with you.

Q445 **Chair:** But Professor Strand doesn't. He wants it all to be academic. He says you have to do a history or English degree to be a teacher. I can't understand that. I agree you must have a higher-level apprenticeship, but I cannot see why somebody can't do a proper degree apprenticeship. They can do a nursing or policing degree apprenticeship. Why can't people do teaching degree apprenticeships and become teachers?

Professor Strand: There is a whole load of professional routes into education-related activities, like teaching assistants and high-level teaching assistants. It is not just about teachers. We do need to give our children the best-trained, best-qualified teachers.

Q446 **Chair:** You could have that attitude to nursing degree apprenticeships and say that they have to get the best training, but you have nursing and policing degree apprenticeships. They do the university experience, but they earn while they learn. I think it is a very reactionary attitude to say, no, they all must have purely academic education before they go on to their teacher training.

Professor Strand: I am sure the DfE will be looking at that.

Q447 **Chair:** I am glad Tony agrees with me, though. There is a little split in the commission.

Dr Sewell: We are allowed to disagree on our commission.

Tom Hunt: I'm largely done now. I just think it is an interesting point. One of the things that has come out of the inquiry is that White lower-income communities' perception and view of education and academia is perhaps slightly different from that of other groups. We have almost got the case, potentially, with Black young people, where there is a focus on academia and maybe that is part of a problem and there should actually be more of a focus on technical. There is a whole load of really interesting things that need to be looked into. Thank you very much for your answers.



It is very useful.

Q448 Fleur Anderson: Good morning, panel. I have three very different questions. On degree apprenticeships, I am trying to persuade my 15-year-old son to take up a degree apprenticeship in due course. He just keeps rolling his eyes as it is my new obsession. I am glad we are discussing them here now as well; I think they need much more airing.

One particular group is not covered very much in the report and I would like to know why. Is it about the data? The group is children from a refugee background or refugees themselves, or asylum-seeking children. It is a cohort that does not fit neatly within the minority ethnic data that we have—so the tables that are in the report. There are some significant differences between ethnic groups, which are outlined in the report in the education section, but there are also significant barriers to education, which have been recognised—for example, the Office for Students has a briefing on children from refugee backgrounds, acknowledging that they face significant barriers for many family reasons and for many of the reasons that you outlined for other groups in the report—but they are not specifically covered.

Is there are a reason why not? Is it the ability to get the data? What are your comments on that?

Dr Sewell: You have made the right point: it is about our ability to get the data and the remit we had at the time. We went along with the data we got from the Race Disparity Unit. That was our major source for a lot of our data.

You are absolutely right—that group needs some work and special attention in terms of outcomes. That said, one hopes that they will fold into that immigrant optimism. There are many stories of asylum seekers coming in and doing really well—flying. That narrative needs to be told more.

Q449 Fleur Anderson: One for future times, clearly.

Moving on to support for families, you raise family as a significant factor throughout the report, particularly in education, and you talk about better support services. What are the better support services that you envisage early years providers and schools providing to support children? You have talked about family hubs and the strain on families. What do you have in mind to overcome that?

Dr Sewell: Martyn, can you take that?

Martyn Oliver: Yes. Rather than taking a complete look at that ourselves, we used a previous review from the recently stepped-down Children's Commissioner, Anne Longfield. She wrote a report called "Best beginnings". She had a number of influential and esteemed colleagues on her panel. In the report, we recommend that the Government take up all seven recommendations made by the Children's Commissioner. It is quite comprehensive—from a guarantee of support to early years children, to a national infrastructure for family hubs, building up the early years



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workforce and making sure that they have the skillset and training. There is room in the initial teacher training market to put more emphasis on the early years skillset when it comes to training. Then there are consistent checks and changing the data. We recommend that the Government look at the “Best beginnings” report by Anne Longfield and enact that.

Q450 Fleur Anderson: What would the Department for Education’s role be within that?

Martyn Oliver: We know that Andrea Leadsom is looking at the family hub review. The chair, Tony, met Andrea as part of this commission and recommended that they look at ethnic disparity within that role.

Dr Sewell: Yes. I think what Anne will do is to come back with recommendations that are relevant to that. That is key going forward.

In practical terms, which I think what you are trying to tease out, what would happen in these family hubs? I will give you something that, for me, is a good example of the way we work. Schools could get more intelligence on children and the transition from primary to secondary, and work with those families to make sure that works better. There is a big drop-off point, particularly for boys, as they move from primary to secondary school. Schools should work with families to ensure that smooth transition happens, because we sometimes find different academic outcomes in primary and secondary.

Q451 Fleur Anderson: Thank you. My next question is about early years, which is very linked to what we have been saying and the recommendations from the Children’s Commissioner and the early years report—other reports are going to be coming out from Andrea Leadsom. You identified in the report significant differences between ethnic groups. Thirty-four per cent. of five-year-olds from the Gypsy and Roma ethnic communities are meeting their expected standard in development, and for the Chinese ethnic group, it is 76%, but those are all way below the 100% that we hope for for everyone joining a primary school. On early years and the disparity between the two, what evidence have you got of a difference in the take-up rates of childcare and the early years entitlements that are being offered at the moment—the offer to parents? Are they broken down by ethnicity and socioeconomic status at the moment? Do you have enough data to show the disparity of the take-up of early years? Is that the issue?

Dr Sewell: I think Anne Longfield and, to a certain extent, Andrea Leadsom, will be giving us that information. I don’t know, Martyn, whether we have that data specifically. I don’t think we have, have we?

Martyn Oliver: No, we don’t have enough data on that. We knew that Andrea was taking on this particular area, so rather than spending our precious time on it, we said that there is a significant review into that one item only, so we passed that to Andrea to look at in more detail.

Q452 Fleur Anderson: You have also talked about the need for more childcare—an extended childcare offer. How would this support



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disadvantaged White pupils in particular?

Martyn Oliver: Having childcare and, as I said earlier, going back to early literacy and early reading, and getting involved in structured play, are all really important. We know that family, geography and poverty, as we have been saying, are a significant source of disparity that runs through them. We also know it is important to give children a safe space as they go from early years and start to go into school—somewhere to do their homework. There is evidence that children who have a safe space to complete their homework have a significantly improved outcome in education. We think it is about focusing on those areas.

Q453 **Fleur Anderson:** Finally, on the issue you identified about the Roma ethnic group, the huge disparity in joining school and the difference there, do you think there is a place, therefore, to have specific Roma-focused early years support? Clearly, for that community, it is not just opening up more offers and they will come. What more do you think should be done specifically?

Martyn Oliver: That is where we talked about the holistic, looking at the funding and drilling down into the data. To be clear, there are areas of great success. It is not universal; there are just pockets where the practice is particularly stark and poor. That is when we would like to see additional funding. As I said, it should be directed not solely at schools but at the local authority. There are lots of local authority officers who do great work in supporting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families. I would like to see a strengthening of that and the funding targeted in that way, and then reporting back to the Government to show the taxpayer the value for money that comes from that exercise.

Q454 **Apsana Begum:** Good morning, Tony and Martyn. My first question is about the area of your report that suggests an immigrant paradigm. The Committee has looked at that in our White working class inquiry. We have really tried to grapple with the idea of aspiration and the different levels of aspiration that may account for differences in attainment between different groups. My first question is really about what you think the Department and schools can do to tackle what has been described as an immigrant paradigm, particularly for White pupils?

Martyn Oliver: We highlight this in our report. It is really important, and we touch on it so much. As you said, White boys say at 14 that they have a 61% likelihood of going to university, and White girls say it is 68%, but 82% of Black African boys and 89% of Black African girls say they want to go to university, so there clearly is a view that education, especially for those with financial disparity—those of a low socioeconomic status—is the route out. Professor Strand wrote a significant chapter on this and quoted previous research about the immigrant paradigm.

Professor Strand: We found four factors that could account for the relative high achievement of many ethnic minority groups: whether young people aspire to continue in full-time education; whether their parents also aspire for them to continue in education; how many nights a week they did homework, which is a kind of measure of motivation; and whether



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they thought they were any good at school work—their academic self-concept. If you put those four things together, you essentially have kids who are very engaged and motivated by school and see school as instrumental to achieving their aspirations.

Many White British and Black Caribbean working-class pupils are quite aspirational—they want success, they want to be happy, they want a family, they want a good job—but they do not necessarily see education as instrumental, so we have to think about the stage at which we allow young people to make a curriculum for themselves that is more relevant to what they want. At the moment, everyone follows the same curriculum up to 16, and I understand why, but we are maybe not listening to some young people in the 14 to 16 age bracket who actually do not see history, geography or modern foreign languages and those kind of subjects as the curriculum that they want. They want a more work-related, vocationally focused experience. There is something to think about there, and about how we can motivate and engage all young people in the education process.

Q455 Apsana Begum: To me, aspiration seems quite subjective or quite internally based. How do you actually define that in relation to an entire community—that an entire community may be more aspirational? How do you define high and low aspirations as well? You mentioned indicators, but how have you defined that some communities have higher aspirations, and how can that be measured by, to use an example you gave, their doing more homework than other communities or groups of pupils?

Professor Strand: For the data I am talking about, we asked young people whether they wanted to continue in full-time education after 16, we asked them how often they completed homework and we asked them how good they felt they were at maths, English and those kind of subjects. Those are the direct measures. Of course, these will always be generalisations when we move up to groups such as ethnicity, gender and social class. Even though we look at these three factors together, there is still a degree of generalisation here, and actually the variation between individual pupils is always massively greater than the difference in average scores between different groups. You can never tie down the individual, and I would not want to stereotype, but we see certain patterns or consistencies. As Tony just said, 95% of Black African young people want to continue in full-time education. That is the same whether they are working class, middle class or upper class. If you look at other communities, you see a very different profile. About 60% of White working-class boys want to remain in education. They do not see school as something that is for them and they want to get out of it as soon as they can.

Q456 Apsana Begum: What can the Department or schools really do? One area we are looking at is how we can replicate the successes of some communities in other communities. Can it be replicated, and if so, what practical things should the Committee recommend or look at?



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Dr Sewell: Could I come in on that? Martyn is an example of that; looking at that on a schools basis, successful schools move themselves, their resources and their ideas, to other areas. The idea of just keeping things locked up in a “south of the river” or south of the country paradigm does not really work for me. There must be some policy or incentive in good practice for schools going to other places and trying to reproduce some of that. The idea of the school itself might be one way in which we could shift that idea. It is not communities necessarily, but perhaps schools moving in that direction.

Q457 **Apsana Begum:** Dr Sewell, we have looked at the family unit—Fleur touched on that—and the role of generational attitudes towards work and education. Are you saying that is not necessarily an area that the Government should be looking at?

Dr Sewell: You talk about policy; we should be looking at helping those families and schools specifically. We have extended school days and all those other things in there. If you are thinking about change and good schools as a key element, is the headache really about the idea of moving the immigrant paradigm around, or is it that we just need great schools in Middlesbrough or Hartlepool? Is that really the issue?

Q458 **Apsana Begum:** You pose a question, but I am not clear either. Perhaps that is something for us to continue to investigate. My final question is quite specific. If, as your report suggests, White parents may take a good education for granted, what particular incentives are necessary to ensure that disadvantaged White pupils engage with longer school days and the entire catch-up programme that we are looking at?

Martyn Oliver: First, it has to be compulsory. If you have a longer day school that is by choice, we are exactly where we are today, where the vast majority of schools will offer some sort of enrichment, as they might call it, at the end of a school day. But if it is not compulsory, it will not make a difference. That is not to say that we recommend that for all schools. For younger children, it is important to go home and play and be with their family. We just do not think it is right that a child in primary school should have roughly the same length of day as a child in secondary school, or a child who is about to take their GCSEs. They might have even less time in school if they are taking their A-levels. We think that is an area to focus on.

Apsana Begum: Thank you.

Q459 **Kim Johnson:** Why do you believe that Black young people are disproportionately represented in the youth custody system? They represent 52% of those in custody and 57% of those on remand. Do you think there is any connection between the high numbers of school exclusions for Black young people and the pipeline of crime? What must happen to reduce that disproportionality in the system?

Chair: Tony, just to add, we know that around 60% of prisoners have been excluded from school, so there is a clear correlation.



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Dr Sewell: There is a link, but there is also a kind of link with what goes upstream. That is what we have been trying to untangle. Mental health is a similar issue. If we can link this to support for those young people in terms of supporting their families, we think this might be one area of outcome. I am not saying that racism is not a part—obviously, it is a key element, but we recognise that earlier family support is key.

Q460 **Kim Johnson:** Thank you. So you are saying early intervention, preventive work and maybe developing more Sure Start programmes nationally.

Dr Sewell: Absolutely.

Q461 **Ian Mearns:** A number of questions follow some of the stuff that was talked about earlier, particularly about funding and the need for long-term funding. One of the criticisms I have had of successive Governments is short-term three-year, five-year funding programmes. Often things such as education action zones and opportunity areas might be good in themselves in bedding things down, but if there aren't lessons learnt from what has been good and bad, the best ways resources were used, and spreading and disseminating that, that could be quite wasteful. In terms of youngsters going on into education post state schooling, was there regret among the panel when you worked together about the loss of previous funding that existed for programmes such as Aim Higher, Creative Partnerships and educational maintenance allowances to help overcome some of the disparities for poorer kids in particular?

Martyn Oliver: I declare an interest in that I sit on the Opportunity North East's opportunity board. What I like about that group, as I said before, is that it has some sense of long-term funding. We have clearly had some impact upon the schools that are being supported in that area. On those other types of funds—some of which have been wrapped up in the national fairer funding formula and improved in that way—we equally agree. A big part of our recommendation is that rather than short-termism, or small pots of money, schools, local authorities, social services or mental health services should be given sufficient funding of sufficient length in time to make structural appointments and permanent appointments, and build up the expertise in an area. It is impossible as a headteacher to set a budget for September if you are only finding out what your funding is in April or are only going to get it for a year or a couple of years. Fifty-one per cent. of an entire school budget goes on its teachers, and another 25% goes on its support staff, so 76% of your entire budget. You need certainty and a length of time. That is really important.

Q462 **Ian Mearns:** The section that Apsana talked about, looking at aspiration—in the work that you have done, have you seen levels of aspiration among students of all kinds impacted by the locality and the jobs market on a regional basis? I am really concerned that sometimes it is difficult to get teenage youngsters interested in education if their peer group—their older brothers, sisters, cousins etc—are struggling having already ventured out into the jobs market. The point of it becomes weakened from that perspective.



Dr Sewell: There is a generational issue in some areas where there is continuous unemployment, and that role model feeds back into younger people. That comes back to this very powerful thing about the family being a factor. I think that parents are key to this. On the journey of educating and inspiring young people to get into apprenticeships and find other routes, or indeed go into higher education, if parents were to come into this, I think it would be a key factor in the way we work with schools and that group. They have to come as well.

Q463 **Ian Mearns:** As a school governor, I have sadly experienced over the years all too many occasions when I have come across youngsters and when meeting the parents it is quite clear why the youngster is having a problem. Sometimes some of the biggest barriers children have to their own future and learning is their experience within their own family home. How do we overcome that, and how do we engage those sorts of families in family learning programmes or enrichment programmes?

Dr Sewell: Martyn has been more successful than maybe I have at doing some of that stuff.

Martyn Oliver: I just think that Ian is completely correct—we know that, for example, in the aspiration in many of the families. If I choose the north-east, where I have some schools in Teesside, some of those families have never left Teesside. Encouraging a child to go to university with Steve in Oxford is then a really difficult thing to do, but that does not mean that we cannot put really great provision in Teesside for those families to actually stay in Teesside. I think it is hugely important that we break the cycle. We do not want to see schools saying, “Get a good education, go to Oxford and leave your area.” We want to say to them, “Stay in your area, return to your area, and be part of building up your area for the future.”

We also think that things like an extended school day and getting involved in sport and cultural activities expose children to different adults and different disciplines—the discipline that you learn on the football field, or the discipline that you learn in taking part at the front of house or the back of house in a theatre production. All those things are transferable skills that are really important for later life.

Ian Mearns: I would point out for the record, Martyn, that while Damian Hinds came to my constituency, to Cardinal Hume School, to launch the opportunity fund for the north-east of England, its resources are mainly being concentrated in Tees Valley, some 35 to 40 miles south of where I am, but that is neither here nor there. We have to put up with these things. Steve, you wanted to come back in.

Professor Strand: It was just to say that I thought your question was a really good one. If we just take a school-focused approach to this we will miss the wider community context in which the school sits. Martyn mentioned family hubs and how important it is to bring in social services, education, welfare, housing and police. I think that you are absolutely



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right. The whole community is important, and whether the jobs are available or not has a hugely motivating or demotivating effect.

We cannot just think of this as a school problem—that if we bring in some new free schools or we change schools to academies we are going to address it through those school-focused approaches. I know that for the Department for Education pulling the levers on school policy is relatively easy. Pulling the levers on family intervention is much harder, but it is important to think about that bigger picture.

- Q464 **Ian Mearns:** Thank you very much. Your report claims that “the British system’s narrow view of ability based on generic, cognitive analytical aptitudes” has a negative impact on young people. What should the Government and the Department do to address that for the 40% of young people who miss out on a pass in English and maths GCSE?

Chair: Martyn, in a nutshell, please.

Martyn Oliver: In a nutshell, I think it is great that we have raised over the generations that I have been a teacher the numbers going on to higher education, but too often we have forgotten about the remaining children. The high quality further education and apprenticeships—I am going to go back to that word again—are hugely important. We want to see investment in further education, mentoring children through jobs, apprenticeships, getting paid, degree apprenticeships—I will bring that one in—paid employment and learning, and then lifelong learning. One of the things that we can now do far better in the teacher training market, for example, is that teachers are able to take their masters and doctorates with far greater ease, with some groups like mine and other large multi-academy trusts supporting teachers.

Chair: Okay, but in a specific answer to Ian’s question about maths and English.

- Q465 **Ian Mearns:** It is not just maths and English; the general narrowing of the curriculum is the question. Is it appropriate for the needs of all youngsters in schools? That is the big question, isn’t it?

Dr Sewell: This is going to be contested, but I feel we have to be ambitious for our young people. For example, learning a foreign language is a really key one. It is quite interesting, though. One of the characteristics of the three big football managers at the moment of our three big clubs is that they can all speak four foreign languages. I say that because it is something that sometimes our young people may downplay. We need to be ambitious for them, no matter what their backgrounds are. We cannot just say, “Oh, just because they are from that background, they cannot do”. We have to inculcate that in our young people and in our teachers. It is a must—we just have to do it.

- Q466 **Ian Mearns:** What regulatory changes do you think the Office for Students should put in place if enhanced guidance fails to boost the numbers of disadvantaged White pupils, disadvantaged White boys in particular, accessing higher education?



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Martyn Oliver: As far as I understand it, Ian, the universities access fund is their money—the Office for Students does not have a call on that. We are saying that it needs to be further downstream, so it is intervening with children much earlier in age, and it needs to have a really good view of whether it is having an impact. If it is not, the Office for Students needs to be given the powers to have a greater say in what that £800 million should do.

We know that there are universities that do—I think I am right to say that Professor Strand's university has increased its diversity massively in the past decade. It is having an effect in some areas, and that best practice needs to be teased out and learnt from.

Q467 **Ian Mearns:** But there were still some colleges in Oxford that did not have any Black pupils at all, just a couple of years ago. I do not know whether that has changed since.

Dr Sewell: Steve, you are there at the moment.

Professor Strand: It is a very mixed picture across the collegiate system in Oxford.

Q468 **Ian Mearns:** That is a very diplomatic answer, Steve.

I have one last bit, but it is important. What regulatory action might also be necessary to improve outcomes for ethnic minority students, once they enter higher education? We have heard about this dreadful fall-out rate. Tony, you referred earlier to an over-representation of Black and minority ethnic pupils in "lower-tariff universities"—that was your phrase, not mine.

Chair: Tony, in a nutshell, please reply.

Dr Sewell: In a nutshell, the OfS has to be more proactive in looking at some of the courses that are on offer. Are these fit for purpose?

Q469 **Ian Mearns:** But is it not also important to get at the students themselves before they apply, to make sure that they are going on to the right courses?

Dr Sewell: That is right. We recommended that upstream.

Q470 **David Johnston:** I want to go back to Ian's point about parents. I have only been an MP for 18 months, but in the 16 years before that, when I ran charities, it always seemed to me that politicians were very nervous about talking about parents. Even though they know that certain things are good for parents to do, they worry about accusations of the nanny state written by journalists who also know what the right things to do with their children are and are doing them, so we end up treating it as a bit of a taboo, where we know that we could be doing more to encourage the right things, but we are too nervous to touch it. I wondered whether the three of you who are not politicians had any views, advice or guidance on what you think people in the House of Commons from all parties ought to be doing to handle that issue, because it is of



fundamental importance.

Professor Strand: I would definitely start with the early years. We see the social class gaps at age three, particularly in areas of language, so the more support we can give to families to engage with and recognise the importance of that the better—to support them to be able to deliver. It is often not a question of motivation for these families; it is a question of knowing what to do. So, the early years.

Martyn Oliver: I agree. It is the early years. It is far better to intervene early than it is late. We say in the report that it is an area that the Government can no longer ignore; they have to focus on that area, because clearly, from Professor Strand's work and the data, we can see that it has such an influence. There have to be interventions and we think that family hubs, or the Sure Start as family hubs, are hugely important.

Dr Sewell: Just for MPs to not be nervous about talking about the family. It is something that we have to engage with; it is one of the key elements to social mobility.

Q471 **Tom Hunt:** My question is probably mainly for Tony, but it is picking up that point that we got to earlier, which was particularly about Black students, some of whom are going to university and are not on the right courses, and frankly maybe should not be going to university but doing an apprenticeship; that might be better for them. This question that has been asked by Ian about the proportion of disadvantaged White young people going to university might be the wrong question to be asking, and actually might be quite damaging. Do you think there is a danger that if we just focus on numbers and trying to get more White disadvantaged children into university, we might have the problem you identified with young Black people with White people as well, in terms of some going to university when they should not be—when they could be doing an apprenticeship—and actually, their outcomes in terms of jobs, income, and so on could be lower as a result?

Dr Sewell: In the area of science, for example, triple science is often an issue for some schools. That is actually a disparity, because if you do not have the resources to do that triple science in your school, that is going to impact on university outcomes. The data shows that that leads you towards the A-level, and the A-level is the one that leads you to university, so clearly inside those schools, this is where the intervention money could be helpful in just buying in an extra physics teacher. I think it is a disgrace that you have a situation where a lot of those independent schools have four or five physics teachers, and in our state schools, we have the chemistry teachers teaching physics. We have to try and get on top of this. It is a very practical way of challenging the disparities, so that more White working-class children can go down that route.

Q472 **Chair:** I just have two or three questions to end with. I am supportive of many of your recommendations, but could I just go to your recommendation 7, where you say that the Department of Education should use funding on interventions to "support high-performing academy



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trusts with a track record of turning around schools to go into geographical areas with large disparities”? Of course, the logic of this recommendation is clear, but I worry that it is a bit motherhood and apple pie and a bit of a woolly recommendation.

It is all very well saying that academy trusts should expand to help raise standards in underperforming schools, but we know this is not happening, and surely you should have looked further into the reasons why MATs are not already doing this. I mean, is it the cost of expansion? Is it down to geographical distance? Is it about fears that partnering with poorly performing schools might drag their overall results down? What do you think the Government should be doing to incentivise highly performing MATs to merge with underperforming schools, and could you have regional schools commissioners doing a lot more to broker these mergers and push them through?

Martyn Oliver: When I look back at the creation of the trust that I am sitting in today, that was done by the Opposition, who were in Government at the time, and the beauty of that policy then was that we had to sponsor schools that were failing. An outstanding school had to support a school that was failing, and that is something that was lost in the system as we went through.

There are trust capacity growth funds: one has just been announced today, I think. It is the third tranche of that, so these things exist, but there is clearly a nervousness. I sponsored a school not long ago that was the worst-performing school in England, and it takes a lot to put your neck on the block and do it again for the 39th time: to say, “I’m going to go and make a difference to these families, but if I fail, then suddenly I am going to have a whole bunch of measures put upon me and maybe even see headteachers lose their jobs”, and so on and so forth.

Q473 **Chair:** What is the answer?

Martyn Oliver: It is about changing that fear culture and supporting and identifying the strongest trusts, but it is also about giving the RSCs greater powers, because at the moment, they can only intervene in a school that has already failed or when a school voluntarily joins into a group. We have to look more widely at how RSCs can intervene.

Q474 **Chair:** I was very interested in something you said earlier in your evidence, Martyn. You said it was no good just giving money to Wakefield, because some areas of Wakefield are doing well in terms of education and others aren’t, and what you have to do is micro-target. Should that not be the policy all the way through? My colleague Ian talked about opportunity areas. Is just walloping £100 million at massive opportunity areas exactly the wrong way to be going about things? Should the Government not be micro-targeting and putting the extra physics teachers or whoever it may be in the schools that need it most, rather than these big grand schemes of generalised money?



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Martyn Oliver: The beauty of the opportunity area, just to defend that for one moment, is that they were then able to identify the schools within that area and target the funding—

Q475 **Chair:** The DfE could do that. The council could do that. You do not need another quango to do it.

Martyn Oliver: We agree that going forward that is what we want to see. That is why, for example, there is a case study in the report that focuses on another trust, called Delta, that went into a school and turned the children's performance around, particularly disadvantaged children's performance, in one year. We want to see that level of micro-analysis of data become the norm.

Q476 **Chair:** Your overall view is that micro-targeting and micro-data is a much better way of transforming education. Is that right?

Martyn Oliver: Yes, absolutely.

Q477 **Chair:** And you think it can be done. It is feasibly possible to micro-target.

Martyn Oliver: I think it is entirely possible, especially if you pass money regionally and allow regions to have a say in where that money should go.

Q478 **Chair:** Okay. That is very interesting.

I am from the Jewish faith. I was brought up in north London. I refer this question to you, Tony, primarily. You will have seen what happened on Sunday. It was very painful to me, because I know those areas like the back of my hand. It was much more painful to the residents who live there.

We know that antisemitic incidents have gone up over the past couple of years by more than 1,800. Tony, do you think with all the focus—rightly; I stress rightly—on other race issues and other ethnic minorities, that sometimes Jewish people are forgotten about and that a lot more needs to be done to deal with antisemitism, both in education in our schools and also with the public in general?

Dr Sewell: I agree; I think that has happened. I think what we have got to do in our schools and among our children is—it sounds very vague, this notion of respect, but it is the only thing I can think of. It can be done in a way that does not feel tokenistic, but so that people really do understand each other culturally and begin to know that there is no place in schools for this. Generally, when children interact with each other, they learn that.

Look, what you are saying is spot on. We have deliberately not just focused this on Black and Asian pupils. What we have done is that we wanted to disaggregate the notion of BAME. I did notice that you used BAME. We want to be very focused on the outcomes of differing pupils and differing groups, because they have different needs. Specifically, we did not look at the Jewish community, but I absolutely agree with what you

say. That is why the commission has gone wider than just Black and Asian.

Q479 Chair: I did notice the language you suggest about BAME in the report.

Do you think there is a resurgence in antisemitism? What is your view? If you were doing the report now, given what has gone on at the current time towards Jewish people and the statistics and so on, would there be something that you would have recommended and is there something you think that should be done now?

Dr Sewell: I think we would have recommended something in this. We would have put that in two places—first of all, our first recommendation that the Equality and Human Rights Commission “use its compliance, enforcement and litigation powers to challenge policies or practices” that are deemed to be racist or cause “unjust racial disadvantage”. That first recommendation, that wants to empower EHRC, is the one that I think would be relevant here. We link that with the online racism that has gone on. I know the Government are moving on that. We were the first there with this, in the sense of suggesting that online abuse be a public policy priority. You are seeing online abuse in terms of antisemitism, as well. We think that that first recommendation probably would have had a more specific link to what is going on now.

Q480 Chair: Is it your view that there is a resurgence of antisemitism?

Dr Sewell: Absolutely. I can see it.

Q481 Kim Johnson: My question is on the back of what you have just been talking about: the resurgence of antisemitism. We also need to recognise that Islamophobia is a major issue. Again, it is not really talked about. Over the past couple of months, we have seen a resurgence of Islamophobic attacks. I would like to ask Dr Sewell what he thinks about racism in general impacting so significantly on so many parts of our communities.

Dr Sewell: Absolutely. I must stress that we recognise racism exists and is a cause of disparities. The first recommendation asks for the Equality and Human Rights Commission to be given more powers. You cannot get more specific than that. I agree with you, Kim. Islamophobia is one of those areas that we think should be tackled.

Q482 Tom Hunt: My question is to do with promoting good relations between people of different ethnicities. We have seen a lot in the press about decolonising the curriculum, and the drama at Pimlico Academy about the Union flag. To what extent do you think that promoting some of the good aspects of Britain and flying the Union flag outside schools can be unifying, help bring people together and challenge misconceptions?

Dr Sewell: I don’t know about that specifically. Martyn, maybe you could relay to us the notions of “Making of Modern Britain”. Inside there is the answer to some of these points.

Chair: Can you do it in a minute, because we must finish at 12?



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Martyn Oliver: I will. We focus so much on the power of shared knowledge to unify a nation. There is an excellent author who is much admired in the education world called ED Hirsch Jr, who has written a good book about this, which we referred to.

We think it is hugely important that we teach these nuanced, multiple-faceted stories of modern Britain—the good and the bad. Schools are doing that exceptionally well, but I learned, even after 27 years in education, when Tony introduced me to a gentleman called Steeve Buckridge, who has written a brilliant book about the language of dress. As teachers, you cannot possibly know everything. You can only bring your experience to the classroom. Having experts such as Professor Buckridge help to develop a unit, which I could then deliver in school, can only be a good thing. Let's use the experiences of Robert, Kim and Tony. Let's use everyone's experiences and have those sent to children in supporting teachers in teaching that story.

Chair: Thank you. We have to finish now. I give huge appreciation for your evidence this morning. As I said at the beginning, there has been a lot of media noise about your report. I do hope that people will read it thoroughly and watch today's session. Then some people who have been commenting on this might have a different view on what you have been saying. I appreciate it and wish you all well. We will no doubt work with you and reflect some of your evidence in our report on White working-class boys and girls, which is due to come out in the next couple of months. Thank you.