



Education Committee

Oral evidence: [Evidence check: National College for Teaching and Leadership](#), HC 957

Wednesday 11 February 2015

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Written evidence from witnesses:

- [UCET \(NCT0001\)](#)
- [Association of School and College Leaders \(NCT0005\)](#)
- [UNISON \(NCT0009\)](#)

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Members present: Mr Graham Stuart (Chair), Neil Carmichael, Alex Cunningham, Bill Esterson, Pat Glass, Ian Mearns, Craig Whittaker.

Questions 1 – 157

Witnesses: **Peter Kent**, President, Association of School and College Leaders, **James Noble-Rogers**, Executive Director, Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET), **Ben Thomas**, National Officer, UNISON Education and Children's Services, and **Amanda Timberg**, Executive Director, Programme, Teach First gave evidence.

Q1 Chair: Good morning. Welcome to this session of the Education Committee. We have limited time; we have four excellent witnesses to give evidence to us today. We are looking into the National College for Teaching and Leadership, following our evidence-check process in which, rather than asking the Department, alongside everyone else, to submit evidence to an inquiry, we asked the Department to produce the evidence base for its policy first and then asked everyone to comment. What is the greatest achievement of the NCTL since its relatively recent foundation? It is nearly two years old. What does it stand for? Who would like to have a crack at that? Ben, you have caught my eye.

Ben Thomas: Well, I think it is slightly unfair—

Chair: Not a lot?

Ben Thomas: It is difficult for me, commenting principally as the support staff union. The evidence, which you have seen, is that we think the NCTL is doing very little, in fact absolutely nothing, for support staff in schools. I understand that some of that is

due to the direction it has been given by the DfE, but, in terms of our view of what the NCTL should be doing, it has a remit to improve the education work force, not just the teaching work force. In our view, it is doing nothing for—

Q2 Chair: You did not really have anything to answer with. I am not saying you should have done. Peter, you represent school leaders, so tell us.

Peter Kent: It is good to start on this positive note. I would certainly say that the NCTL has continued a direction of travel that the National College for School Leadership started towards a school-led, self-improving system, particularly in the work that has happened around teaching schools. I suppose I am biased because I am head, myself, of a teaching school, but I think they have fostered that direction of travel; they have promoted the development of a Teaching Schools Council. While it is yet to be fully realised—it is something we all have to work on together—there has been a move to get the profession to take a leading role in the system and to take responsibility for improvement rather than wait for it to be done to. That has been a positive that NCTL has encouraged.

Q3 Chair: Is it measurable in any way?

Peter Kent: It is still at too early a stage. All of us in the network of 500 or so teaching schools feel it is having an impact, but part of that is finding the tools and the methodology that can really measure that at scale so we can objectively say, “Yes, that is what it would be like without it and this is what it is like with it.”

Q4 Chair: Amanda, I know you want to make a declaration of interest.

Amanda Timberg: Before I start, I just want to declare, as I think you are aware, that we do receive funding from the NCTL. We are currently in a process of securing future funding for recruiting and training teachers, so I just want to make that clear. In terms of the question, just to piggy-back on what Peter is saying, the evidence you can see of that school-led system being fuelled in part by the NCTL is the thought leaders that have emerged in the system. If you look at the forums we go to around policy or, in the lead-up to the election, around gaining insight for manifestos, when I sit in think-tanks and other forums, oftentimes you see head teachers and school leaders around those tables. If you compare that to maybe a decade ago, when you are looking at local government or central Government, I certainly see that.

The other achievement would be with the national leaders of education. They have increased in number since the NCTL has come into place. For me, what they stand for is around work force supply and development; that is the way I would think about them.

James Noble-Rogers: The transition from the Training and Development Agency into the Teaching Agency into the NCTL has gone as smoothly as it could have done, given the upheaval that the creation of a new organisation brings with it and the culture differences in bringing together the NCSL and the Teaching Agency. That has gone reasonably well. Some of the consultative processes they have engaged with and the officer-to-officer contact we have had with them have been very productive. The work on

teaching schools has been a success. UCET has long supported the notion of teaching schools, and they have put the concept of school-led teacher education very much on the centre of everyone's agenda, which is good.

We do think, however, that the school-led agenda has been progressed in perhaps a rather unsubtle way, and there are more sophisticated ways in which that could be done without leading to the possibility of disruption and removal of the teacher education infrastructure we have. There have also been, as you will be aware, some issues to do with skills tests, which have been a big issue over the last couple of weeks.

Chair: We will come to that, and we will also come to some of the subtleties that could be inserted in the system.

Q5 Pat Glass: We have picked up a level of dissatisfaction with the NCTL. In your view, is that sector-specific; is that about the early years versus the schools sector; or is it about organisations' and individuals' interface with the organisation?

James Noble-Rogers: The interface with us is generally very productive. I can give examples of that, and we have in our evidence. When problems do arise, we have been able to get together and generally sort them out quite effectively. I think they have suffered from a loss of collective memory. A lot of experienced and knowledgeable staff being lost has led to new policies being introduced without sufficient regard to what went before and why what went before happened in the way it did: "This is a new dawn and we will do everything in a new way, throwing the baby out with the bathwater." An example of that is the subject knowledge enhancement courses, where some changes were made—for example, the introduction of concurrent subject knowledge enhancement where there were good reasons why we did not have concurrent programmes in the past. There was perhaps a lack of awareness of why the previous system of allocating training places was done in the way it was done—to reward quality and to focus as many places as possible on high-quality providers, whether they be SCITTs, universities or whoever. They did suffer from that to an extent, and that caused some of the administrative difficulties.

Peter Kent: There is this classic phrase: "You don't know what you've got until you lose it". I think among school leaders there is a sense of feeling regret for the National College for School Leadership and what that was providing for leaders—as Amanda was saying, that sense of a thinking space where ideas could be developed, where there was some very strong, powerful research about the nature of leadership. That, in part, may explain a certain level of dissatisfaction. It is not necessarily a criticism of NCTL; it is just the fact that the function, the remit, has shifted, and among school leaders there is still a sense of a need for something focusing upon the specific challenges of leadership. Consistently—whether it is from Ofsted or other quarters—it has been seen as central to school improvement, so it would be seen to be a good idea to have something really focusing on it.

Amanda Timberg: My impression is that it is the major policy changes around School Direct, the school-led system, while at the same time consolidating not just the NCSL but the other agencies within it, moving up to Manchester. It is not just this current incarnation, but there has been a considerable change in some of the staff, and, at the same time, in our experience, a real drive to create efficiencies and value for money, which

means the budgets have shrunk. I would echo what James is saying. In our experience, the people have been aiming to get it right, but there is a historic knowledge gap.

Q6 Chair: So have we abolished the sort of Sandhurst National College for School Leadership, merged it into other organisations and been left wondering why the ethos has gone and why that rare and fragile quality that was there has just been lost, despite the best efforts of those concerned? Is that a reasonable parallel?

Peter Kent: There is a sense of that among school leaders. As I say, it is not really a fierce criticism of NCTL, and there is a recognition that people, as Amanda says, are doing their very best to make what they have work. It is more that there was something very special there. I think that image of Sandhurst is a very good one.

Q7 Craig Whittaker: Recent evidence suggests that valuable materials have been taken off the NCTL website, which were originally used as a resource by teachers. Has there been a significant change in the direction that has been taken?

James Noble-Rogers: Yes. In the past, under the TDA and the Teaching Agency, there was a lot of direct advice and support given to ITT providers, which is where I am coming from. We had the Teacher Training Resource Bank, which was an excellent resource, and it was used by teacher-training providers, by student teachers and by schools. It had links to best evidence on practice, ways of training teachers, practical methodologies and things like that. All that has gone, and it is interesting that the Carter report suggests bringing them back. It would have been quite helpful if those resources had remained. There was a lot of productive work done in the past on running events in partnership with schools, with universities, with SCITTs, about developing best practice in, for example, systematic synthetic phonics, behaviour. That whole strand of activities has gone in the move to a schools-led system. Partly it was inevitable, because of budget constraints and some things had to go, but it would have been good if they could have maintained some of those activities.

Q8 Craig Whittaker: That would not be hard to do either, would it?

James Noble-Rogers: No. It could be done in partnership with the sector, drawing on the expertise of the sector, which is how it was done. It was part of a self-improving system, if you like, but with more of a facilitating role carried out by the central agency.

Q9 Craig Whittaker: My point is, because it is on a website, of course, the cost of doing that is minimal.

James Noble-Rogers: Yes. There is a case for a website, but more active measures as well.

Q10 Craig Whittaker: Does the college still have the same level of expertise in a variety of areas, or do you think that has gone, and does that matter?

Amanda Timberg: I would say, because we inherited the most similar agency from where we started, with the TTA, TDA, etc, our experience would probably be the most consistent, but Teach First is not just about initial teacher training; we also have lots of middle and senior leaders within the system, so we did engage with the national college in particular around leadership progression. That is probably where the conversation just has not progressed to the extent that it was a few years ago, because it was a dedicated body that was looking at that leadership pipeline and supporting the leadership within schools. I would say, for us, though, because we are mainly around teacher training, it has been probably the most consistent.

Peter Kent: There was some very strong expertise in specific areas, such as, for example, leading personalisation, reducing within-school variation; that is a project I worked with them on, which is still very, very relevant today. Because of that shift of focus, to some extent that has been lost, and leaders regret that because that was a resource that could be dipped into, so much so that we are certainly talking about whether we could find a way to put some of this information on our own website, because some of the leaders would still like to access and make use of it in their own school-improvement work.

Q11 Craig Whittaker: But does losing expertise in some areas—we have heard how there is consistency in one area—really matter? We have seen that the role has changed and become system-led.

James Noble-Rogers: I think they do not have as many staff with direct experience of initial teacher education as they did in the past. That has, on occasion, led to some issues with some proposals that do not fit with, for example, the Ofsted inspection framework for teacher education or the teacher education requirements. That sort of detailed knowledge has gone and they have relied, to an extent, on organisations such as ours to point out these things to them, whereas they may have perhaps looked at better maintaining the knowledge base on teacher education and people with direct experience of teacher education.

Q12 Chair: What about from your point of view, Ben?

Ben Thomas: In terms of the information that you can get about support staff or early years?

Chair: What about expertise? Comment on information as well, but is the expertise there as it was before?

Ben Thomas: Some of it has disappeared, in the sense that the NCTL no longer has a remit for support staff. There was a regional network of WAMG support staff to promote learning and career development for support staff under the TDA, but that infrastructure has disappeared.

Q13 Chair: So, specifically, the remit has changed for NCTL, has it?

Ben Thomas: I find it difficult to follow, to be honest, where the TDA disappeared and things moved into the NCSL and then the NCTL, along with the remit of the CWDC, and what moved to the Children's Improvement Board and what moved directly to the DfE. It is not always an easy thing to follow how the remit—

Q14 Chair: I pity someone who is not in our world, listening to this, trying to follow this ocean of acronyms.

Ben Thomas: It is not easy to follow. The successor bodies had specific areas. For example, the CWDC had the wider work force remit and the TDA had specific areas dedicated to improving the career development and training needs of support staff. If you look at the work of the NCTL now, everything is directed to teachers.

Q15 Chair: You said the remit had changed.

Ben Thomas: Certainly its funding has changed; the way it spends its money has changed.

Q16 Chair: That is different. I am sorry to focus on it. The Government, effectively, have said to the NCTL, “Nothing for support staff in future”, as opposed to what the TDA or other agencies had; that is what you suggested. I just wanted to know whether that is true or whether they are just failing to do it, even though they still have the remit.

Ben Thomas: In preparation for this, I did look at their remit. The remit says to improve the education work force. I take that as including everybody.

Q17 Chair: So the remit has not changed; it is just they are not doing it, according to you.

Ben Thomas: Yes.

Q18 Ian Mearns: Ofsted has pointed out that, by 2023, there will be nearly 900,000 additional pupils in schools in England, whilst the number of entrants to teacher training has fallen by 16% since 2009-10, and was 7% below target in 2014-15. How much is the shortfall in new teachers down to some sort of mishandling of allocations for places rather than the fact that young people do not see it as an attractive career option?

James Noble-Rogers: The large reason for the potential shortfall is economic. We would in any case be faced with a shortage of teachers at the current time because of higher competition for graduates, the improving economy and the number of staff leading the profession. I do, though, think that some of the policy decisions of the NCTL may have added to the problems. On allocation specifically, I do not think sufficient weight is given to success in recruiting when places are allocated. There has been a big push for School Direct, and School Direct is doing some good things up and down the country, but it does recruit less well than other programmes. The fee-paying School Direct programmes filled 57% of their places last year, compared to 90% of places filled by

HEIs, and yet School Direct are getting first call on all available places. I do not think that makes a great deal of sense. I also think they should be allowed more flexibility at a regional level for schools holding School Direct places, for SCITTs and for universities to agree to share and swap places between them, in order to maximise recruitment, and that flexibility is not there either.

Peter Kent: What we are hearing from school leaders is that there is significant regional variation, and that is one of the things they have particular concerns about. As James has just commented on, there is a sense that the model used to predict future teacher need should take more account of the fact that there may be different challenges in different regions. When we have held sessions up and down the country, very much depending on where we are, colleagues have reported different areas of concern, different subjects that are a challenge to recruiting. Something that averages out across the country may be missing some of the fundamental issues.

Amanda Timberg: I just wanted to add some detail to that, really, because I would agree with it. In terms of the economy, absolutely, I think the economy has shown us that it is getting better. We know that graduate recruiters across the board are hiring about 8% more graduates than there were, and the salaries for those graduate-recruitment jobs are going up. They have gone up about 30%, even in the last decade, so they are going up quite considerably compared to a teacher salary. Equally, we know that there are 16% fewer entrants into university that are exiting as graduates this year because of tuition fees, so you also have a smaller pot that you are trying to fish out of. In terms of regional variations, we just speak to our experience of school demand, because we will be recruiting close to 2,000 teachers this year, so we are out working with schools now.

Compared to this point last year, we have 40% more teachers being requested from schools, which indicates there is quite a strong demand out there for our teachers compared to even a year ago, which might indicate that there are shortages. In particular, we are seeing an increase in demand for English, science and maths compared to even a year ago. Last year, we had a demand for English teachers that exceeded our supply by 28%, and the two biggest areas of the country that were looking for English teachers were the West Midlands and the East of England. This year, we have already seen twice as many requests for English teachers compared to last year in London, Yorkshire and the East Midlands. That is just our experience of working with schools, demonstrating that they are not necessarily able to get the teachers.

Q19 Ian Mearns: I am getting the feeling, though, that there is a kind of structural problem here. We are saying that there are other tensions acting within this, so we are not recruiting enough teacher trainees because of other economic pressures. Therefore, structurally, what would you be suggesting that we did to rectify that problem, to increase the number of teacher trainees or graduates who are willing to go into teacher training?

James Noble-Rogers: There should be scope to look at a more regional basis for allocating training places, taking more account of where in the country new teachers are most needed. That does not factor into the allocations at all at the moment.

Q20 Chair: Did it in the past?

James Noble-Rogers: Only at the margins. It has not traditionally been a great factor ever in the way places have been allocated. In the past, it was done on the basis of quality grades; now it is done on the basis of what I think is rather a crude definition of school-led training. There is a case for a more regionally based allocation system. To avoid further problems in the future, care needs to be taken to make sure that the supply base of new teachers, which is often long-established larger providers, is maintained, because, by its nature, the numbers will go up and down at school level quite a lot, and you need an infrastructure there to meet future supply needs. If that infrastructure goes, it has gone potentially forever.

Q21 Ian Mearns: Given the sort of statistics I kicked off with in terms of the extra 900,000 pupils by 2023, do we not need a much more forceful hand doing some strategic teacher-training place planning?

Peter Kent: There is certainly a feeling among leaders that we need something that will take a more centralised approach, rather than just leaving it to a set of market forces. Also, something that is often fed back to us is that it needs to be made clearer: if you want to become a teacher, how do you get into it? I have a son who is at the moment going through the process of applying to be a maths teacher, which should be a relatively straightforward thing to do, given the national need. It is not straightforward. There is a variety of routes and approaches, and, again and again, colleagues involved in School Direct or other approaches are hearing that people who want to apply to be teachers do not find it a straightforward process. We need to bring greater transparency into the system.

Amanda Timberg: The teacher supply model is the way that the NCTL projects the teacher need. The issue about transparency is just to better understand what figures they are using to project that, how far ahead they are looking in terms of training teachers, what sort of retirement statistics, population statistics and regional variations they are bringing into it, and how they are managing what they are hearing on the ground compared to what the model is telling them. Our understanding is that they did quite a considerable rework to that teacher supply model last year, which did change things, so it might be worth better understanding that.

Q22 Ian Mearns: The other thing you have not mentioned there, though, is attrition rates in terms of teachers leaving the profession early.

Amanda Timberg: I think they take all that into account, but it is not clear to me how they take those things into account, in particular the regional issues.

Q23 Ian Mearns: Is there anything particular that we think the NCTL should be doing to tackle under-recruitment in initial teacher training?

Chair: In addition to the points you have already made.

Amanda Timberg: There probably is something around better understanding in which parts of the country School Direct is very successful and feeding that in. Certainly,

one of the things we do—and I am not suggesting they do this—is centralise recruitment, so we recruit everybody in and it is our ethos as a charity to get people to teach in the areas where they are most needed. More than 50% of those people are outside of London, and we are increasingly trying to get those into the areas of the country where they are the most needed.

Q24 Ian Mearns: You would hope that more than 50% were outside of London.

Amanda Timberg: Exactly. More and more, that is the strong direction of travel, but my point is that that is the way we do it. I am not suggesting they do it that way, but there have to be ways to address those issues.

Q25 Ian Mearns: There are not currently any sanctions for schools not filling their allocated School Direct places. Could some sort of regime of sanctions against schools not filling their places be a solution?

Chair: Go on, Peter, before we hear the HE angle: if it is good enough for them, it is good enough for you. You can get your defence in first.

Peter Kent: Absolutely, yes: a teaching school head's immediate response to that. Graham saw me twitch. There is a danger, if you had sanctions, that you would get a more cautious approach. As a school that is involved actively in School Direct and leading a consortium, it can be quite hard to predict, because you are gazing into the future.

Chair: That is a “no”, then. Sorry, we have very little time.

James Noble-Rogers: I do not like the term “sanctions”. That sends the wrong messages. When allocations are made, we need more account taken of previous recruitment records, but also, as I said, more flexibility on the ground to share places to make sure they are filled, which will help schools and universities fill their places.

Q26 Chair: Do you get fined if you do not fill yours?

James Noble-Rogers: It is taken into account. There is no fine as such.

Chair: I do not know whether “amused” is the right word or not, but we saw this morning that Ofsted have just been fined £150,000 for appointing a senior official without getting Cabinet Office sanction first. How pointless that is, I don't know.

Q27 Craig Whittaker: The vision is of having a single work force covering birth to 18. Do you think the NCTL has brought it any nearer to that vision at all?

James Noble-Rogers: I am not sure it is any closer than it has been in the past.

Q28 Craig Whittaker: Has it moved on or not moved on?

Amanda Timberg: Our experience has been that they work very closely with the DfE in the zero-to-five, and we do place early years, so it cuts across the DfE and the NCTL. They seem to work very closely in conjunction with that; they are obviously part of the same entity, but that is an anecdotal experience, just with Teach First.

Ben Thomas: Our experience is, to repeat what I said earlier, that the focus has very much been on teaching and leadership, to the exclusion of the rest of the work force, which we felt, in a sense, has distanced it from a single work force. The focus of some of the work the TDA previously did was a whole work force approach to training and development so that the needs of particularly teaching assistants in behaviour support or dealing with pupils with medical needs were met to assist the teacher and develop the whole work force. That role as the national strategic lead in terms of training and development has been lost. That vision has disappeared, as far as we can see.

Q29 Craig Whittaker: So it has gone backwards; is that what you are saying?

Ben Thomas: It has gone backwards, definitely. I was looking through some of the old materials we produced previously. The relationship and the way that the TDA was leading certain aspects and promoting learning and development of support staff has entirely disappeared. If you look on the NCTL website, there is a single page with a qualification finder for early-years workers and that is it.

Q30 Craig Whittaker: Therefore, you are saying the disparities between early years, primary and secondary have not been ironed out at all and you think it has gone backwards.

Ben Thomas: Definitely, yes.

James Noble-Rogers: I do not think they have gone forwards. I am not sure they have gone backwards, but I do not think any progress has been made. One thing, which is beyond the remit of the NCTL and to some extent this Committee, is the training of teachers for further education, which is the responsibility of a separate Government Department, with a totally separate regulatory system. There would be a lot of logic in bringing those two together.

Peter Kent: I would say it is unchanged. It has certainly not gone forward.

Q31 Pat Glass: We had concerns raised with us, not least by you, James, and by ATL, that the NCTL is focused on ITT, initial teacher training, at the expense of CPD.

Chair: Continuing professional development, for anyone listening.

Pat Glass: Sorry, continuing professional development. What should be the role of the NCTL in this? Should they be providing courses themselves or just simply encouraging others to do it? First of all, are they focusing on ITT at the expense of CPD, and should they be running CPD courses themselves or just encouraging others?

Peter Kent: From the point of view of ASCL, one thing we are obviously very anxious about is the suite of leadership development courses that NCTL still has oversight of:

the NPQs, the national professional qualifications. We think it is very important, because those have had a strong uptake and they are providing that pipeline of the next generation of school leaders at various levels, that those are fostered and maintained and that we find a suitable profession-led solution for them. It is important that we do not lose that, because it will make our leadership challenges even worse in the future.

James Noble-Rogers: For newly qualified teachers, there has been a step back. The focus of the agency and its predecessor organisations has always been predominantly on ITT, but, in the past, there was quite a lot of work done on continuing professional development, particularly at masters level for teachers, which was very successful in terms of boosting teachers' confidence, their innovative ability and retaining them in the profession. A lot of that has been lost. I would not want to see them run courses themselves, but they could facilitate other organisations running courses. If you want to address a supply problem, half of it is to keep existing teachers in. What new teachers especially need to stop them leaving is structured early professional development that builds on and complements their initial training. That might be a role for a future College of Teaching, but, until the college gets off the ground, Government agencies should have a facilitation role.

Q32 Pat Glass: What is happening in the meantime for teachers who wish to do masters? Do they just have to find their own way, or is it just not happening?

James Noble-Rogers: They have to find their own way or in partnership with their schools. Teaching schools are doing a lot of good stuff on this, facilitating it for them, but it has to be funded entirely now by individual teachers or teachers and schools. In the past, there was a Government subsidy: it did not pay for the whole provision; it allowed universities to reduce the fees by about half, and that was very successful for a relatively small amount of money.

Peter Kent: One of the things that have happened over recent years is the national professional developments often provide credit towards masters, so they are a first step towards them. That has encouraged a lot of people to do them.

Q33 Pat Glass: The NPQH is no longer compulsory, is it? Has that dropped off dramatically or are deputies and senior staff still going?

Peter Kent: There are some recent figures that suggest the numbers have reduced, but this may just reflect structural changes, because the course was changed, made more challenging, about three or so years ago. My own school is involved in the provision, and we are seeing a healthy number coming through. The National Governors' Association tells us that governing bodies still value this very highly as a quality measure, effectively.

Ben Thomas: Some of the professional qualifications that we had seen developed for other staff, such as the school business managers, examination officers or HLTA standards are very difficult to find now. You simply would not know who was responsible or where you could find details about those qualifications anymore.

James Noble-Rogers: One positive thing that is happening is with School Direct, actually. When SCITTs and universities are negotiating with schools about School Direct, factoring in early professional development as part of those negotiations is something we are trying to encourage and is a good thing happening on the ground.

Q34 Ian Mearns: Ben, you just started answering the question I was just about to ask. UNISON has argued that, either by fault or design, the NCTL has abandoned its role in the training and development of the wider education work force. What role should the NCTL be playing in the training and development of support staff in schools? Is it simply lack of Government funding that means it is not fulfilling this role?

Ben Thomas: In its evidence check, its main evidence of its effectiveness was that it had reduced its budget. The way we see it is that the support staff in schools play an essential role in delivering effective education. You cannot simply improve the whole work force if you ignore half the work force. Obviously, we would like some funding for support staff training. When we did a survey of support staff last year, we found that a quarter of staff received no training whatsoever, and 75% received three days or less in a year, so there is an absence of training.

What we would like to see is some form of career development and career pathways for support staff. We saw, with the CWDC, this development of a framework of qualifications where people could move between professions. That is the sort of thing that we would like to see the NCTL developing. Obviously, we would like to see funding. I know lots of teaching assistants feel dissatisfied with their ability to progress and achieve. Even the training they do do is not linked to qualifications sometimes. They would like a framework of qualifications that can lead to a career path, and that is the sort of work we would like to see.

Q35 Ian Mearns: Do we have a career development and training vacuum for support staff at the moment?

Ben Thomas: We do. One of the issues we have talked about for teacher training and the early-years system is that the Government's preference is for sector-led professional development. That is where, particularly in the early-years sector, we think that the sector itself struggles, simply because of the nature of the sector, with lots of small or single-site providers. It is simply not in a position to provide that strategic leadership for developing qualifications and occupational standards for measuring progression. We think there is a role for a national development agency that leads on that strategic approach to career development, qualifications and progression.

Q36 Ian Mearns: It seems logical from my perspective that, if we want standards in our educational settings at all levels to improve, there has to be some way for staff to learn about the job. Continuing professional development for all staff within schools should be a given, I would have thought.

Ben Thomas: Yes. Part of the issue has been the cuts to local authority funding. We would see it as an issue that the academisation of schools has led to a more school-led

approach, and therefore there is not a local authority role in providing training. With support staff, there is a wider scope of professions, so what you need as a science technician or as an IT support worker is very different to what you need as a teaching assistant, so it is difficult to get the economies of scale, if you are a single-site provision, to develop a training suite for support staff.

Ian Mearns: Is there therefore anything that the NCTL should be doing to address the needs particularly of the wider early-years work force?

Ben Thomas: In terms of the early-years work force, anecdotally, I went to the NCTL site at the Nursery World conference last week and asked them for information about what they are doing for the early-years work force. They could only give me information about initial teacher training. It seems, apart from providing a qualifications finder, that is all they do. What we would like to see is much more promoting the benefits of learning and of improving your qualifications. They have done some work in terms of the standards for the early-years educator qualifications, and I do not think we have a particular problem with those.

Everyone wants funding; we would like funding for courses, because people are not getting the funding. They have to pay fees now for their first qualifications, particularly at level 2 and 3. There are issues around the requirements for GCSE English and maths. We do not think the impact on learning was fully evaluated before those changes were brought in. Again, that is something the NCTL could have taken a role in.

Q37 Chair: Looking ahead, the College of Teaching looks like it may finally take off. Where would you like to see the developmental focus placed, if the College of Teaching takes off? Would you want it in the College of Teaching? Would you want it in a continuation of the NCTL? Where exactly in the institutional landscape do you see your members' needs being best met?

Ben Thomas: It is a difficult one for us, obviously, because, if you put them in the College of Teaching, for one, they may no longer be our members. The issue is whether or not they get swamped by the teacher work force, because the focus is generally on the teacher work force, as we have seen today, so the focus is lost. The other issue is, if you have a professional college, for example, you expect other professional standards: you expect professional pay; you expect the right to CPD; you expect a career framework. I think some of those things have to be there first, before you can put people in a professional college. If those things are not there, you can have sanctions against someone for not meeting professional standards, but you do not expect them to be paid as a professional.

Q38 Chair: Thank you all very much for giving evidence today. We about to have Charlie Taylor give evidence to us, so what one question would you want to put to Charlie today?

Amanda Timberg: I would ask him about the teacher supply model and the transparency around that.

Peter Kent: How can we continue to support the pipeline of new leaders coming through the system?

James Noble-Rogers: Does he accept that there are models of school-led teacher education other than delivered through SCITTs or School Direct?

Ben Thomas: What could the NCTL do for support staff in schools?

Chair: Great. Thank you all very much indeed.

Examination of Witness

Witness: **Charlie Taylor**, Chief Executive, National College for Teaching and Leadership, gave evidence.

Q39 Chair: Good morning and welcome, Charlie. Thank you for coming back to the Committee. Today's session is part of our evidence-check inquiry. What input did you have into the DfE's memorandum to our evidence-check process and why does it contain so little evidence on the actual effectiveness of your organisation?

Charlie Taylor: Yes. We came back, because we were not quite sure what you were after on that. I am sorry if it was not giving you what you wanted, because I was involved in that. We also put a link to our annual report as well. Part of the difficulty is we are such a broad agency that to both summarise the reasons for our existence but also give a reasonable summary of our entire performance in a two-pager, which I think you asked for, was quite challenging. I am sorry you did not get everything you wanted there.

Q40 Chair: So you are so broad-ranging, it is impossible, in two pages, to summarise what you do and whether you are any good at it.

Charlie Taylor: No. I think we summarise it in our annual report, which we also sent you a link to as well, which starts off with a summary of the achievements of the national college.

Q41 Chair: How much autonomy do you have in determining the strategic direction of the NCTL?

Charlie Taylor: We are civil servants, and therefore responsible to Ministers, so we follow the ministerial decisions in terms of what the agency does.

Chair: Thank you. I hopefully will pick up on some of the questions that the previous panel left hanging and you will find opportunities to address them, perhaps, during answers.

Q42 Pat Glass: The training agency and the NCSL that the current organisation replaced were actually seen as somewhat independent from the Government, as a buffer between the teaching profession and the Government. The current organisation is seen by some, now, as having lost credibility and simply being an arm of Government. What you said to the Chairman seems to suggest that you are civil servants and you do what the Government tells you. Is that a correct understanding?

Charlie Taylor: Yes. If we go back to the time when we were thinking about the name of the new agency, thinking back now perhaps I should have given different advice to Ministers in terms of the name. One of the difficulties has been that retaining the “national college” name has made an assumption that we will simply do many of the functions of the old national college, or indeed the old TDA or the Teaching Agency. There is a question about whether my advice was right on that. Having said that, many of the things that we do are simply continuations of the things that the old Training and Development Agency did, or indeed that the other agencies that we were amalgamated from have taken on. Yes, we are a different organisation, but many of the functions we do are similar, for example the allocation of teacher training places.

Q43 Pat Glass: There is a certain amount of criticism that the organisation has now simply become politicised and less able to stand up to Ministers. Do you accept that?

Charlie Taylor: I would be confident that my colleagues and I would give Ministers robust advice.

Q44 Pat Glass: It seems as if we have lost something in this. Do you regret that—the level of independence this organisation has had?

Charlie Taylor: It is different. It is born of a different time; it is born of a different Government; it is born of different ministerial priorities.

Q45 Pat Glass: It has just merged into a Goveism.

Charlie Taylor: No. That is the former Secretary of State of course, but no. It performs many functions that are very similar, for example on teaching schools, which is something we took on from the national college. National leaders of education, local leaders of education, are new developments we have taken on. The leadership, training and selection of new leaders again are part of our remit. There are parts of the organisation that, because of resource but also because of the way we are set up, we do not do, but the core business and the fundamental stuff that Ministers want to do is what we are focused on.

Q46 Pat Glass: Do we need something else that is going to give that credibility, certainly with the profession, and act as a buffer?

Charlie Taylor: I am really very excited by the idea of the College of Teaching, and I think out there in the profession there are people who want to have a genuinely independent organisation. One talks about the independence of the national college or the

Training and Development Agency, but you are only so independent of someone if they are giving you 100 million quid. The point of the College of Teaching is the aim that this will be genuinely independent of Government and a voice for teachers and for professionalism.

Q47 Chair: What has been gained and what has been lost by the formation of your organisation?

Charlie Taylor We have more coherence between some of the bits of policy. For example, when teaching schools were first being set up, overall responsibility for teaching schools was with the National College for School Leadership, but responsibility for the teacher training aspect of that sat with the old Training and Development Agency, which became the Teacher Training Agency. We are more coherent in terms of the focus, which is about improving quality of the school work force and also helping schools to help each other to improve. That is the overarching remit of us. As to other aspects that we have moved away from, for example the website that we used to run, I think things have just moved on.

Chair: Moved off, in that case.

Charlie Taylor: I think the world has moved on. For example, when I first did my NPQH back in 2006, there was an interactive forum where school leaders could hold discussions with other school leaders and chat about particular issues. That was enormously exciting, innovative and a new thing, but there are enormous amounts of forums now in which school leaders hold those sorts of discussions. Therefore, I do not think the national college needs to be in that space anymore, because schools are doing it for themselves.

Q48 Craig Whittaker: In what sense is the NCTL still a college or a seat of learning?

Charlie Taylor: It is not. Specifically, it is not a college, but I suppose in some ways it was never a seat of learning. For example, when I did my NPQH, my qualification to be a head teacher, it was done by commissioned providers. The national college commissioned people to deliver the training. I did mine at the Institute of Education in London, and I did my residential in Twickenham. It was not a sense that this was a college where you went to, where you did qualifications. It was a college that had an overview of qualifications, developed the training materials and then commissioned providers to deliver them around the country.

Q49 Craig Whittaker: So, if it is not a seat of learning or a college, what is it?

Charlie Taylor: It is a Government agency.

Craig Whittaker: Just a Government agency?

Charlie Taylor: Yes.

Q50 Craig Whittaker: What should you be called?

Charlie Taylor: I will leave that to Ministers.

Q51 Chair: Can you not tell us? Can you not share the advice that you would be likely to give? It is not terribly political. It is only the name, after all.

Charlie Taylor: At the time my recommendation was the “National College for Teaching and Leadership”. I have not thought about a different name for the future. Again, it depends on things like the development of the College of Teaching, and therefore where would the national college sit with a College of Teaching, as and when it begins to develop. That is something Ministers will want to think about in the future.

Q52 Chair: Will there be an envelope awaiting the reappointed or newly appointed Secretary of State on 8 May saying, “Just a small thing, Secretary of State, but here is my proposed name change for my organisation, love Charlie”?

Charlie Taylor: Gosh. No, because I think that will be something that Ministers may want to think about at some stage further along the line, but it is not something that I see as a huge priority at the moment.

Q53 Ian Mearns: But you are not frightened to give robust advice to Ministers.

Charlie Taylor: I am certainly not. They will have some major priorities to worry about as they come into Government, and the name of the agency will be something they may want to do, if they do, later on.

Q54 Craig Whittaker: You said that some things you do not do anymore—“because of resource” I think were your exact words.

Charlie Taylor: Yes.

Q55 Craig Whittaker: Would you say that the NCTL is a shadow of its predecessor organisations?

Charlie Taylor: I would not. I would just say it is different. To take an example, one of the aims of the agency was to develop a school-led system, so the development of a system where schools take more responsibility for continuous professional development, for initial teacher training, for the selection and training of the next generation of leaders and for school-led school improvement.

We used to run a very big conference every year, the Seizing Success conference. That was enormously popular and many heads attended it. Up to 1,800 school leaders attended it. I took the decision that we were going to stop running that conference. The reason why I did it is because I thought, if we were a Government agency that close to Government, what kind of a conference could we really realistically run? Either we would run a conference in which there were speakers who were criticising Government policy—

as a civil servant or as a Government agency, that would be strange—or we would be running some sort of hideous Nuremberg rally, at which we would all stand around saying how wonderful we thought the Government were. Again, the credibility with teachers would be questioned. Therefore, I decided to stop running that conference. As a result, actually, the National Association of Head Teachers and CfBT have taken that conference on. It is now an independent conference, which means all of those robust and challenging conversations around education are happening, but it is a sector-led conference, rather than simply being driven by Government.

It was a brilliant conference; it was a conference of its time. It has moved as we have moved to more of a school-led system.

Q56 Craig Whittaker: Are you saying, therefore, that because you are now a Government agency, as such, you cannot be impartial? In relation to things like CPD, for example, it appears, from what we have been told, that a lot of teachers have used websites, for example, for tools. Now they have to go out hunting for it. Are you saying you cannot be impartial enough?

Charlie Taylor: No. I was very surprised by the evidence that ATL put in about being able to look at the stuff on our archive. The first thing I did was put it into a search engine, and it is all there. All of the materials of the former National College for School Leadership and the Training and Development Agency are there in our archive. I am not quite sure where that confusion came from. It is all there and it is all available. Everything the national college has ever done is still available to be seen. The only proviso is that some of the teaching materials are licensed until 2016; the licensees have ownership of those as terms of the licence.

Q57 Chair: Would it be possible for you to write to us about that? We can then at least make that publicly available.

Charlie Taylor: Yes, of course.

Chair: If there are any nuances to add to the oral evidence you have given, we can perhaps make sure that is all down.

Q58 Craig Whittaker: Going back to when the agency was set up, the current Government said there was a strong argument for a single work force agency. What is that evidence?

Charlie Taylor: It was partly that you have two agencies whose aim is to improve the standards of the work force, but also develop a skill-led system. You had the national college, for example, focusing on the development of national leaders of education and the teaching schools, but the remits of teaching schools and the national leaders of education were so close to the work of the old Training and Development Agency or the Teaching Agency, because one of the fundamental remits of teaching schools is initial teacher training. It made sense to merge those two bits.

Certainly, for the short period of time when I was chief executive of the Teaching Agency, even though we had excellent relationships with the National College for School Leadership, being two separate agencies made things more difficult when it came to having that sort of overview.

Q59 Craig Whittaker: You are really saying that by bringing the two agencies together, which both do the same thing or whatever it is you are saying—

Charlie Taylor: Parallel things rather than the same thing.

Craig Whittaker: Yes, parallel things. All that has been achieved by bringing them together is that you have saved budget and you have cut down on staff.

Charlie Taylor: No, the agency is more coherent as one agency. It is more coherent than two separate agencies.

Q60 Craig Whittaker: The people using the sector do not seem to think that.

Charlie Taylor: There was a huge affection for the old National College for School Leadership amongst a group of school leaders. Our aim is, first of all, to address the wider work force, but also for us to be an agency that covers a wider brief. Anything that is to do with improving the quality of the teaching work force sits with our agency as opposed to sitting in two different places.

Q61 Craig Whittaker: You are saying that the people are wrong in what they are saying and, actually, it is an ethos thing rather than a “this is what we are actually achieving” thing.

Charlie Taylor: I take your point. I understand people’s sense of loss about some of the things that the national college used to do: for example, the old website and the conference we used to do. I understand that, but, nevertheless, with a new agency and a reduction both in budget and staff numbers, we had to do two things: first of all, we had to make savings so we fitted in with the rest of the Department; we also had to make sure that the things we were doing aligned with ministerial priorities. We are doing precisely the things that Ministers want us to be doing.

Q62 Craig Whittaker: How do you measure your goals so that you make sure you are achieving what you have set out to do?

Charlie Taylor: We have a wide range of KPIs. For example, we have aims around teacher recruitment; around recruitment for teaching schools—we now have 500 teaching schools; around national leaders of education; and around specialist leaders of education. We have a range of targets on early-years recruitment and teacher regulation. One of the things we have not talked about is that we have responsibility for holding hearings into teachers who have been accused of serious misconduct. We have a range of KPIs across our remit.

Q63 Craig Whittaker: How do you change those KPIs? If it is not what the end user wants from your agency, what mechanism is for there for the end user to feed in to say, “This is not working; how can we change it?”

Charlie Taylor: We spend a huge amount of time in conversation with schools. One of the things, for example, we have done is completely revamped and reworked our Get Into Teaching website, because of the national college fellowship, which is a group of system leaders who come together every year and unpick a knotty problem in education.

One of the things they flagged up to us was that they felt the quality of the website was not good enough and that also some of the materials on the website could be better. We actually asked one of the members of the panel, a head teacher called Bill Jerman, to come along and look at and help us design the new website in order to make it more school, teacher and trainee-friendly.

We see ourselves as very responsive to the needs of schools leaders. At the same time, we also need to be responsive to the needs of Government.

Q64 Ian Mearns: Is this going to lead to the NCTL being involved in brokering school improvement?

Charlie Taylor: Yes. We continue to do that. We have 49 teaching and leadership advisers, who operate around the country, who support the brokering of school improvement, amongst other responsibilities.

Q65 Ian Mearns: From your perspective, is your organisation effectively fulfilling that role?

Charlie Taylor: Yes. What we have to do on this is be careful that we are not sucking the oxygen out of the room. For example, I was down in Plymouth the other day, where there is a fantastic relationship between the local authority and the teaching schools. School-improvement work is now simply done by teaching schools. The local authority commissions teaching schools to do it.

Actually, in a place like Plymouth, and in other parts of the country where the school-led system begins to reach levels of maturity, we have much less of a role. If, however, you move to other parts of the country, other counties or other areas, where it is less mature, we have more of a role in terms of brokering. We were heavily involved in the process around the £10 million school-to-school support fund that has just been released to schools across the country. Where the money was allocated was our decision, but we worked closely with regional schools commissioners’ offices as well in order to make sure that the schools most in need of support were getting support.

I would see us having a continuing role in terms of doing that at the moment, but making sure we do not do it in places in the country where it simply is not required anymore because the system is working very well.

Q66 Chair: What are the titles of these 49 people?

Charlie Taylor: They are called teaching and leadership advisers. By and large—not all of them, but a large proportion—they are serving head teachers who give some of their time to us.

Q67 Chair: We have teaching and leadership advisers; we have national leaders of education; we have local leaders of education; we have specialist leaders of education.

Charlie Taylor: Yes, indeed. The teaching and leadership advisers are contracted by us as opposed to the national leaders of education, who are independent.

Q68 Chair: Do we have enough clarity about who should be doing what in this area of brokering school improvement? There is the local authority role. In our “Academies and free schools” report we called for clarification about their continuing role. There seems to be confusion among local authorities as to what they are doing. As you say, we have the teaching school alliances, some which seem to focus very much on this area and others less so. Do we have a coherent system? Does a lack of coherence matter? Could we bring greater clarity to the way things should work?

Charlie Taylor: The introduction of the role of regional schools commissioners is really important here. There are numerous stakeholders, which you have described in terms of local authorities, regional schools commissioners and the Ofsted regional leads as well, and the teaching and leadership advisers.

One of the things that our advisers do is help bring people together in order to be able to broker those sorts of arrangements. Is it working perfectly across the country? No, there are some challenges on that. However, we are seeing some examples of where, locally, people are beginning to work things out for themselves with the support of our agency and the regional schools commissioners. We are beginning to come to a system where people have systems in place whereby they can broker and deliver school improvement across the board. We have just allocated £10 million to a whole range of schools across the country exactly for them to be able to do that school-to-school support work.

Q69 Bill Esterson: What do you mean by this term, “broker”? You describe areas of the country where the system is working, where schools are supporting each other and where improvements are happening. Who decides which areas are working, which do not and what the process is for intervening?

Charlie Taylor: If you take the example of somewhere like Wigan, again there is a very close working relationship between the teaching schools. The old way of doing the school improvement was where, in effect, a local authority would come in and say, “This is what you need to do; this is how you can sort things out.” The local authority is now sharing data and schools get the data on school improvement. The commissioning is done by the local authority through the schools.

That is one layer that would happen there, but, on top of that, you would also have the potential for the regional schools commissioners—if, for example, it were an academy that

was getting into difficulties—who would then be able to ask local schools for support as well in order to put a specialist leader of education or a local leader of education into that school to give them the support they required.

Q70 Alex Cunningham: There are very few regional schools commissioners across the country. We hear about more and more things they are supposed to be doing. Could you just clarify what you see the work that you are doing with them is? Can you just clarify that and tell me a bit more about that?

Charlie Taylor: In a nutshell, it is about support for maintained schools who are in serious difficulties—supporting the brokering of sponsorship arrangements with those schools. For academies in “requires improvement” or who are in difficulties and require additional support, it is about helping them obtain support from other schools, very often teaching schools or national leaders of education.

Q71 Alex Cunningham: Do they actually have the resources to put the time in to doing all of this co-operative working?

Charlie Taylor: It is very early days, but I have not heard anybody say they do not. This is something that, obviously, the Department will continue to look at.

Q72 Alex Cunningham: It is interesting to hear you talk about the local authority becoming involved, particularly in relation to academies, when we have had Ministers here saying that they are nothing at all to do with local authorities. They have their own route through to the Department. Can you just talk a little bit more about that and how you see local authorities working more effectively with academies? Ministers seem to have different thoughts on the matter.

Charlie Taylor: This is simply about local solutions when a school, whether it is an academy or a local authority school, is in difficulties. When we are talking about difficulties here, we are talking about the whole spectrum. We are not just talking about a school that is having a horrific time in terms of results or leadership issues or whatever it might be; we are also talking about schools who are asking for support because their English department needs a bit of a boost or because they think that boys’ writing in Key Stage 2 is not as good as it should have been. It is a whole range of things that are happening.

Q73 Alex Cunningham: Are you saying that your guys should be working with commissioners and local authorities to intervene in academy situations as well as the local authority schools?

Charlie Taylor: What we do, very specifically, is, if there is a school-improvement need, support the school that is in need of support. We will put them in touch with someone who can deliver that support locally.

Q74 Pat Glass: How do you respond to the claims that your organisation fundamentally misunderstands the relationship between higher education institutions and schools in its interpretation of school-led provision? Do you accept that Schools Direct is actually exacerbating the problems of teacher shortage?

Charlie Taylor: We have been absolutely adamant, and Ministers have been clear that they see HEIs and universities as absolute and continuing partners in a vibrant ITT market with a wide choice of different routes for potential trainees. It is really important to say that we absolutely see universities as key partners, as indeed schools do. It is worth remembering that, when it comes to—

Q75 Pat Glass: Do you think you have a clear understanding?

Charlie Taylor: Yes.

Q76 Pat Glass: I do not necessarily mean Ministers, but you and your organisation. Do you have a clear understanding of what is meant by the relationship between higher education and schools in school-led provision? That is the argument, that you misunderstand what that is.

Charlie Taylor: One of the things here is that it varies. It varies depending on what schools are asking for in the relationships with universities and, also, where universities sit on this. For example, you have some universities—somewhere like the University of Leicester or the University of Hull—who, for a long time, have had very close relationships with schools in terms of the content and input of programmes. You also have other universities that have perhaps been slightly more independent of schools.

One of the things that School Direct has done is bring people together in terms of building partnerships. These are not partnerships that start and finish with initial teacher training. These are partnerships that lead to continuing professional development; they lead to the opportunity for people to do masters degrees. One of the fundamental things about teaching schools, which again feeds back into universities, is about research and development.

On the second point about recruitment, we know the challenges we will have at the moment—this year in particular—on recruitment. Amanda talked about the fact that there are fewer graduates coming through, because there was a bubble the year before due to tuition fees. Also, the economy is improving and graduate recruiters are out there in a way that, perhaps, they were not a few years ago. That is the challenge for us in terms of recruitment.

Q77 Pat Glass: You heard the evidence earlier about the targets and how many of those are achieved in higher education institutions as opposed to School Direct. Are you willing to consider alternative models—and can you consider them? If you were looking at altering the balance, would that have to go through Ministers? Could you make that decision? Would you consider it and can you consider it?

Charlie Taylor: I will give you an example. Currently, we are going to release some more places for initial teacher training. These will be for universities. If a university has a course that is full and it is one of the courses that is more challenging to recruit for—say, for example, something like maths—they can get in touch with us and we have said we will allocate more places to them.

We have introduced a level of flexibility here, but this is something we have raised and discussed with Ministers, and Ministers are happy.

Q78 Chair: When did that happen?

Charlie Taylor: That happened this week.

Q79 Pat Glass: You are not able to decide, “There is an imbalance in the system; we can shift it one way or the other,” without checking that with Ministers.

Charlie Taylor: In effect, the allocation conversation happens that we get the bids in from schools and universities in the summer. We then process those over the course of the summer and we talk to Ministers about how they want to prioritise the way that allocations go. Of course, prior to that we publish the methodology by which we will make decisions. This time around, we prioritised outstanding schools and outstanding universities, and good schools and good universities. We also encouraged schools to form larger partnerships, because we know that when it comes to building relationships and sustainable initial teacher training partnerships with universities, bigger school partnerships have more capacity to do that.

We have a methodology. We get the bids in, but this time around we received far more bids than we had places for, in effect, because we have an overall budget that we have to stick within. We got nearly 24,000 bids from schools for School Direct and we gave out 17,000 places. We had 30,000 bids for universities and we gave just over 15,000 places. We made the decision on the balance between supporting schools’ huge appetite for School Direct—and their appetite to have more involvement in School Direct, which has expanded hugely; this is not driven by us, but by schools—and, at the same time, continuing to support the university core allocations, so they can continue to be a buoyant market.

Bear in mind that there is also huge cross-fertilisation here, because 80% of School Direct arrangements are with a university.

Q80 Pat Glass: Do you have any plans to put viring into the system? If you are failing to get in one area and you know that universities can recruit better with, say, maths or English, is there going to be viring in the system?

Charlie Taylor: That is a version of what we have announced, actually. If you are the University of Oxford and you have filled up your course on biology, come to us. If you have a good person lined up, come to us and we will release an additional place.

Q81 Chair: Further to that, can I ask you a question on the regional differences? We heard before about the need for that. Can you do more to create a more regionally responsive system?

Charlie Taylor: Yes. At the moment we have a teacher-supply model, which has a range of inputs in terms of the rate of people retiring and people moving in and out of the profession and the rates of people going on maternity. Those sorts of things are all factored in, and a teacher-supply model comes out at the end of it.

There is a possibility one could have something more regionalised, but I would be very cautious about moving to that at any level of pace, because the risk would be an unintended consequence of having done that. Yes, this is something Ministers may want to think about.

Q82 Chair: Teachers tend to stay where they train, do they not? In Ofsted report after Ofsted report, if you look at the moving hotspots, London has been a wonderful triumph and turnaround—and we all celebrate that—but there are other areas that have perhaps not traditionally been recognised, such as coastal and eastern areas, which are now seen as such. If the key resource of leadership in the education system is quality teaching, getting it where the biggest problems are is the central challenge. If we do not have a system of recruitment that is aligned with that, we are going to carry on failing to make the improvement we want, are we not?

Charlie Taylor: We actually have more than that. Rather than regional, we actually now have local arrangements. As a result of School Direct, schools can now recruit teachers who are local.

I have a quote here to read, because I thought this question might come up. It is important, because it comes from a guy called Carl Moore. He is vice-principal of the Tollbar Academy in Grimsby. He was talking about School Direct, and he said that the difficulty was that someone may come from the University of Hull to do a teaching practice in Grimsby, but that person may actually come from Sheffield. With the best will in the world, that person is unlikely, having done a teaching practice in Grimsby, to stay there.

What he says is that, “School Direct has given us the opportunity to choose the graduates we wish to train in the subjects we know there will be shortages in the following year. It has always been difficult to attract teachers to this region, so this scheme has allowed us to train people who already live here, are returning to live here or want to stay and work here.”

Chair: We heard the same evidence from heads in Hull about the fact that, historically, they had had that problem, and they were seeking to use the opportunity to train their own, because then they reckoned they would stay there.

Charlie Taylor: Yes.

Q83 Pat Glass: Can I ask you about the new skills test? We have heard reports that there are serious problems in finding even the location of where you can take the skills test. I

know you have put additional resources in and the responsibility has shifted to learndirect, but what else could you do around improving this, if this is going to be a barrier to people entering the profession?

Charlie Taylor: Yes. We think this is now resolved. We are assured that the right processes are now in place in order to sort this out. What happened is there appears to have been a glitch on the contractor's software, which was showing some of the bookings already full when they were not full, in effect. Therefore, it looked like there were no tests available when actually there were tests available. We have gone back and, obviously, we have fed back the concerns that we have had. We are now assured that 96.8% of candidates have been offered a test booking within 10 days. There is a little bit of a backlog to work through in terms of that. Therefore, learndirect have put on additional test centres across the country.

What they have also done is given us assurances that, if testing capacity drops below 20 in any of the centres, they will put on additional tests. I am confident that this has been resolved, but we will continue to monitor it and we will talk to James Noble-Rogers and his members to make sure there are no continuing problems with it.

Q84 Ian Mearns: Moving on to subject shortages, what further measures are you planning to take to address subject shortages through initial teaching training?

Charlie Taylor: There is a broad range of things we will do. The first thing is that we have increased bursaries for some subjects. We are now paying up to £25,000 for physics, maths, computer science, and modern foreign languages. We have increased the bursaries for those subjects for which there is a challenge. We know that increasing bursaries tends to increase the input of people coming through there. That is the first thing we have done.

The second thing we have done is we have run subject-knowledge enhancement courses. These are an opportunity for someone who, for example, has done a degree in economics but who has a maths A-level, to build up their subject knowledge as part of a funded course by us in order to that they can be at the right level when they go onto their teaching training course.

Q85 Chair: Can you give us some idea of numbers?

Charlie Taylor: The numbers are coming through now, so perhaps I can write to you and give you more of an update on that later on, if that is alright.

Chair: Thank you.

Charlie Taylor: We know that this is a way that both universities and schools find is a healthy way of getting some good people in. We also run four scholarship schemes for our priority subjects at the Royal Society of Chemistry and the Institute of Physics. We are continuing to improve the quality of our website.

We are about to run some TV advertising campaigns, which we have not done for some years, but we think, given that this is going to be a challenging year, it is worth doing that. You may or may not have seen our excellent advert that would have appeared on the web,

which is Mr Burton from *Educating Yorkshire*. Look out for that, because he is terrific and it is a very good advert.

The Prime Minister also recently announced £67 million more for recruitment into STEM subjects. This was about additional money to train current teachers up in order for them to be able to teach some of the STEM subjects. We are also looking at supporting people through university in a way that the short service commission works with the army, where we fund people through university with the proviso that they then go into teaching at the end of the process. We know this is going to be a challenging year, and therefore we are putting lots of things in place.

Q86 Chair: When you write to us, could you give us details and numbers for this support-through-university programme?

Charlie Taylor: Ministers have not agreed the final details on that, but it is in train at the moment. As soon as we do, we will let you have it.

Q87 Alex Cunningham: A lot of this is extremely positive—in fact, quite grand—but how long will it be before we will overcome the shortage in teachers in these main subjects of maths, science and English? How long is the gap going to remain?

Charlie Taylor: It is hard to know, because it depends on factors that are, to some extent, out of our control. It does depend on the economy, and as the economy grows there is a wider choice of options for graduates. We know that as the economy grows, teacher recruitment tends to get more difficult.

I would say this: there are more people now taking maths, further maths and physics A-levels than ever before. There has been a quite significant increase. Therefore, there is a bigger pool from which we will be able to fish in the future. Depending on the state of the economy, it will continue to be challenging if the economy is growing fast, but nevertheless, in the longer term, this begins to be solved by having a larger pool to fish from.

Q88 Alex Cunningham: The economy has not been growing fast over the last five years. What is the situation now in terms of finding sufficient people to fill these roles? Are sufficient numbers going to come out of the various training scheme over the next two or three years that will fill the substantial gap that remains?

Charlie Taylor: I would not be able to say with certainty that we know there are enough people coming through in the next few years.

Alex Cunningham: Is there half enough or three quarters enough?

Charlie Taylor: There is certainly more than that, yes.

Q89 Chair: Could we compare where we are now and the trajectory we are on with some previous time? Comparing to 2009-10 is not a similar time, but if you were going back

to—I do not know—sometime in the 2000s when the economy was growing strongly, how does our teacher recruitment, particularly in these shortage subjects, compare in terms of now with then, and what reasons do we have to believe that we have a better or worse situation now?

Charlie Taylor: The most recent data we have, which is from the school census, which is 2013, around vacancy rates says that current vacancy rates are at 0.3% for teachers at the moment. That is the current vacancy rate. That has remained broadly the same since—

Q90 Alex Cunningham: What are the vacancy rates for the specific subjects of maths, English and science? The 0.3% could cover anything and everything.

Charlie Taylor: Indeed, yes. We can give you more detail in terms of the vacancy rates. That is a broad picture. It has remained below 1% since around 2000. That is about where we are. At the moment, of course we are concerned; we know recruitment is going to be challenging. Nevertheless, vacancy rates are still below or around the average they have been for the last few years.

Q91 Ian Mearns: When we spoke earlier about the pattern for teacher training recruitment, we had oversupply in some subject areas and some with undersupply, but it was being broadcast by Ministers that we had met our targets in the global sense. However, the graphs were up and down in different subject areas. Is it not the role of your organisation to do some future work force planning to make sure that that does not happen and we get a better balance in terms of who is being trained in what?

Charlie Taylor: The teacher-supply model makes projections about the future. It looks at, for example, how the new national curriculum will play out. Therefore, the teacher-supply model doubled the amount of English teachers that were required this year, because, having looked at the teacher-supply model, what came out was that we need more English teachers because of the changes in the national curriculum.

We know that these sorts of things are coming. We also look at the population and the changes in the population. We are aiming to recruit fewer primary teachers this year, because the bubble that arose a few years ago is now moving into secondary. Therefore, the numbers in terms of secondary have gone up. Variation and over-recruitment happen in some subjects over time. Some subjects will recruit more; some subjects will recruit less.

When it comes to the teacher-supply model, the other thing to say is that this has quite a big range within it. If the teacher-supply model says, “We need 878 geography teachers for the year”, there is a range within that and there is a comfort zone within there. We are not saying, “If we do not fill 878 geography places, those places will not get filled.” Of course, given the way the churn of the work force is, many of the people who will be filling school places are, for example, people who are coming back from maternity leave. People returning back into the work force make up a quarter of people who fill teaching places every year.

Q92 Ian Mearns: This stuff does not just happen, however. Does your organisation not have a much more tightly focused role in terms of making sure the training places are not oversupplied in some subjects and not under-recruiting in others?

Charlie Taylor: As a result of the introduction of School Direct—and this is also something we have always done—we have over-allocated places across the country. We have allocated more places than the teacher-supply model tells us to. The reason why we have done that is because we can fill those gaps you have talked about. We will aim to fill the gaps in those subjects that are challenging by over-allocating places across the country.

Q93 Bill Esterson: Is part of your role to do more than planning and say, “This is what we predict; this is what we need”? Is it also to find a way of making sure that the shortages in STEM subjects are dealt with? It goes back to the questions both Alex and Ian were asking. If that is right, what can you do to fill those places?

Charlie Taylor: The STEM announcement the Prime Minister made was enormously welcomed by us, because this was a way of helping to recruit other people. There are more things we need to look at here around the margins. For example, one of the things we are talking to universities about is whether or not we can begin to piggy-back or think about creatively piggy-backing a teaching element into the courses of people who are involved in, for example, a maths or physics undergraduate degree. It could be qualified teacher status or some sort of extension onto that.

We have to be quite smart about how we do that, and we are talking to universities. If you take something like the University of Birmingham, as part of their physics course people can actually take a module, which is a module around initial teaching training. What they say is that is a very good way of flicking the switch in people’s brain when they are potentially seduced away by offers from high-paying graduate employers. Actually, if they get to spend a little bit of time in a school, what they realise is it is a far more enjoyable and fulfilling career than anything else.

Q94 Bill Esterson: That is not new, is it? I did a maths education module as part of my maths degree quite a long time ago. It did not make me a teacher.

Charlie Taylor: You are more than welcome to.

Bill Esterson: You never know—8 May.

Charlie Taylor: Yes, indeed.

Chair: Nobody will make any comment about children breathing sighs of relief.

Charlie Taylor: But you are right. We absolutely need to be creative about the way we think about bringing extra people in. This is going to continue to be a challenge. The point I made to Alex about more people doing these subjects in the future will begin to help, but nevertheless things are tight and therefore we are talking to universities about whether or not there are more things they can do in terms of their programmes to bring people through.

Q95 Bill Esterson: We have talked before in this Committee about how we get the very best graduates into teaching, as happens in the highest performing countries. Is it about money? Is it about something else?

Charlie Taylor: 73% of people who go into teacher training now have a first or a 2.1, compared with 63% five years ago. Amanda's work with Teach First has been enormously helpful with this, not only because of the people that Teach First have recruited, but what Teach First have also done is raised the status of initial teaching training at top universities. In terms of the quality of people coming through, when you look at degree class, for example, it still remains a very attractive profession for those people.

Peter did not talk about it, but if you ask head teachers, generally they would say the quality of the teaching profession at the moment is as good as it has ever been.

Q96 Chair: Do you have a measure for that? If you look at Finland or Korea, there was talk about how the top three deciles of graduates—we are not talking about the top three deciles overall; we are talking about the top three deciles of graduates—compete to go into teaching. We talk about the percentage of people with 2.1s and firsts, but in terms of the overall cohort of graduates and where teachers come from, do we have a measure of that?

Charlie Taylor: I am not sure we do. I can check on that, but beyond degree class I am not sure we would have that level of intelligence.

Q97 Bill Esterson: Is it about the way that we as a society value teachers or do not value them?

Charlie Taylor: It is an interesting question. As someone who is a teacher, it is not something I personally struggle with at all. I have always felt enormously valued and supported. Teaching is a profession that continues to be hugely respected, and teachers are valued people. I do not really see that myself.

Q98 Chair: Would you look at providing this information? If degree class is used and if that really is the most sophisticated measure we have of the calibre of entrants to the profession, we do not have a very sophisticated measure.

Charlie Taylor: We can look into seeing what other information we have. It may be that the Finnish system simply has more information. Our universities may be more independent than Finnish universities. I do not know. We will look into it for you.

Q99 Alex Cunningham: At the outset of the session this afternoon, Ben Thomas said that the NCTL was failing to support staff in schools. I have talked to a lot of teachers, and they tell me the time they are allowed now for CPD has diminished considerably over recent times. How is your organisation encouraging schools to prioritise CPD for their staff?

Charlie Taylor: I will deal with that in two parts. First of all, what Ben was talking about was initially about teaching assistants. Actually, teaching assistants do not sit within our

remit at the moment, as an agency. Ministers have not asked us to do anything on teaching assistants. If they did, of course we would. Currently that is not—

Q100 Alex Cunningham: We can set that aside. More importantly, teachers say that they no longer get the same amount of time for concentration on their professional development.

Charlie Taylor: There continue to be the five what used to be known in my day as Baker days. They continue to be there. What we are seeing is a development of more bespoke types of continuing professional development. The fact we now have 6,000 local leaders of education, who have all kinds of specialisms in terms of supporting teachers, means that we are moving away a little bit from the idea of simply sending teachers on courses. That is not to say courses are not very useful, but Doug Lamont describes them as drive-by CPD, whereby in effect you are dumped in a training course and then you are back in school.

A lot of the CPD that is going on—particularly through the work of teaching schools, the local leaders of education and the national leaders of education—is actually about looking at individual teachers and what it is that they need, whether that is through coaching or support in specific areas—for example, a teacher who has difficulties with behaviour. In Leeds last week I was talking to a local leader for education who had gone in there to support a teacher who was, by all accounts, a perfectly good teacher but who was really struggling with some of the quite challenging children within his class. Therefore, a local leader of education was giving some bespoke training.

We are moving away from the days of the top-down big Government training programmes we would have had before. It is all localised.

Q101 Alex Cunningham: Teachers still need the time. The schools need to give the teachers time.

Charlie Taylor: Yes, without doubt. It is incumbent on schools to do that. If head teachers do not do that—my feeling is head teachers are very good at doing that—there is a price to pay in terms of staff retention and staff development.

Q102 Alex Cunningham: We have talked about the different landscape out there in terms of courses. What roles does the NCTL play in ensuring quality control and moderation of CPD in this wonderful landscape you have just painted for us?

Charlie Taylor: The Government does not see it as having a role overall in terms of doing that. There are some CPD programmes—for example, subject-knowledge enhancement—that we fund. Obviously, on anything that we specifically fund, we take assurance that people are fulfilling what they ought to do and they need to send us returns on that.

Broadly, however, over the course there has been a philosophical change here, which is to say that schools are best placed to decide on what CPD is appropriate for their schools. There is a difference. This Government has not chosen to do overall quality assurance for CPD.

Q103 Alex Cunningham: Schools are still failing, and failing quite dramatically, all over the country. Schools are not taking the lead. Does your organisation not have some sort of responsibility to say, “We require this quality, this level of standard”, and actually make sure they are aware of what that is?

Charlie Taylor: We have not been asked to do that by Ministers. What we do is support the designation of teaching schools and national leaders of education—and they in their turn designate local leaders of education—whose role absolutely is about school improvement.

Q104 Alex Cunningham: Could you see a role for your organisation in doing that?

Charlie Taylor: It is one of those things we could do if Ministers wanted us to do it. There are potentially risks, however, about a centrally ordained quality kitemark on things. Centrally, are we really in a position to say what the best type of CPD is for a school a long way from London, for example a small primary school?

Q105 Alex Cunningham: There is still a matter of quality standard, is there not?

Charlie Taylor: Yes. That is something that—

Alex Cunningham: Somebody needs to drive that.

Charlie Taylor: This is being driven by the teaching schools across the country. They absolutely are driving quality standards. I would challenge that, to some extent.

Q106 Alex Cunningham: What evidence is there that outstanding schools actually provide outstanding CPD?

Charlie Taylor: Specifically on outstanding schools, I would not say there is specific evidence around outstanding schools providing CPD. Nevertheless, one of the things outstanding schools do very well is develop their staff. Therefore, though I could not direct you to a piece of evidence—we could look into that for you—for that, nevertheless, outstanding schools are outstanding because of the time the school has spent on staff development. 90% of the success of an organisation is the quality of the staff, and schools are no different.

Q107 Alex Cunningham: Do you believe that the roles and remits of the different leadership schemes are clear?

Charlie Taylor: Yes, I do.

Q108 Alex Cunningham: Despite this broad landscape that is out there, all the different organisations, all of these different grades of people all responsible for doing different things.

Charlie Taylor: Yes, I do. What we are talking about here is a situation where this is more local and more school-led. If you talk to a teaching school and you say, “Is the landscape clear in terms of the way that your teaching school operates?” they will be able to give you absolute clarity in terms of the way that they operate, the way they have relationships with other schools and the way they broker support.

I will give you an example of that. For example, in London there are quite a lot of teaching schools and lots of outstanding schools. Therefore, the relationships between schools will be different from somewhere, for example in rural Suffolk, where we are working very hard to encourage more schools to step forward to be teaching schools.

The arrangements for teaching schools may be different, however, and the way they operate may be different depending on what other resources are around there. How many other outstanding schools there are within your alliance and how many other outstanding schools there are within your local area depends on the way the teaching schools operate.

What we also see is examples of teaching schools who are banding together to be, in effect, one organisation. Derby Teaching Schools Alliance is actually made up of four schools, including a special school.

Q109 Alex Cunningham: Perhaps you are suggesting that in certain parts of the country those most in need are not actually getting what they need when they need it.

Charlie Taylor: We understand that there are parts of the country where there are not enough system leaders out there. There are not enough national leaders of education and there are not enough teaching schools. In the last round of teaching school designations, we pushed very hard to encourage people to step forward into those system leadership roles. 50% of the people we designated in the last round were people from what we were describing as our cold-spot areas.

Q110 Alex Cunningham: You are hopeful that the gaps in the system will now be overcome; how many years will that take?

Charlie Taylor: Our aim is to continue to do that. It is very hard to give an assessment of where we will be in three or five years’ time, because it depends on what Ministers require on that, but certainly our aim is to fill those cold-spot areas. There are now only two local authorities who do not have a teaching school within their boundaries.

Q111 Chair: Is that it? Sir Michael Wilshaw has talked again and again about these cold spots and hot spots. You are simply seeking areas where there are not many outstanding schools and not many national leaders of education or local leaders of education and trying to get them to come forward and pushing them through your approval process because it looks bad if you do not have teaching schools in that area. Is that really an answer to getting the resource, which is strategic high-quality leadership, into those areas in which it is most wanted?

Charlie Taylor: We are doing more than that. You have a range of programmes. First of all, you have Teach First, whose remit is about getting teachers into schools with high levels of deprivation.

Q112 Chair: I know they are changing, but if we look at the spread of Teach First now you will see a concentration in London, which is the most improved and strongest area. We are not seeing Teach First being deployed primarily—although they are trying to change—in the areas of greatest need. Teach First is a perfect example of what is wrong right now.

Charlie Taylor: No, Teach First are moving more into those areas. We also see it with the high-performing middle leadership programme which we follow, because middle leadership is essential also in raising school standards. We have the Teaching Leaders scheme, for which we fund a substantial amount of money to support the development of middle leaders.

Q113 Chair: Could you show your analysis of cold spots, from cold to hot? Could you show that your allocation of funding actually goes to need rather than going to where the demand might be, which would typically be the place that is already quite good?

Charlie Taylor: Absolutely, yes. Going forward, the focus of Teaching Leaders is about moving out into those sorts of cold-spot areas. For example, they now work in Hastings. They now work in parts of Manchester that were previously cold-spot areas.

Q114 Chair: Have you done that? Could you write to us? If you showed us where the money was being spent, mapped against the cold spots, would we find that money was—at the moment, rather than in the future—being allocated to those areas with the greatest need?

Charlie Taylor: We can look into that and write to you. The point is that part of the reason London has been so successful is because of the influence of Teach First. I would not for a minute say, “Job done”, but there is now the opportunity for Teach First to move into other areas. That is the same with the middle leadership programme.

Q115 Chair: I would hate for my words to have been taken out of context and seen as a criticism of Teach First. You have responsibility for strategic oversight. We have those cold spots and it is your job to address them. I am just trying to tease out precisely how that is going to be addressed and make sure that it does happen.

Charlie Taylor: To add to that, there is also the Talented Leaders programme, which is specifically addressing the concerns you and Sir Michael have raised—we know the thing that really makes the difference is the quality of leadership in schools—about getting leaders to move and funding high-quality leaders to move into areas of the country where there are difficulties.

The aim is that we get 100 head teachers into some of those cold-spot areas over the next two years. That does two things: not only are you getting an outstanding leader into an

area, but it also gives that area some impetus. One of the things you sometimes get is a sense of ambition. If you have one outstanding school that is really driving that, it can also drive the ambition of the other schools in the local area as well.

Q116 Chair: Tell us a little more about the 100.

Charlie Taylor: The recruitment process is being run by the Future Leaders programme, who also have a remit to create new leaders. Recruitment is currently in train.

Q117 Chair: How are they being incentivised to go to cold-spot areas?

Charlie Taylor: They are being supported with professional support, but also in terms of things like moving costs and living costs as well.

Q118 Chair: We have had evidence to suggest that participants in your programmes for leaders in particular find them lacking in substance and professionalism. Are you aware of these complaints and how do you measure the effectiveness of your courses or leaders?

Charlie Taylor: That goes back to the ATL evidence. It is quite interesting. One of the people was complaining that they had been failed on one of the courses because they had not reached the standard. I was quite surprised by that, because the feedback we get is very good and I have not seen any complaints. I did go back to the team on that and say, “Look, is this something we are seeing lots of?”

Q119 Chair: Do you have data on that feedback? Do you have a formal process by which you capture every participant in a leadership course?

Charlie Taylor: Yes, we always ask for feedback from people who have been on courses.

Q120 Chair: Do you have data on satisfaction with the courses provided over time?

Charlie Taylor: Yes, we have. We can give you that data. What we have moved from here, though, is that this used to be a centrally commissioned model. One of the things people said was, “It is all very well us doing a centrally commissioned NPQH, but, actually, the local issues that our heads need to be trained in, wherever it might be, are slightly different.” What we have actually done is there is now more freedom for the licensees of leadership courses to adapt and develop national college materials.

What we continue to do is the quality assurance of it. We make sure that people who pass or do not pass through that process are universally high-quality on a national level. We have liberalised in terms of the content of the training, but we are very clear that we will continue to oversee the quality of the output.

Q121 Chair: You said there are risks to an overly centralised model; it has to be said that there are rather more obvious risks to going from a centrally provided high-quality

programme previously delivered by an organisation absolutely dedicated to the promotion and provision of support for top-class leadership and then spreading it out, with the bland assurances that this Committee hears on all sorts of subjects, that there will be quality assurance and that we can rest assured it will all be all right.

Charlie Taylor: We are very comfortable that the quality-assurance framework is very robust and strong. The fact the person from ATL failed to meet the standards, in a way, shows that we are running those standards across the country.

However, what people are actually doing with this—it is one of the things that is interesting—is taking it further. It was Peter who described how people are now adding masters credits on to leadership training programmes, which were not there in the past. By giving people the freedom to do that, people are being more robust in terms of the programmes they are offering people, and adapting them to suit what the requirements of local schools are.

Q122 Pat Glass: Surely that was always there from the beginning of NPQH.

Charlie Taylor: I wish it was. I did not have a masters credit when I did mine. Early on there was always a debate with the NPQH about whether it should be a separate qualification or whether it should be directly a masters qualification.

Q123 Chair: Do you accept that the NCTL currently has no programme of work on the training and development of support staff in schools?

Charlie Taylor: We do not, no. The Government is putting out some guidance—working with Dame Kate Dethridge—but actually also working with and consulting Unison about guidance for the use and training of support staff, which will be coming out quite soon.

Q124 Chair: How will that guidance make up for a lack of provision?

Charlie Taylor: What the Government has decided and what Ministers feel is that schools are best placed to decide what training is required for teaching assistants.

Q125 Chair: Is there a market developed to provide that?

Charlie Taylor: Indeed, yes; one of the things teaching schools have taken on is a lot of this work. They run lots of programmes for teaching assistants.

Q126 Chair: Are there more programmes of development for teaching assistants and other support staff now than there were, say, five years ago?

Charlie Taylor: We do not have an overview of programmes for teaching assistants.

Q127 Chair: I thought your remit was to improve the quality and training of the whole education work force.

Charlie Taylor: It is the education and training of the teaching work force.

Q128 Chair: It is specifically the teaching work force; I thought it was the whole education work force.

Charlie Taylor: No, we also have a remit for early years as well, which is early-years professionals and early-years teachers. Early education is there, but we do not have a remit for improving the quality of teaching assistants or support staff. That is the responsibility of individual schools.

Q129 Ian Mearns: There is quite clearly an acknowledged shortage in training provision for the wider work force other than teachers. Charlie, you are suggesting that a fully rounded training programme, which is going to fulfil all of our work force needs, is going to appear somehow, evolving from schools out there. I am afraid to say that you have more faith in providence than I do. Does the national college therefore not have a leadership role to try to not broker but facilitate, making sure that these training opportunities do emerge somehow, rather than hoping that a market of teaching schools will provide it?

Charlie Taylor: We do not have a specific role around support staff. It is not the role of the national college to be involved in the training of support staff.

Q130 Chair: Where does it say that? Where is that stated? According to the evidence we were given in the evidence check, according to the Department for Education—this is the first line of what they say—the aims of the NCTL include “improving the quality of the education work force”. In what way could any normal reading of “the education work force” exclude all the support staff who work in the education work force?

Charlie Taylor: We also do not do centrally ordained continuing professional development programmes for teachers. Nevertheless, by supporting teaching schools and national, local and specialist leaders of education, we are facilitating improvement—

Chair: Your duty is to improve the quality. Whether that is done by—

Charlie Taylor: That applies to teaching assistants as well. In what Ministers have asked us to do, we do not have a direct remit to run programmes for teaching assistants. In the same way, we do not have a remit to run CPD programmes for teachers. Nevertheless, we know that because Ministers want CPD programmes to be run locally, on the ground, by teaching schools and national leaders of education.

Your questions about teaching assistants equally apply to continuing professional development for teachers. The Government wanted to get away from an idea of centrally delivered CPD programmes across the board.

Q131 Alex Cunningham: You are talking about different professionals in different sets of situations. Special schools have a higher level of vacancies than other schools. The number of specialist teachers—

Charlie Taylor: Do you mean for leadership?

Alex Cunningham: Both leadership and generally across the piece. What is your organisation doing to try to address some of that and ensure we have the specialist teachers to work in special schools in the future?

Charlie Taylor: I have two answers to that. As a former special school head, obviously this is something that is very close to my heart. One of the things is around School Direct, because one of the difficulties that special schools and pupil referral units have always had is that they find it hard to recruit people. They tell us, “We have really good people who we would like to put through a teacher training programme, but if we do particularly with the pupil referral unit, they have to be trained elsewhere, and the risk is that we will lose them.”

School Direct puts special schools and pupil referral units at the heart of teacher training. Very often they are key partners in terms of teacher training programmes. Within an ITT alliance, a School Direct alliance, people have the opportunity to spend time within a special school. Also, special schools themselves can bid for School Direct places. We are also working with a group of special schools to do some work around what more we could do in terms of attracting people into special schools. We have a group of special schools working with us at the moment to do that.

Q132 Alex Cunningham: What will that mean? That is a very encouraging thing to hear.

Charlie Taylor: I will tell you where the challenge is. For example, if you have a secondary special school for PMLD, where the children broadly are on P levels, and if you want to do teacher training, you will have to get someone through a specialist secondary route. Actually, the question would be: what would be the point of someone doing a thorough geography teacher training route if, ultimately, what they wanted to do was become a teacher in a special school?

Here we have to get the balance between making sure we train generalists who can be effective in any school and developing a specialism within special schools in order that they can give people bespoke training.

Q133 Alex Cunningham: You say that is what we need to do. What are we actually doing?

Charlie Taylor: School Direct gives them the opportunity, with universities, to set up bespoke programmes of initial teacher training, which means that the aspirations of people who want to work in special schools can be met by those programmes.

Q134 Alex Cunningham: You have thrown the emphasis back on the special schools themselves rather than you taking some sort of responsibility in your organisation to encourage this.

Charlie Taylor: The appetite for this from special schools has been huge. Special schools are beating a path to our door, saying, “We want places in order to be involved in teacher training programmes.”

On top of that, in terms of leadership, through teaching schools and special schools we are also setting a support programme for aspirant head teachers within some of the areas of the education landscape that are harder to recruit for, such as small, rural primary schools. Included in the £900,000 we are spending is money for aspiring special school heads in order to encourage people to step up into headship.

Q135 Pat Glass: Following on from that, Charlie, one of the concerns I would have about that is this: are those teachers then not isolated within special schools and cannot then move on? If you train somebody in P scales—let us look at the group of children they are working with—they are going to find it very hard to move into the mainstream sector. One of the issues we have always had with special schools, particularly PMLD areas, is about progress and aspiration.

Charlie Taylor: I absolutely agree. I went to Sheffield Hallam University last year and had a very interesting meeting with some special schools there about this particular issue. When we went back to them and said, “Would you like to have a specific route that solved the problem for PMLD?” they actually said, “No, we do not want that because we want to make sure we train generalists who can work in different schools.” Even though they want people with more specialist skills, they are adamant that they want people who are good.

I met a group of special school heads the other day in the Department, and they said to me, “Actually, good teaching is good teaching; yes, you need different skills to work in different environments, but what we want is for outstanding teachers to come into special schools.”

Q136 Pat Glass: You agree that you have a role in early years.

Charlie Taylor: Indeed, yes.

Q137 Pat Glass: The national college did have a dedicated director of early years and integrated learning. It no longer has such a post.

Charlie Taylor: Indeed, yes.

Q138 Pat Glass: There is now no higher level early-years presence in the national college. How do you respond to criticism that the college has not just a lack of clarity, but a lack of interest in this?

Charlie Taylor: I would not agree with that. I have a deputy director whose responsibility is early years. We have remits for two specific things in terms of early years. One is about the new early-years educator qualifications and the early-years teachers; the other is about supporting the roll-out of those programmes and supporting recruitment to them.

Because the national college has a less wide remit in terms of early years than it might have done in the past, we have fewer staff working on it, but we also have a much more flexible staff than we did in the past. One of the things I was very keen to do—and we have done quite well on this in the national college—is ensure that staff have a broader range of skills.

There is a difficulty when people spend all their time focusing on one particular area. Yes, we do not want to lose knowledge, but we also want to introduce people who have flexibility. I am comfortable that we have enough people to cover the work we are required to do.

Q139 Pat Glass: The previous role was not just about the whole spectrum of early years, but there was a heavy part of that role in keeping abreast of strategic partnerships with health, local authority children's services, vulnerable groups and the voluntary sector, etc. How is that happening now without that specific role?

Charlie Taylor: You are talking about the previous qualification that used to be run by the national college.

Pat Glass: No, I am talking about the previous role.

Charlie Taylor: The previous role was through the qualification. Where Ministers made the decision on this—

Q140 Pat Glass: No, I am talking about the director. You previously had a director of early years. Part of the role of that director, however, was not just about early-years education; it was also about maintaining those partnerships and keeping abreast of what was happening in the strategic partnerships in health, children's services, social care and all of those areas. How are you doing that now?

Charlie Taylor: We continue to link with a range of the bodies you talked about. We also talk the whole time with early-years providers—for example the NDNA, with whom we work closely. Yes, we have a smaller team, but that continues to be something we—

Q141 Pat Glass: Are those formal links still there with local authority children's services and youth services?

Charlie Taylor: No, we do not have direct relationships with individual local authority children's services in that way, no.

Q142 Chair: The NDNA say you have a top-down approach, there is a lack of clarity on your role and the sector would appreciate greater engagement and dialogue. If you

are in the communications business, you do not judge it by the person who thinks they are communicating; you judge it by whether that communication was any good by asking the recipient, do you not?

Charlie Taylor: I spoke at the NDNA conference in Manchester in the summer. I am sorry they are saying that. We were actually at their show, the nursery show, this week as well. We have a lot of engagement and we continue to have a lot of engagement.

To add to that, we have also awarded £5 million to teaching schools in order to do work with early-years providers across the country to develop some work about how we can develop school readiness, support for the transition between nurseries and school. It is something that we see as a key part of the development of—

Q143 Chair: Sadly, they see you focusing on schools at the expense of the early-years work force. That is an exact quote from—

Charlie Taylor: We are no longer the Children's Workforce Development Council, which was a large organisation built in Leeds who had that remit. We are certainly different from that. Nevertheless, we have a number of teaching schools—I will give you the number on that; I think it is 16—who are nursery schools as well, who are taking on a wider role as well in terms of giving support for PVI nurseries across the country by giving £5 million to teaching schools with an expectation that they will work more closely with nurseries. Actually, what we are looking for is a more school-led approach to developing the skills of nursery teachers.

Q144 Pat Glass: Can I ask about nursery schools specifically? In previous inquiries, we have had very strong evidence that the nursery schools in this country are without doubt—not just in this country but probably in the western world—providing the best outcomes for young children. Are you focusing on nursery schools as teaching schools?

Charlie Taylor: Yes, indeed. I am sorry that I cannot remember the number; I think there are currently 16 nurseries that are teaching schools. That is one of the things Ministers were very keen on when teaching schools were set up, to make sure that nurseries could be part of this. Dr Lesley Curtis from North Liverpool Teaching School Partnership actually sits on the Teaching Schools Council and is a very strong voice and advocate for nursery education on that council.

Q145 Pat Glass: You do not accept that you have lost significant expertise.

Charlie Taylor: We have the people to fulfil the expectations that Ministers have put on us.

Q146 Chair: We all strongly believe in early intervention, getting it right first time, making sure that children arrive at school ready to learn, and the emphasis on the early years is one with cross-party support; people know it is right. You can see why we are concerned when we do an evidence check on your organisation and we get the evidence from the early-years sector with a very different perception coming from them than we hear from you.

Charlie Taylor: I absolutely take that point. We will take that away and we will talk to organisations such as NDNA and find out what more they would require of us. We will take that extremely seriously.

Chair: We appreciate that. Thank you.

Q147 Craig Whittaker: I have one final question. Obviously, NPQICL is gone; it is history. There is a vacuum there. What are you doing to find its successor?

Charlie Taylor: We are not currently developing a successor to that. It ties in with the stuff I was talking to Pat about: we are seeing more school-led solutions to this in terms of developing the teaching schools and developing early years. The sense with NPQICL was that children's centres had such a broad remit that trying to devise a one-size-fits-all leadership programme, given that they were doing such different things, actually began to become less tenable.

Q148 Craig Whittaker: I have one more question. The aim is to have a birth-to-18 provision—single, straight through. How do you hope to achieve that if you have so many different statuses, levels of pays and sets of conditions? Early years, in particular, is woefully behind primary and secondary. How do you make it a level playing field whilst you are playing in that arena?

Charlie Taylor: In terms of early years, what we have done is introduce the early-years teacher status. This is building on what was the early-years professional status. Now the expectation is higher. We are therefore looking to get more parity in terms of the qualifications, so people will now have to undertake the professional skills test to get onto that programme. They now have to have English, maths and science at GCSE in order to do that.

Ultimately, most people who work in early years work for private and voluntary institutions. Therefore, in effect saying what the pay should be in those private institutions is not something that Government see as their role—to be telling people what they should be paying their staff. For example, I saw an advert for Bright Horizons nursery recently where they are offering a starting salary for an early-years teacher of £24,000, which is commensurate with that of a teacher with qualified teacher status.

Nevertheless, we have raised the status in terms of the bar. We have looked at the standards people have to meet in order to become an early-years teacher, and they are broadly similar to those of a teacher. When it comes to their pay, however, that is something for individual nurseries to decide.

Q149 Craig Whittaker: I remember the previous Secretary of State being here and saying quite clearly that he was not prepared for the early-years teachers to be at the same level as an NQT, for example.

Charlie Taylor: His point was that he did not want QTS to be awarded to nursery school early-years teachers. The point of that was not because of any structural issue; it was simply because the standards are different. The standards you require in order to become

an early-years teacher are different from the standards you require in order to become a teacher with qualified teacher status. They are very specifically written for the 4-16 age range, and the early-years teacher standards are different.

They have the same status, but in terms of qualified teacher status, actually, to achieve qualified teacher status you need to achieve the qualified teacher standards. An early-years teacher would not have the opportunity to do that.

Q150 Craig Whittaker: You are saying you are raising the status of early years.

Charlie Taylor: Yes.

Craig Whittaker: Do they feel that?

Charlie Taylor: What we are seeing from people who are coming on to both the early years professional programme and also the early years teacher programme is that these are people who understand that graduate-led provision is of better quality and the outcomes for children are better when you have graduate-led provision. We saw over 15,000 early-years professionals come through.

Q151 Craig Whittaker: That is not what I asked, though. Do the people at that level feel as though the status has been raised for them?

Charlie Taylor: There is a debate around this. There is a debate. People would have different views on this. People have varying views between, actually, if you simply gave qualified teacher status to all early-years teachers—

Q152 Craig Whittaker: We are talking about having a consistent, through-approach, with status and all of those things that are attached to that, from birth to 18. That is your remit at the end of the day. You are saying that these are your goals and aims. I can assure you that, from the evidence we have received, and not just in this inquiry, but in others, that is not how the work force feels.

Charlie Taylor: We introduced the early-years teacher status in order to tackle that. There was a sense that this was an inferior status.

Q153 Chair: Is that going to fix the problem?

Charlie Taylor: We are hoping that will go some way to fixing the problem. For example, we are ensuring that people who become early-years teachers have to pass a professional skills test, that they have the English, maths and science GCSEs, and also that there is parity between the QTS standards and the standards for early-years teachers. They are much more aligned. That is a way of saying, “Look, we believe the status of these people is equally important”.

Q154 Chair: On the issue of QTS or non-QTS, your job is to raise the standard of the education work force. Do we have any evidence as to the strengths or weaknesses of non-QTS teachers in the teaching work force?

Charlie Taylor: Our particular remit is about recruiting and training teachers and ensuring that there are sufficient training places and getting teachers through. The issue on qualified-teacher status for people coming in is simply a policy decision.

Q155 Chair: I was not asking about the policy decision on that. You are responsible for the oversight of the quality of the education work force, and we have spent a long time—

Charlie Taylor: I am sorry. I am responsible for improving the quality of the education work force. I am not responsible for the overall quality of it; that is Ofsted's responsibility.

Q156 Chair: In order to improve the quality of the education work force, you would have to have a look at what you thought that quality was and where there were weaknesses and strengths. I am trying to get some idea about these non-QTS teachers. Are they bad? Are they good? What is the evidence? Do you have anything you can share with us whilst steering away from political controversy and policy decision-making? Do you have the facts on the ground?

Charlie Taylor: I will have a look at the evidence. I would not be sure about what evidence we have, because Ofsted do not now grade individual teachers. Obviously, individual schools would have that evidence, but given that Ofsted do not grade individual teachers anymore, it would be quite hard to get that evidence specifically. I am not sure, so I will check.

Q157 Chair: Indeed, we would also like to know which disciplines they are deployed in or anything else. Given the level of political controversy, which I understand you would want to keep out of, it seems to me there is a complete cloud as to who these people are, what exactly they do and whether they do good or ill as a result.

Charlie Taylor: We will look that up and come back to you with whatever information we have.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed for giving evidence to us this morning, and we look forward to hearing from you on the various points on which you agreed to write.