



House of Commons  
Children, Schools and Families  
Committee

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**The Gifted and  
Talented programme**

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**Oral and written evidence**

***1 February 2010***

*Joy Blaker, Professor Deborah Eyre, Richard  
Gould, Sue Mordecai, and Denise Yates*

*Diana R Johnson MP, Jon Coles, Dr Geraldine  
Hutchinson, and Professor John Stannard CBE*

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### **Contacts**

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Children, Schools and Families Committee, House of Commons, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 6181; the Committee's e-mail address is [csfcom@parliament.uk](mailto:csfcom@parliament.uk)

# Oral evidence

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## Taken before the Children, Schools and Families Committee on Monday 1 February 2010

Members present:

Mr Barry Sheerman (Chairman)

Annette Brooke  
Ms Karen Buck

Mr David Chaytor  
Mr Graham Stuart

*Witnesses:* **Joy Blaker**, Officer with responsibility for gifted and talented teaching and learning, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, **Professor Deborah Eyre**, Educational Consultant, **Richard Gould**, Director, Villiers Park Educational Trust, **Sue Mordecai**, Chair of Board of Trustees, National Association for Able Children in Education, and **Denise Yates**, Chief Executive, National Association for Gifted Children, gave evidence.

**Q1 Chairman:** I welcome our witnesses, Professor Deborah Eyre, Sue Mordecai, Joy Blaker, Denise Yates and Richard Gould, to the evidence session. I apologise for trying to get as much expertise as possible into today's session, but as you can see, it will be both stimulating and broad-reaching. As I said outside, we have been waiting for some time to look at the gifted and talented programme, because in some senses it is a classic. It has been around for some time. It has changed and had different modes. Some of us have actually kept an eye on it. I visited the University of Warwick with Sir Peter Lampl at one stage to look at it and met Professor Eyre. We all know that it has had an interesting history, which I have been rereading over the weekend. We do not normally allow five witnesses to give evidence at the same time. Can I tell you that whatever they—my colleagues—ask you, not all of you can answer each question, otherwise, we'll never cover the breadth of the question. Please forgive us for that. I will have to cut people off. If you indicate that you want to come back on a question, I will try to make it manageable by calling you. Professor Eyre—all of you—do you mind if we revert to first name terms rather than titles? Doing so adds to the informality and the speed. Let us start with Deborah and riff across a tiny element of what your involvement in gifted and talented has been. Can you put in a tiny nutshell whether you think it has been a good thing?

**Professor Eyre:** My background is that I've got 30-some years experience in gifted and talented from the school level—the local authority level—as a university researcher and as part of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children. At the moment, I make my living designing and advising on system-wide schemes for nurturing giftedness and creativity across the world. We've had a lot of variety in the UK. In terms of where it has all gone, that would be interesting to explore. One of the lessons from other parts of the world is that you have to have a very sharp focus if you want to make a difference.

**Q2 Chairman:** When I visited you in Warwick some years ago, you seemed to have a sharp focus and to be doing all right. Why did the Government pull the plug on Warwick doing the programme?

**Professor Eyre:** I think the Government felt that some of the things we were doing at Warwick were really good, and everybody who worked on that programme is extremely proud of what they did. It had a very small amount of money—£4.75 million a year—which in the great scheme of things is not that big. It had a remit that started off asking us to work only on out-of-school programmes and on informal learning. We did that and as part of that, we discovered an awful lot about what happens to gifted and talented students in the 21st century, in relation to our autonomous learners and what they do. Then we were asked to expand the cohort from 20,000 to 200,000 on the same budget and to take on school-based provision—also on the same budget. So at the point at which we came to a change in contract, there was a decision at Government level to split the in-school and out-of-school work and, in both cases, to scale it up substantially. Warwick took the view that what was on offer in the contract was not really the right kind of territory for a university, so it indicated that it didn't wish to be the delivery partner.

**Chairman:** You didn't bid for the second contract.

**Professor Eyre:** No.

**Sue Mordecai:** Good afternoon. My background has been in gifted and talented education for 20 years. Previous to that, I was a history and politics teacher in Wales and in England. My current job—my day job—is principal adviser with Bromley local authority, where I am heading up the school improvement agenda. But I am here in the capacity of Chair of Trustees and President of the National Association for Able Children in Education, which is the largest independent organisation that supports teachers in schools. It has been in existence for 27 years. We have membership in virtually every local authority in England and we are heavily involved in Wales and further afield.

**Q3 Chairman:** Is all well with gifted and talented programmes for young people in this country now?

**Sue Mordecai:** It's a mixed picture. There were lots of good intentions, but it seems that there are too many programmes—that's perhaps the key word—and lots of initiatives, with a lack of ideological and philosophical underpinning and research behind

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some of the events and programmes. Probably the main criticism would be that it did not impact sufficiently where it should have impacted, which is in the classroom.

**Joy Blaker:** Good afternoon. I am primary gifted and talented consultant for Rotherham local authority, and within that role I feel it is my duty to champion gifted and talented children, to work closely with schools to create challenge and engagement, and to promote innovative pedagogy. I also believe that it is my role both to work with agencies and experts to bring children together in groupings that span personalities, social class and other barriers that could present themselves, so that children are brought together in a learning community, which is important, and to engage with the region to promote research opportunities and wider experiences for children that I think are very important, particularly in areas with high levels of deprivation.

**Q4 Chairman:** Hasn't that more or less been the drift? The Government have been changing their mind and are being more focused these days—certainly since the recent report on social mobility—on gifted and talented children from a poorer background.

**Joy Blaker:** I think that has been an increased focus, and is very important, but I think there is a danger in focusing very much on areas of deprivation and not bringing those children into social groupings with children from other areas. That is important to break down barriers and to create bridges that will give them the strength to go forward in future. I think that needs to be from an early age, with early intervention when children are encouraged to recognise their strengths, and to socialise with children on the basis of their strengths rather than their differences.

**Denise Yates:** I am Chief Executive of the National Association for Gifted Children, which is an organisation that works face to face with about 15,000 parents and carers a year. We have been in existence for 43 years. My background is that I have dealt with the whole spread of special needs within education and training since about 1984.

**Q5 Chairman:** Thank you. Are you happy with the way things are at the moment, or do you think that the gifted and talented world could be improved?

**Denise Yates:** I would agree with what NACE said—there is a wide spread of different involvements in schools. There are some excellent schools with excellent leadership and excellent programmes for the gifted and talented, but parents are extremely worried that the other end is not catered for. Many schools do not understand what gifted and talented means and are not prepared to put in place programmes that cater for gifted and talented children, and parents are extremely concerned.

**Q6 Chairman:** I was talking to a young woman who was in high school at about the time all this started, and she felt a bit resentful that she was not chosen as

being gifted and talented. She felt it was a way in which teachers could play favourites. Is that a commonplace resentment that you pick up?

**Denise Yates:** The sooner gifted and talented stops being seen as an elitist issue and starts being seen as an equal opportunities issue the better. If you pick someone, by definition you will always not pick someone. That issue needs to be considered within society as a whole.

**Q7 Chairman:** The current programme started with 1 or 2%, and the percentage then gradually increased. Is that a mistake? Is it best to narrow it to 1 or 2%, or should you broaden it to a larger percentage of 5 or 10%?

**Denise Yates:** I think I would be more concerned about having programmes for gifted and talented children writ large. Throw the dice up, and see what falls. Let's see whether some of the under-achievers who sit at the back of the class and who are bored and lack challenge are being picked up as well as the ones who sit at the front of the class and hand in their homework on time.

**Richard Gould:** Good afternoon. I am director of Villiers Park Educational Trust, which works with post-16 able students, and have been doing that for about 45 years. I have worked with the organisation for about 20 years. I think Student Voice is an important part of our work, and we speak to 1,000-plus students every year. When I started to work in the field about 20 years ago, listening to those students made us realise that there were things that needed to change in the everyday school, and that it was very important to add them to our programme, which until then had been working only with students. One problem that has not been resolved with the whole gifted and talented agenda is what happens with colleges. A lot has been happening in schools and, as colleagues have said, it is a mixed picture. There has been a lot of improvement and provision in many schools, but there has been little to involve sixth form and FE colleges, which is a big problem.

**Q8 Chairman:** I've warmed you up. I have only one more question before I pass over to my colleagues. Deborah, you were involved in the first wave of five years. You have been keeping in touch, of course, with what has happened since. What do you think of Government policy—has there been a seamless building up of experience with things always getting better, or has it gone up and down? The policy agenda looks a bit dislocated. What do you think?

**Professor Eyre:** It's inconsistent and incoherent—that's what I think. There are a variety of stakeholders who have goals and purposes for a gifted and talented programme. They have no intention of working with each other and sometimes work in opposition to each other. For example, under the social mobility agenda, the purpose of a gifted and talented initiative is to increase social mobility. That is its main purpose, even if that means holding back some people in order to allow others to catch up. Sets of initiatives sometimes come out, such as the fair access into the professions initiative,

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where social mobility is all. There is a concentration on mentoring soft skills and so on. Those things are all tremendously important, but I am attached to the University of Oxford and, at the end of the day, when we are looking for potential students, we want those kinds of skills, but we also want high academic performance. High academic performance is, for the majority of people, exactly what other countries in the world are concerned with. They see this as an economic issue as much as an educational issue. It is about making sure that all our students in school have an opportunity to achieve highly because as a country we need a high performing, highly skilled set of young people. In other parts of the world, there is far less emphasis on who is or is not gifted and far more emphasis on what kind of provision leads to high performance in a wide variety of domains. In other parts of the world, when you say that part of the argument in the UK is about whether you are academic or vocational—that is cognitive or skills—people will throw back that it is difficult to envisage any kind of endeavour that doesn't involve both cognitive and skills development. That is absolutely the case. In some ways, I think we have a very old-fashioned view of what we might do in terms of gifted and talented. We are living in a very fast-moving world and statistics show that most people are working in jobs that didn't exist when they went to school and that many of us will have had seven or eight jobs by our late 30s. The whole idea that everything that will happen to you can be predicted seems to be refuted by the evidence. All the work that has been done in the last 10 to 20 years in neuroscience and psychology, and research that has looked at very successful people and their trajectories to success, suggests that the opportunities and conditions that people experience—what happens to them educationally—plus personality characteristics such as a desire to do well, are more influential than any inherited predisposition or other factors. We seem to be in a rather mid-20th century model, whereas other parts of the world are moving into what I would describe as a more 21st century model, which involves an ambition of high performance for a lot of people.

**Q9 Chairman:** I suppose one trouble is that some of my constituents would say, “Gifted and talented for what?” When I thought about gifted and talented, I always thought of the brilliant scientists who would be researching the genome and medicine, or top people in music, the arts and public administration. You mentioned Oxford. I remember walking across the hallowed turf of Magdalen College with the Master. I said, “Do any of your graduates go into public service, such as local government, teaching or the civil service?” He said, “No, no, no, they all go into the City.” If gifted and talented will only produce people who go to make a lot of money in the City, I won't be able to persuade my constituents to support it, will I?

**Professor Eyre:** One of the joys of the opportunity to work with the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth was that we had 152,000 students drawn from all over the country. They are very

articulate students and they talked, so one of the outcomes was that we have a far better understanding of what it is like to be in their position and what they are interested in doing. Generally speaking, most of those students had a very high level of social responsibility. They wanted to give back. Certainly, there may have been a minority who saw themselves going into the City, but they were that—a minority.

**Chairman:** Perhaps not at Magdalen.

**Professor Eyre:** Maybe not.

**Chairman:** The message we got from that response is very interesting, Deborah, but “inconsistent and incoherent” will remain with us for the moment. I now ask Graham to lead on looking at the in-school provision.

**Q10 Mr Graham Stuart:** Before I do so, may I follow up on the previous point. I wonder whether the panel think that the balance between the funding for tackling underperformance, particularly in areas of disadvantage, and the funding for supporting the gifted and talented has been struck properly.

**Denise Yates:** If every child matters, so too does every gifted and talented child. What parents are looking for is some sort of equality in the amount of funding being given. That said, I think there are structural issues that need to be addressed—in areas of deprivation, for example—but we also need to look at areas in a wider sense by looking, for example, at children in rural areas, children who are underachieving, or children who are what is called dual or multiple exceptional. I don't think it's just one issue, but certainly I would not want a child's needs to be looked at in terms of the postcode or the amount of income their parent has. I would want it to be available for everybody.

**Q11 Mr Stuart:** What about their potential? Here you are, a champion for gifted and talented, trying desperately to pose the whole argument in terms of social equity, when in fact the answer that Barry undoubtedly wouldn't give his constituents is that 25% of all income tax is paid by 1% of taxpayers, and 40% of income tax is paid by 5% of taxpayers. That is what provides the teachers and public services. We actually need people who will be globally competitive. We need to have excellence promoted and supported in this country and not always couched in terms of equity. It is also about excellence, not just equity. Have we been cowed by the current debate and mind-think so that we are unable to stand up and speak the fact that we should give special resources and support to those, wherever they come from, who are brilliant? Failing to do so is a mistake.

**Denise Yates:** Absolutely. That is exactly what I am saying. It should be an equal opportunity issue, so everyone should have equal access to the resources that are available, but at the same time we should understand that there are some structural needs that have to be addressed. For example, if a kid in an inner-city area hasn't got a laptop and £250 would buy them one, so be it. What I would be happier to see, however, is a national strategy that said, “Okay,

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we're going to deal with that as one issue. Next year we will deal with the issue of children in rural areas, and the year after we will deal with underachievement." I see no long-term vision in the current programme for how we want it to be seen. You asked why we are doing all this. Yes, a very strong reason is to raise talent and aspiration in this country, but I don't think we should forget about the child either. Why are we doing it for the child? Because the child wants to feel fulfilled. They do not want to know whether they are going to be a banker because they went to Magdalen college. They want to know that they go home and they're happy.

**Chairman:** Very good point.

**Richard Gould:** There is a third element. For the child's sake, gifted and talented is important, and it is important for competitive advantage and economic reasons as well.

**Mr Stuart:** Good.

**Richard Gould:** To answer your question specifically, I think the focus on excellence can have an impact not just on society and the individual child, but on the culture, ethos and attainment of the school, and it can move the whole school along. That is something I believe very strongly.

**Q12 Mr Stuart:** Thank you, Richard, but that didn't actually answer my question. The question was, have we got the balance wrong? Are we pouring money into tackling disadvantage? Does the removal of the contract for gifted and talented show that this Government are not interested in supporting excellence?

**Chairman:** Don't put answers into the witness's mouth.

**Sue Mordecai:** I would say that we need to look at how the money is being used. That is critical. I come back to the fact that I don't think enough money has gone into the schools and had the impact that it should have done—whether on the advantaged or disadvantaged. It is not always about money. It is about considering the pedagogy in practice and the mindset. I can think of some outstanding schools that have not necessarily benefited from funding. I deal directly with my authority on standards funds; it is a question of mindsets, training and the focus on how we use the money. We need to step back and consider the question of what is an educated person today, for the 21st century. How are we going to get there? Why is it that some schools are highly successful with their most able? We should stop having these initiatives, stop spending money, stand back and reflect and, as Deborah has said, learn from other countries—although most of them seem to be learning from us. There is a paucity of research in this country. There is a lot elsewhere, so what can we learn from it? What do we want for the future?

**Q13 Chairman:** Deborah, can you come in? You run a programme. I know that you said it was underfunded, but it is about £25 million of taxpayers' money over five years. Did you have it evaluated? Do we know whether it did any good, and where are those people now?

**Professor Eyre:** Yes, we know that it was endlessly evaluated. Basically, when a student joined NAGTY, their trajectory was that they would go on to one of the leading universities. In the exit survey of 18-year-old students moving forward, it was the case not only for NAGTY students but for the 33,000 students from the lowest possible socio-economic backgrounds. That is social mobility in action. I am not suggesting that is in any way in conflict with what Sue has just said, because this is not an either/or situation. It is not that you have good provision outside school or good provision inside school. What you have is integrated provision, with good provision in school that is supplemented and enhanced by out-of-school provision. Social mobility happens when you have, as has occurred, a boy from inner-city Salford sitting next to a boy from Eton, and after a couple of sessions, he says to the tutor, "I'm as good as he is if not better." That is how you change belief. In answer to your question, 10 years ago when this Committee looked at highly able children, one of the things it said was that the Government had been through a period of time when they had been trying to secure minimum competence, and now they were going to give greater emphasis to excellence. I do not think that has necessarily been borne out in the funding arrangements. It is rather sad that we have had a national programme for 10 years, and at the end of 10 years we are still looking at rescue packages for a small minority of students rather than at a more universal approach of catering for and encouraging excellence in our schools. A more ambitious ambition might be to try to achieve high levels of performance across a wide range of domains for as many students as we can, including those people who have traditionally not performed so well in our system.

**Q14 Mr Stuart:** What are the hallmarks of good in-school provision? Do you want to pick up that question, Joy?

**Joy Blaker:** If we are going to look at good in-school provision, I will quote from one of our head teachers, who said, "What is good for gifted and talented is good for all children, but what is good for all children may not necessarily be good enough for gifted and talented." It is about opening up that whole opportunity for children—to give them challenge, open-ended opportunity and mixed ability working, where they can build from each other and develop a community of inquiry and where they can build their knowledge one upon another, facilitated by a teacher. That gives us the opportunity to gift-and-talent spot, which is the beginning of the whole process. Once you start that process, you're coming to something that's not elitist and not looking at social mobility, social deprivation or whatever. It's looking at the issues that are really important within the classroom: what can that child do and what are they really capable of?

**Q15 Mr Stuart:** Can you tell us what leading teachers add, as opposed to gifted and talented co-ordinators?

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**Joy Blaker:** Can I give you the Rotherham model. We have co-ordinators who have the strategic role within a school and are generally part of the senior leadership team. They look at issues, such as the cohort, and champion the cause of the gifted and talented, whereas a leading teacher, as far as we're concerned, is someone who develops innovative practice within their classroom and is seeking out and researching different aspects of education and pedagogies so that they can share it within their own school and across a learning community or an authority. That is a really important capacity-building way forward.

**Q16 Mr Stuart:** You spoke as if elitism was fundamentally a bad thing, which seems to me to cut across this whole agenda and is a further sign of the group-think that I would certainly not want to see. Some schools were reluctant even to return data on gifted and talented pupils in the termly census. Were the criteria for identifying pupils clear enough or was the anti-elitism component so strong in so many schools that they would not even play with the idea of helping people who are particularly gifted?

**Joy Blaker:** I think there are two aspects to that. Schools are very accountable—they feel the responsibility; they feel particularly that identifying children at a young age may make them accountable and that they may be setting them up for failure in the future. We need to work against that, because there needs to be an inclusive element, to say, “We are strong in our identification procedures.” There is that need to develop identification among the teaching staff.

**Q17 Mr Stuart:** Does anyone else want to comment on that? Is there a cultural problem here?

**Richard Gould:** Going back to post-16, which is important because that's the time when students are beginning to contemplate whether they want to go on to university and which university to go to, there hasn't been a register and identification at post-16. We visit lots of colleges all over Britain, and without doubt there is the claim of elitism—it hasn't been accepted as mainstream. In the vast majority of post-16 colleges, and more than 50% of students doing A-levels do so at a sixth form college or FE college, there is an important gap that needs to be addressed.

**Q18 Mr Stuart:** Is there a prejudice that needs to be challenged? It is alleged that some children who are perfectly capable are dissuaded from applying to the top universities because of anti-elitism. Is that true, do you think?

**Richard Gould:** It's a very mixed picture, but certainly that's true in certain schools and colleges, without doubt.

**Q19 Mr Stuart:** How could that be challenged?

**Denise Yates:** Just to follow through on that, there are two other issues that you've not taken into consideration. One is that many teachers aren't confident about the G&T word, don't know how to identify it and are frightened of talking to parents about it for risk of putting their head above the

parapet. The other is that they're frightened that parents will ask them to do something about it if the child is identified as gifted and talented. That is the bigger issue and it needs to be addressed by all of us.

**Sue Mordecai:** There is also an issue that is phase-related, because a lot of head teachers of the early years at Key Stage 1 felt uncomfortable about giving a title and a label when the cognitive development of children is uneven at that age: that's one aspect. The other aspect is that, again, NACE members would see it being much wider—at 20%—because looking at the top 5% in art, maths and physics, you can have a profile of about 20%. Other schools—the 164 grammar schools for example—would say that, under the criteria, all their pupils could be gifted and talented. For some, the word “gifted” has certainly got in the way, which is probably why the Welsh Assembly has adopted “more able and talented”, and there doesn't seem to be the elitism or the philosophical problem in Wales, as there has been in England.

**Professor Eyre:** There is a peculiarly English dimension to this around people feeling uncomfortable with the notion of identification. I agree with my colleagues entirely, which is to say that the younger the student, the less firm any kind of judgment might be about how they will perform at a later date. One difficulty with identification, particularly identification of younger children, is that once a cohort is identified and additional provision is made for them, those who are not identified are less likely to perform well, even if they had the aptitude, because they are not accessing the opportunities. The cohort approach, as it is called in the literature, has inherent structural problems. Hence the schools that are most successful, particularly in the secondary sector, but also across the board, in catering for the needs of these gifted and talented students are the ones that look at the provision that they make and are really focused on what makes an outstanding learner, what characteristics we are looking for and how we make that happen in our schools and classrooms in terms of expectations. The question of who is or is not is a secondary issue, which will reveal itself over time, so students begin to reveal what they are capable of doing. When we were at NAGTY, we were asked to look at some of the best practice in schools in the country. We selected a group of schools, which were called ambassador schools, and have gone on to take forward through SSAT some of the leading-edge work. It is really interesting that there wasn't one model in those schools—and some had no identification at all—but they did have outstanding practice and very satisfied, happy parents and very high performers. It is not axiomatic that because you identify a cohort, by whatever means, you are necessarily going to have the kind of provision that you are looking for.

**Q20 Mr Stuart:** Deborah, I suppose that you're saying that one size does not fit all but, in general, do you think that the designation was a mistake—the

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gifted and talented tag—and we would be better not tagging people but worrying more about broad provision?

**Professor Eyre:** That is my view. It is a very complex area and the problem is that, for some students, being identified as gifted and talented is what liberates them to perform. We had students in NAGTY who, once they had been identified on a national scheme, completely changed their self-image, their perception and that of their parents and teachers. There are some positives with labelling, but there are also some negatives, so we have to look at it in the round. The conclusion that has been drawn elsewhere is that, on the in-school provision, the main focus should be on securing high-quality provision, in terms of high expectations of all students in all areas and very clear monitoring of the progression of individual students right across the piece. In many ways, it is not just that the most able students somehow go on and succeed and others don't—what actually happens is that part of this is about some students who just fall away. In the international research, for example, the evidence suggests that if you are identified at five, you are unlikely to be identified statistically at 16. Why is that and what does it mean about identification? There are some hugely problematic areas with identification and, therefore, the judgment is, can you still have the relentless focus on helping people to achieve highly by a focus on high expectations coupled with progress reviews and still get to the same place, as opposed to the kind of baby Einstein theory of being born entirely different from the rest of the species? Research shows that that is sometimes a bit of a burden for people. Certainly, the NAGTY students felt that they didn't mind being labelled as gifted and talented, as long as we were all clear that that just meant that they might have the capacity to do well if they worked hard. It was not Willy Wonka's golden ticket to success. In the States, particularly, they have had a lot of problems with their gifted and talented programmes creating the kind of sense that, if I'm labelled as gifted, it must all turn out, whereas in the Asian countries, where they focus very strongly on the ethic that if you work at it, you will succeed, giftedness is the end point. If people stick with something and get to the point of high performance, that is giftedness. In the kind of desultory way that one does as an academic, I have been looking at when the term "giftedness" is used. Outside education, it is most often used in people's obituaries—it is a retrospective view where your peer group deems you to have achieved in a particular way, which means that you excelled.

**Q21 Chairman:** Deborah, you never answered the question that I threw in the middle about whether you evaluated what happened to your gifted and talented students.

**Professor Eyre:** We set up a longitudinal study to evaluate what happened to our gifted and talented students. We evaluated for the duration of NAGTY, after which, of course, the data were transferred across to the subsequent providers. My understanding is that that did not occur. The lack of

research is a problematic area for us. We know that in other parts of education, things such as the childhood study from the London institute have been particularly influential in helping us to understand what really happens, and to unpick the myth from the reality. We are still at a point, after 10 years, where we have had a lot of experimentation and a fair bit of novelty but not necessarily the longitudinal evidence that will help to tell us what really works. We gathered a lot of data during the NAGTY years to try to understand that better, but there is no substitute for longitudinal studies.

**Chairman:** But the longitudinal study has finished.

**Denise Yates:** We hear from parents what has happened to the NAGTY students, and in universities across the country, in different socio-economic classes, these children have chosen to go to university or chosen a course because of the NAGTY courses. When NAGTY went, they themselves set up a website called NAGTY Forever, which gets upward of 3,000 posts a month.

**Q22 Annette Brooke:** I wonder whether you could help me a little. Despite all the questions we have had so far, I still do not really know how we are defining "gifted and talented". I understand Deborah's point, and I can empathise with the point that perhaps outcomes would be the easiest way to do it. Could you just explain this simply? If you have a child gifted in music, art or dance, there would be fairly straightforward settings and criteria, but I really cannot come to grips with the idea that a particular school should just take a percentage. Can you comment on that?

**Professor Eyre:** One of the difficulties with gifted and talented is that there is no universal, internationally recognised definition, so you decide on your definition and identify according to it. In essence, there are two different ways in which you can define. The first is around existing performance. In other words, those who are performing at a level that is significantly in advance of their peer group—a five-year-old who is doing things that are normally expected of a nine-year-old—are identified. Another methodology is to use psychometric tests to try to identify ability and aptitude which may or may not currently be realised. Most identification systems use a combination of the two. However, there are other methodologies. There are teachers nominating and parents nominating, but research evidence suggests that that can be of variable quality. What is kind of clear is that if you are identifying according to performance, the opportunities that people have had make a big difference to how well they perform. To take an obvious example, if you had the perfect violin teacher, you are likely to be a better violinist than if you have just been messing around at home. It is the same with schooling: the school that you go to makes a big difference. Performance is a reliable piece of evidence to some extent, but it is strongly influenced not just by opportunities but also by family support and background. Aptitude is equally controversial in terms of whether or not it is possible to measure potential. Again, there was much debate about that—as with creativity. Some people think if

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you sit a test, they will know if you are creative; others think that the nature of creativity is such that you can't measure it accurately. In terms of who is gifted, in some people and in some instances you know it when you see it—although not in all instances by any means. That is why identification in the entire field across the last 50 years has been a hugely problematic area, and why the field of gifted and talented education has kind of gone through three paradigms, which are loosely historical. The first model relates to the unique individual who is completely different from the rest of us. We do not see that very often—if you spot one on the tube, you'd know it. That is the sort of psycho-medical model that is very much linked to IQ testing and so on. The second model is much more about the fact that some people are not the same, but have certain things in common, so we put them in a cohort. That is very much based on the US post-1970ish kind of idea. There is masses of research on the effects of that—positive and negative. The more 20th-century approach suggests that perhaps the routes to expertise might be more open to more people and that we should perhaps focus more on the conditions that make it happen and less on the psychological profile.

**Sue Mordecai:** I agree with a lot of what Deborah has said, but very often the issue is not about the teachers knowing whether or not a child is very, very bright; it is what they do with the child. The issue is about looking at some of the characteristics. One of my favourite characteristics is the child who can deal with ambiguity and cognitive confusion. Some of the children who underachieve do so because they are on a diet of questions and the answers, rather than one in which they have to delve into their mind and explore a pit of cognitive confusion, where they actually have to think and be challenged. The issue within the schools is how can children reveal their abilities unless they are given the opportunities to do so? It comes back to giving them those challenges. But it is very much a case of the teacher saying, "I've got a bright child—help!"

**Q23 Ms Buck:** Apologies if you've covered this—I was attending another Committee meeting. What do we know about the extent to which children are categorised or defined as gifted and talented according to different types of school? Do we have comparative data on percentages of children who are defined as gifted and talented in relation to particular socio-economic backgrounds, or faith schools compared with maintained schools, academies or whatever? What is the range?

**Sue Mordecai:** I would say it's very ad hoc. That is one of the issues. If you consider the matter, it is easier to look at it regionally rather than nationally. So if I represented the London regions, we actually have London data, so we can have a look. It will vary from anything from 5% to 30%, so it's very variable.

**Q24 Ms Buck:** Paint me a picture of the variations. Does it incline towards a very positive effort to define children as gifted and talented from within schools and more challenging backgrounds, which

would make sense, or are gifted and talented designations over-represented in your high achieving schools?

**Sue Mordecai:** No, it is very much a mixed picture—*[Interruption.]*

**Chairman:** There is a Division, so we shall suspend the sitting. I urge colleagues to get back very quickly.

*Sitting suspended for a Division in the House.*

*On resuming—*

**Chairman:** Karen, I think you were in charge when we finished.

**Q25 Ms Buck:** I think Sue was in mid-response. As I was voting, I was reflecting that there must be some trend analysis. If not, where is the debate going on about providing consistency or monitoring the levels of consistency in designation?

**Sue Mordecai:** The very fact that schools were asked to identify the top 5 to 10% in each school meant it had to be a relative term, because what is 5 to 10% in one school is different from what it is in another school. I suppose it gave a bottom line from which to start asking the questions. The data should raise the questions you want to ask. There is an emerging pattern where people are getting more consistent and more confident. We have moved beyond the identification and are looking much more at the curriculum of opportunity and the provision for those students. I agree with Deborah that it is about the day-in, day-out provision, but it is also about the enrichment and extension that they get. It must be seen inherently as a part of, not apart from, the whole school improvement agenda.

**Q26 Ms Buck:** Just one last point on whether the 5 to 10% is consistent. Perhaps I misunderstood.

**Sue Mordecai:** There is an element of consistency.

**Q27 Ms Buck:** Did one of you refer to 30%?

**Sue Mordecai:** I said up to 20%.

**Ms Buck:** How does that sit with the 5 to 10%?

**Sue Mordecai:** I was saying that the 5 to 10% was the guidance from the Government. NACE, the organisation that I represent, would say that students are not gifted and talented across the board. If you take the top 1, 2 or even 5% in physics, the arts and modern foreign languages, a large school would end up with a profile of about 20% of children being designated in the more able category.

**Q28 Ms Buck:** There are cohorts of 5 to 10% of pupils from each school. Do we know anything about the differences between the cohorts from different schools? What kind of variation are you getting in the nature of pupils who are being classified as gifted and talented?

**Chairman:** Sue and Deborah are both nodding. We'll start with Sue.

**Sue Mordecai:** It's like anything. There is as much variation between schools as within schools. It depends on the nature of the school. Again, a number of characteristics define the people identified across schools. When the students are brought

together on enrichment activities, they have a lot in common. The identification has got much more sophisticated. Some other interesting issues are emerging. The “Student Voice” research we have done at NACE has shown gender issues, for example. When we have asked boys whether they are comfortable being identified as gifted, they have no problem. When you ask girls, they say that they are not, but that they work hard.

**Q29 Ms Buck:** That’s interesting because my experience of pupils in tough schools is that boys will run from being designated as gifted and talented because it is potentially problematic. Girls find it much easier, because the fundamental gender element, which allows girls these days to be intellectually confident, does not apply to boys.

**Professor Eyre:** One of the difficulties about this sort of stop-go approach that we have had is that there have been various different sorts of initiative.

**Q30 Chairman:** You are changing your description. Just now you said that Government policy is incoherent and inconsistent. Now you are saying that it’s stop-go.

**Professor Eyre:** Well, it’s the same thing. I am sorry, you are correct. The two are not mutually exclusive.

**Chairman:** Deborah, I am being mischievous. Certain people in the public gallery were not present when you made the original comment.

**Professor Eyre:** Right. One of the difficulties is that you don’t have a data set that you can follow for any length of time. During the period that we were monitoring students who were put forward by their schools for admission to NAGTY, we could tell you something about that cohort of students. More broadly, one of the difficulties that seems to have emerged is that because not all schools put their students forward for the national database, the data is incomplete. Sue may well be right that identification has become more sophisticated, at least in some places, although the Ofsted work that was done just before Christmas suggests that in some places we are going backwards rather than forwards, but in 2007 schools definitely took different views about the proportion of students they considered to be among their gifted. They also took different views about whether, in order to be designated gifted, you had to be good at everything across the board or outstanding at something. In schools in inner-city areas, there was still a disproportionate number of students from wealthier families appearing in the cohort, even though they were in a school that was broadly disadvantaged. You are right that both genders have some difficulty with the whole concept unless it is presented positively in school. The savvy student, regardless of gender, will duck it, and if necessary underperform to avoid being in the cohort. There are strong cultural issues, such as it’s not cool to be bright.

**Chairman:** I have to keep us on track. Annette, do you want to come back?

**Q31 Annette Brooke:** Sorry, I took us down that route, but it has been helpful. I’d like two people to answer this question. What are the main achievements of the national academy at Warwick from an insider’s and an outsider’s point of view?

**Professor Eyre:** I think I’d say that the main achievement for the national academy was that we set down the models and templates that have provided for a variety of activities in future. In particular, we came to understand far more about what secondary-school age gifted and talented students in particular needed in terms of effective educational provision, and how they function in the educational world. As I said, to begin with we had a remit only for out-of-school activities, and in terms of the achievements there I think we evolved an effective pedagogy for out-of-school provision, which could enhance school provision, so it had characteristics to the way in which it worked. We then mobilised providers to provide that, and adopted a sort of managed market approach to try to stimulate providers to create that sort of provision because that was not there in the past. It is easy to forget that the first time we were asked to work with universities, they were universally hostile to the idea, saying that they did not usually work with schools. There has been a lot of difference, and NAGTY was not the only part of that widening participation and activities. None the less there was mobilisation of provision. We created role models and a catalyst with the student academy to explore what was possible with those very bright students, and what they told us and what they did astounded everyone. On the in-school agenda, which we held for the last three years of our period, we set expectations and offered some sector leadership to the local authorities. Working with them, we created a regional delivery structure and found ways to showcase best practice through the ambassador schools scheme, and we created some innovation opportunities. At the end of NAGTY—I looked back yesterday at the 2007 annual report—we commissioned two big surveys through Guardian Professional’s Headspace and MORI. Headspace was a head teachers’ survey into which we put a question, and we found that 46% of heads felt their provision for gifted and talented had improved over that period. In the MORI poll, 64% of classroom teachers in secondary schools, and 56% of primary teachers, felt their provision had improved. We provided some advocacy for G&T and some sector leadership. We provided a kind of catalyst. We developed an entire pedagogy for the out-of-hours integrated side of the provision, which led to a community of young people who were actively engaged with us. Our website had 4.6 million hits finally. But we made plenty of mistakes.

**Q32 Annette Brooke:** Now I want a critique from the user side.

**Richard Gould:** There are certainly some positives. Raising the national profile for gifted and talented was a great success and gave all those agencies such as mine that had been doing some work a focal point on where to meet and where to raise issues. A

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workable website as the central place where anyone involved in gifted and talented could go—be it a student, a local authority person or a teacher—was important. It was also important for something like gifted and talented to be based at a well respected research-based university. In my opinion, that's been a problem over the past three years. The division of the academy into a student part, a professional part and a research part was a good way of dividing up the workload, too. I should like to stress the positives. Perhaps someone else wants to talk about other issues.

**Denise Yates:** I've already spoken about the positives, so I'll leave it there. One of the things that we were most excited about was the prospect of the gifted and talented agenda moving down to a younger age. In a recent survey, some 87% of parents have had their children identified as gifted and talented by the age of 10. So we wanted more provision at a younger age. That was the only bit of the equation that NAGTY was starting to work on but was missing. I remember saying to the best value review that was done at the time, "Don't throw the baby out with the bath water, but let's have some good examples of what can be done with the younger age."

**Q33 Annette Brooke:** We move on in time. Deborah has given some indication about why the national academy was closed. We move on to excellence hubs. Perhaps Richard can tell us something about these. Are they built on what the national academy did, what do they offer and how many children are involved?

**Richard Gould:** Ahead of excellence hubs came regional partnerships in the same nine areas in England. Excellence hubs were not really integrated: they were a bit of an add-on and this created quite a lot of difficulties, particularly for the user—the student, the teacher—who had to go to three different places: the young, gifted and talented website, the regional partnerships and the excellence hubs. It was confusing for people to find what to do without having a central place. Excellence hubs provision is mixed. What goes on in the everyday classroom in terms of the standard of teaching has moved on enormously in some schools. What goes on at university in terms of the quality of the teaching is very mixed. As a result, when students went to university, they sometimes had a wonderful experience and sometimes it was a turn-off. There was, and continues to be, a big problem in the quality of provision that takes place at the universities.

**Q34 Annette Brooke:** If I could just tighten the question slightly, have excellence hubs taken this forwards or backwards?

**Joy Blaker:** There could be very patchy provision across the country, but in our opinion in the Yorkshire and Humber region, it has been a very positive experience. That is probably because the regional partnership was very strong from the beginning of Excellence in Cities, and that has developed over the past 10 years. Because it has

worked very closely with the excellence hubs and there has been integrated provision and a feeding backwards and forwards of information and a lot of opportunity for our children in the region, we feel that that is a very strong aspect of our provision.

**Q35 Annette Brooke:** Finally, there has been some suggestion that direct funding might be withdrawn from the excellence hubs. Would they continue if the direct funding were taken away?

**Denise Yates:** The short answer to that is no. I believe that a lot of excellence hubs are doing their best to see what they can do if funding is withdrawn, but the short answer is no, they will not continue.

**Chairman:** That leads us nicely to the future.

**Q36 Mr Chaytor:** What I find difficult to understand is how the policy can move forward if there is no agreed definition of what constitutes a gifted and talented child.

**Professor Eyre:** The way that other countries deal with that is by agreeing a sense of what you want the system to achieve. For example, how would you know if you were being successful? How would the system know that it was successful? That might be specified in terms of outcomes rather than inputs: for example, getting more people performing highly in the way that we want to see them perform. I am not just talking about getting good exam results, although that is an integral part of it, but developing a kind of learning behaviour that is associated with high levels of expertise. That might sound esoteric but it is not. It is important that a good mathematician is not just somebody who can pass a maths A-level. It is someone who thinks like a mathematician. Part of what advanced provision in schools is about is making historians or mathematicians or whatever. It is about engaging with the subject domain and not just passing the test, although passing the test is important.

**Q37 Mr Chaytor:** If I could just take that up, it is now 2010 and there are people in the Department for Children, Schools and Families beavering away, trying to decide what they are going to do with the pot of money they have got for the next few years. If you are suggesting that they should design a system that is based on outcomes, is it outcomes now? Will they evaluate the nation's mathematicians now or will projections appear? I just do not understand what the criteria will be.

**Professor Eyre:** You could do this in different ways. For example, at the moment I am working with Saudi Arabia, which has instituted an approach to nurturing giftedness and creativity. Among other things, it involves the creation of an advanced supplementary curriculum that floats above the curriculum. It is more demanding and made available in particular kinds of ways. It has also instituted a very targeted programme that is focused on its teachers, and not on generic teaching skills. It is specifically looking at high-level performance within subject domains, even in the primary age range, and considering what it means to excel in a particular subject area as a primary age student. It

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has also instituted work that tries to engage parents more actively, both in how to support their child in their education and how, at home, they can nurture the characteristics that are associated with giftedness and creativity. So it's not like it's not known.

**Q38 Mr Chaytor:** So you are saying that it is really about building support for parents, encouraging and enabling parents to give support, and giving professional help to teachers to allow greater flexibility and variation in the curriculum?

**Professor Eyre:** Yes, absolutely. I also think that at the moment we don't systematise this in this country. Another thing they are doing in Saudi Arabia is providing incentivisation through creating a form of teacher who is considered to be particularly outstanding at nurturing high performance. Equally, schools get recognition if they are particularly outstanding at nurturing high performance.

**Q39 Mr Chaytor:** That would come through in our Ofsted reporting.

**Professor Eyre:** But in this country, the TDA does a survey every year to look at how well students are prepared to begin teaching. It asks lots of questions about how confident they feel about behaviour management and all kinds of things, but it does not ask how confident they feel about dealing with high-ability students.

**Sue Mordecai:** On future funding, I think that there have been too many gifted and talented initiatives and they have been apart from mainstream education. We need greater alignment and synergy with organisations such as the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics. Rather than create something new, we need to see what is already out there and how we can bring it together. The LAGT co-ordinators in some areas have been successful. Where they haven't been successful, they have not been given the clout or the funding to give support at a more local level.

**Chairman:** What was that acronym, just for *Hansard*?

**Sue Mordecai:** Local Authority Gifted and Talented co-ordinators. They have not been part of the school improvement agenda, although over the past year or so, personnel from the National Strategies have valiantly tried to bring that into the school improvement agenda.

**Q40 Chairman:** They're only going to be around for another year aren't they?

**Sue Mordecai:** Well, that's it. Just as you start to get things right, they seem to disappear, but there you go.

**Chairman:** Ah. Denise.

**Denise Yates:** I just want to talk about it from the front line. We can't duck this issue. It might be difficult—it might be impossible—but we shouldn't duck it. Last September, the NAGC put a questionnaire online that parents could fill in. It told them, although not definitely, whether their child might be gifted. Since last September, 4,323 parents have filled that in on behalf of their children. That shows that there is a great deal of impetus to get this

right. People are looking at this to see how we can do it. Some schools are very good at this, as we have said. Better schools seem to be scrapping the special needs and gifted and talented agendas and coming up with a personalised learning agenda that gives every child an individual education plan. If that took place, we wouldn't need to worry about whether a child was on the SEN register or whether they were gifted and talented because the provision would be appropriate for the needs of the child.

**Q41 Mr Chaytor:** It puzzles me that everyone seems to be critical of the succession of different initiatives, which I can understand, everyone seems to agree that it has to be based in schools, there is no dissent over the need to improve teachers' professional expertise, everyone thinks that there needs to be active professional advice from outside, such as specialist mathematics teaching, when that seems to be exactly what the Government are doing. Do those things not underlie the changes in policy? Why is there this mismatch?

**Sue Mordecai:** Because, working directly with schools, I think there is still a strong accountability model through Ofsted about getting up to five A\*s. While you have that very strong accountability model, it is very difficult.

**Q42 Mr Chaytor:** But the current Bill, with the school report card, the changes to Ofsted and the school inspection framework, is part of that change of direction. It seems to be what you are arguing for.

**Sue Mordecai:** No, again it could be seen as a form of accountability model. If you have the report card and the pupil guarantee, it will be very hard for some heads, particularly with very advantaged, articulate parents. They say that head teachers spend 90% of their time with 5% of their children or parents. It is about all children. We have to be careful in looking at where there is too much accountability and not enough development of the excellence that is there and more effective dissemination of it.

**Professor Eyre:** I have been reading HMI reports since about the mid-'60s, and all of them have said that teachers find it very difficult to challenge the highest attainers, the most able students—whatever terminology you like to use. A key enduring factor is that it takes good teachers to get to that very high level of challenge—it is not an easy thing to do—so one piece of work definitely needs to be about how teachers can be helped to achieve that more effectively, working through subject organisations, through other routes and so on. The heart of students' engagement is through school—I agree with you—but one of the things that we have learned very much from NAGTY and from other experiences is that, in the 21st century, there are a lot of independent, autonomous learners learning all over the place. We have new technology. As one 13-year-old boy said to me once, "I have been interested in the second world war since I was about five. We're about to do it in year nine and the teacher thinks that I don't know anything about it yet, but I'm probably much more expert than they are." When you learn is no longer constrained by the school. These are the

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most able learners. They are the ones who are most adept at learning, and they will use the new technology. We have said, and I want to reiterate this, that there should be integrated provision—not just in-school provision but out-of-school provision. There are certain particularly challenging things that you can do in an out-of-school environment that you cannot do in school. It is not realistic to ask schools to carry the whole burden, and, if we do, we won't get outstanding performers. It is like asking your local sports teacher to do the same kind of work as a coach for some premier football club. It is just not fair.

**Q43 Chairman:** Haven't we missed the boat, in the sense that this was a great fashion and fad, was it not, around about the time that new Labour came into government? Obviously it was favoured by the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair, and Andrew Adonis, but then we saw it gradually dwindling. Was that because of a lack of enthusiasm from the Department and Ministers, or was it seen off by the teaching unions? What is your analysis of where the resistance to all of this has come from?

**Professor Eyre:** I think there are a number of factors in all of that. Obviously, there were some political drivers behind the Tony Blair-Andrew Adonis kind of agenda. With the dismantling of the assisted places scheme, there was a political need to demonstrate that the state sector was doing more for its most able students. Having said that, I think it was a laudable aim, and there was a serious attempt to try to achieve it. In my view, where things have gone rather awry is in the two areas where there have been a variety of different kinds of initiatives, none of which has been allowed to develop for the kind of time that is necessary to give sustainability. Secondly, we failed to integrate this into the whole school improvement agenda and other structural agendas. It should be a matter of course that when you ask how a school is doing in any particular way—any characteristic, subject area, progression or anything else—you should be asking what is happening to the whole cohort of students. The acid test is obviously at the extremes: how well is the school dealing with those who can go furthest, and how well is it doing with those who are struggling? For gifted and talented, up until now—this is an opportunity to embed it more thoroughly in a mainstream way—there has been a kind of lip service, but we know that, culturally, there is still a lack of enthusiasm for it in some schools. I think the Ofsted report that was done in the autumn said that the 26 schools that were looked at thought that it was important but not a priority. If it is not a priority, it is because somebody else is indicating what the priorities might be, and they are not indicating that this is one.

**Denise Yates:** I would like to return to the previous question. We recently did a survey of parents, and 55% of them said that the biggest priority for the Government to tackle at the moment is more training for teachers. While we wait for this nirvana to be reached, there will be a lot of parents who have children in schools where the performance of gifted

and talented isn't so good. We need to preserve the out-of-school activity, so that—as Deborah said—parents from poor areas are mixing with those from more affluent areas. Last year, we ran a family weekend—we do so every year—and we had 550 parents and 550 children come along. The one thing they said to us was that it is wonderful to be able to book online and go to something that isn't school related. Ideally, school would be perfect. Let's have something in place before that day comes.

**Q44 Mr Chaytor:** Is the logic of that that the amount of money per child spent on those who are defined as gifted and talented—however they are defined—should be greater than the amount of money per child spent on those in the middle?

**Denise Yates:** No. As I said before, this is an equal opportunity issue.

**Q45 Mr Chaytor:** So the budget should be equally distributed per capita according to the child's ability, or the definition of it.

**Denise Yates:** Sometimes gifted and talented children have been the poor relation, but that does mean that we take very seriously the fact that money should be spent on gifted and talented.

**Sue Mordecai:** We need to look at how we spend the money more effectively. You asked about why it has gone off the boil. I come back to the fact that there are too many things going on—that is why it has gone off the boil. We need to refocus. For example, is there a way that an outstanding school could be a mentor to another school? There are models that have worked, but there are so many models out there that we need to step back and say, "Where has there been the most effective use of people's time? Where do we need to refocus? Where is it having an impact?" We need to really look at some of the outstanding work that is there. We must absolutely be clear that this must not go off the national agenda. They are our greatest natural resource; we must keep this on the agenda.

**Q46 Ms Buck:** I just wondered what evidence there was—I am not saying this sceptically—in the specialist schools programme and education action zones that successful schools mentoring others produced any differences in outcome. Was that done and monitored?

**Joy Blaker:** In our local authority, we have champion schools that are cross-phase schools—primary and secondary—working together to develop practice in looking at the needs of a child from five to 19, and how we can develop excellent practice. Those schools, in combination with leading teachers, are having a really powerful effect upon other schools within the authority, and sharing that practice. To go back to Denise's point about master classes and opportunities for children, we have 400 children every week coming to master classes across the authority. In many cases, on a Saturday morning, parents queue up with their children to bring them to that kind of provision.

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**Q47 Ms Buck:** I was not challenging whether it worked; I was merely interested in whether it has been extensively trialled. It was very much part of the EAZ programme, but I was really interested to know what evidence there is of the difference it might have had on outcomes.

**Chairman:** Everyone must be brief now, because we are winding up. We have the next session with the Minister.

**Richard Gould:** Very sporadic. We ran a conference in the eastern region for high-performing specialist schools, which are now called lead schools. Even that change of name was symptomatic. There have been so many changes in the last six months. You go to a meeting one week and hear something that is actually very different from what happened the week before. But the quality of what those schools could offer, even though they had all had the same title bestowed on them, was very mixed—from excellent to, I shall use the phrase, useless. They had someone who was very low down the hierarchy within their school, who had sole responsibility for putting out the message for gifted and talented. They were one year off from being a newly qualified teacher and they had one hour a week to do the work. I worry about it being delegated to schools to do that job without having the lead from the national government setting it as an absolute priority. That point was made by heads in the Ofsted report, and I agree with it strongly. My final point is that that is why we continue to have a huge amount of

underachievement among the most able students. Every report that comes out shows dramatic underachievement by a very large group of that cohort.

**Professor Eyre:** My first point is that if we want to put the reliance on sharing best practice, as it were, we need to be clear that the schools we are drawing attention to really do have best practice. My second point is that the evidence shows that some can and some can't make a difference to other schools. Being good yourself doesn't necessarily mean you can explain to or nurture others. We need a very clear methodology for how a school plays that role in relation to another.

**Q48 Mr Chaytor:** The Young Gifted and Talented Learner Academy closes its doors on 12 February, and the website is already being wound down. Does anyone regret its passing? Has it served any useful purpose?

**Sue Mordecai:** No.

**Chairman:** No one else regret it? No. Thank you very much. It has been a very good session. It is always like this when there are five witnesses. It is all the Clerks' fault—I blame them entirely—but they were spoilt for choice because there was so much talent around and we wanted to have all of you. Please remain in contact with the Committee, because there are questions that we didn't ask you that you should have been asked, and there may be things you want to say to us after reflecting on this over the next few hours and days. Thank you again for your time.

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#### Memorandum submitted by Joy Blaker, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

##### THINGS THAT HAVE STRENGTHENED MY ROLE

- Mainstreaming through the Strategies.
- Institutional and Classroom Quality Standards (because they have enabled us to work closely with subject leaders on common ground).
- The introduction of Leading Teachers for Gifted and Talented.
- A shared understanding within our team that all we do should be cross-phase with emphasis on early intervention. This is particularly important in the case of young exceptional learners who often have social and educational needs that can preclude them from accessing a 'normal' education and set them on a trail of isolation and/or poor attitudes and behaviours. With the help of the Sutton Trust and later the DfES we have a weekly class for such children from KS1 which has been evaluated at different times through Brunel and Sheffield Hallam Universities showing that teacher identification can be relied upon and that early intervention of this nature can prove beneficial in supporting children in mainstream education. But there is much more to be done in this respect.

##### THINGS THAT HAVE WEAKENED MY ROLE

- Funding that is not ring-fenced (with changes of staff and other inconsistencies it becomes increasingly difficult to see how the money is meeting its focus).
- Removal of funding from the Excellence Hubs, which in the Yorkshire/Humber region gives a strong unified lead to University education and offers a variety of provision open to all G&T students.
- Lack of funding for G&T Leading Teachers, which compares unfavourably with that given for Leading Teachers in Literacy and Numeracy. (However, in our authority we have begun some joint generic training and the LA are funding to some extent the cover costs for the G&T LTs).

It seems to me that we are talking about two different aspects of G&T education: high quality provision for teenage gifted learners, and the process that initiates that need involving raising teacher awareness and expertise in this area. We ask for all teachers to identify  $\pm 10\%$  of their gifted learners (academically able—or potentially so) and then to look across their school population for those who would be talented in any context in creative arts and sports—we cannot specify a definite percentage for the latter.

My contention is that there is the same range of potential in any school you visit—what varies is the amount of enrichment, high quality teaching and parental support that has been offered. So asking for  $\pm 10\%$  of a school population simply focuses the teachers' attention on how they can engage, motivate and provide for their potentially more able learners to ensure their bright creative minds are not overlooked in the future. To focus this support on 14–19 students who live in deprived areas is to offer something too late (hard-wiring within the brain has already taken place) and to further isolate them in the opportunities they are offered because they would just be socialising with their own groupings.

February 2010

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### Memorandum submitted by Professor Deborah Eyre

The current Government should be commended for creating the National Programme for Gifted and Talented.

It is the first Government to give priority to this area of work and to recognise its importance in the creation of a high performing education system. During the duration of the programme to date many students have, without doubt, benefitted. However, in a general sense the policy aspirations have not been translated into a sustainable model for the future. The reasons for this are complex but the constant changes in delivery models over the 10 year period have led to policy incoherence and inconsistency.

This is particularly damaging in the light of the clear steer from the 1999 Education and Employment Committee Report (Third Report, *Highly Able Children*) which indicated that the development that would make most difference would be a change in attitude among teachers, LEAs and perhaps even more importantly among the public and society at large. So a clear, simple and consistent policy was needed if hearts and minds were to be won. In this climate any sensible programme would also need a systematic communications plan aimed at drawing attention to the benefits of the new programme for students, families, schools and society at large if it was to secure greater acceptance and system-wide culture change. This did not occur.

Not only was this period characterised by frequent changes in the major delivery platform but crucially, at no time was the policy delivered or co-ordinated through one single delivery platform. For example, during the NAGTY period (2002–07), NAGTY was in receipt of approximately 50% of the centrally held budget with the other 50% being deployed direct by DfES through a plethora of small, autonomous and sometimes conflicting initiatives. This created a very confusing landscape for schools.

The constant change has led to weariness in schools with some schools increasing their activity and support in one phase of the programme only to retreat at a later stage when more changes occurred. (*Gifted and talented pupils in schools*, Ofsted 2009). It also led to frustration for parents and out-of-school providers with again ebb and flow in both interest and activity levels.

Finally, when delivery models were changed the lessons learned and successes secured were not transferred and hence rather than a cumulative effect the result was a constant restarting of the programme with resultant superficiality in content and slowness in delivery.

A revised model is essential but it must build on what has been learned, seek to rectify these problems and strive for sustainability.

#### *Why is a sustainable approach to Gifted and Talented education important?*

The gifted and talented agenda is significant for a range of reasons which transcend the needs of the individual. It has system-wide implications and hence securing a robust and sustainable approach is important.

1. *Economic competitiveness.* It is widely accepted internationally that national workforces are suffering from a shortage of highly educated and highly skilled personnel. This “talent crunch” is forecast to increase with an ever increasing need for a high performing young people. (Manpower Inc, 2007). This appetite for high performing individuals requires the school system to raise its expectations, to nurture its most able students from a wider range of backgrounds in order to provide the volume of high achievers needed and hence to minimise talent wastage and maximise achievement in the system. For a country like England which is so dependent on intellectual capital as a form of wealth creation this is particularly pertinent. Competitors in the “Asian Tiger” countries and in the parts of the Middle East are already addressing this agenda and the UK risks being left behind. *The G&T agenda is the mechanism for increasing the volume of high performers.*

2. *School improvement and performance.* Research evidence suggests that where schools approach Gifted and Talented education by providing challenging curricula coupled with a structured approach to the provision of demanding opportunities, then overall standards in the school are likely to rise. Expectations of students generally are raised, not just those of the target group. *Hence when well used the G&T agenda can provide a mechanism for driving up overall standards.*

3. *Social mobility.* In the drive to improve social mobility education is vital. Research evidence around the financial and other benefits of a university education PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP(2005) indicate that gaining a university degree can lead to 23% more in earnings a lifetime than leaving school with 2 A levels. At the school level those most likely to achieve social mobility are those who perform highly in their educational setting. *Hence where gifted and talented provision is effectively applied it can create a structural mechanism for increasing social mobility.* For example, the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY) demonstrated that all students admitted into NAGTY were statistically likely to obtain places at leading universities, regardless of socio-economic background.

4. *Individual fulfilment.* For the individual, education matters. Whilst the general public often believe that the most able students will achieve regardless of their education this idea is comprehensively refuted by the evidence. Without appropriate provision they under-achieve. All students, even those from the most advantaged backgrounds need an education that creates appropriately demanding opportunities, supports them at difficult times and helps them to develop learner behaviours such as resilience and persistence that are the building blocks for high levels of performance. *Without a system-wide approach to nurturing giftedness and talent, system-wide underachievement occurs with this being most pronounced amongst minority populations.*

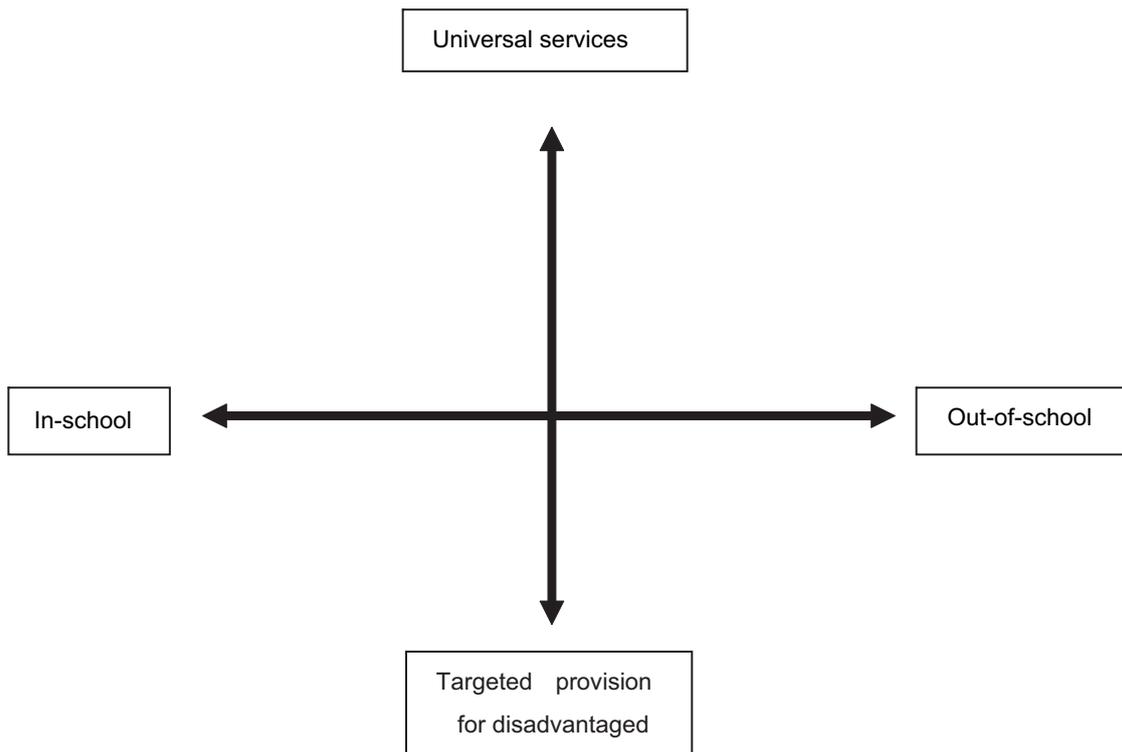
*Why has a sustainable approach not been achieved?*

Over the 10 year period the Government has attempted to structure its G&T programme in a variety of ways and tried many approaches.

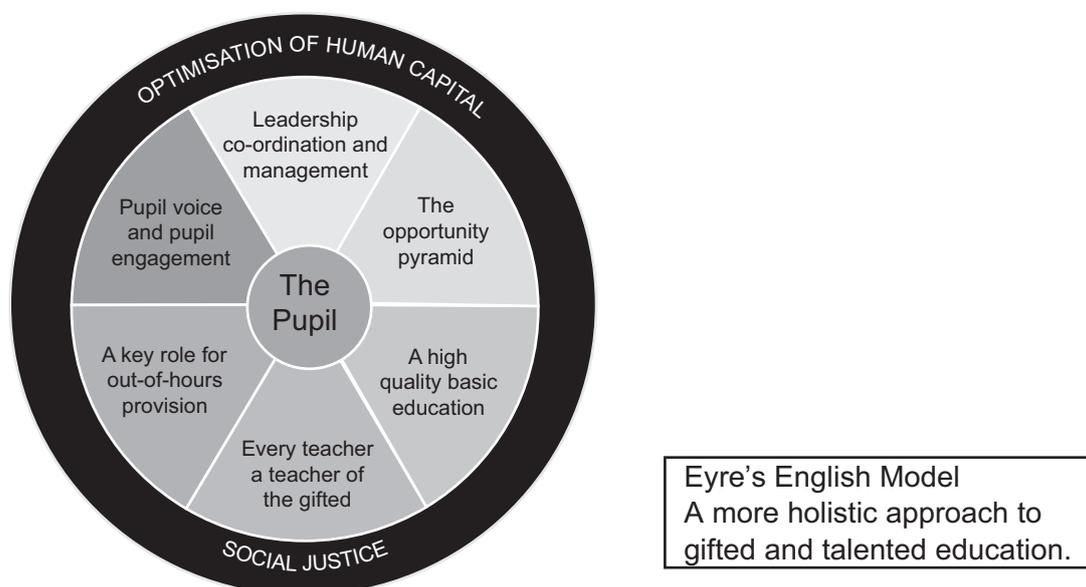
For the benefits outlined previously to be secured, not only is a strong G&T policy (maybe in preference to a programme) needed, but its delivery must be configured in such a way as to achieve the desired goals. Much was known from the experience of other countries about what works at the delivery level and also about potential difficulties. This knowledge was not appropriately factored into G&T policy planning. The overall approach adopted was old-fashioned and sometimes confused.

Without doubt the constant changes in G&T policy emphasis and hence in delivery structures has impeded progress on this agenda. The reasons for these constant changes are not clear but two tensions in policy prioritisation seem to have contributed significantly to the constant changes in emphasis and hence delivery structures.

1. Tensions around the merit of focusing the programme as a universal benefit for all relevant students or as a targeted intervention for the disadvantaged students.
2. Tensions around the focus on in-school improvement and out-of-school enhancement.



For a National Programme for Gifted and Talented to be truly effective it would need to operate simultaneously on all four quadrants. In this way it harnesses the benefits of integrated in-school and out-of-school provision (Eyre's English Model, 2009) and also provides a universal service whilst using incentives to actively manage take-up from disadvantaged groups. In the National Programme these elements have been construed as an either/or option with policy see-sawing between the two extremes.



Hence, as general education policy has shifted in emphasis so the National Programme for Gifted and Talented has shifted in response. At periods when general education policy has focused on standards (White Papers: *Excellence in Schools* 1997 and *Higher standards better schools for all* 2005) the focus in the National Programme for Gifted and Talented tended towards universal services and towards an integrated model of in-school and out-of-school provision—these being seen as the best routes to high performance for students. With a change in direction to focus on Narrowing the Gap (*Children's plan 2007, Every Child Matters* 2008 etc) the National Gifted and Talented Programme shifted its focus towards disadvantaged students, particularly those located in urban environments. In effect this moved the National Programme for Gifted and talented back to its Excellence in Cities roots and lowered its profile in suburban and rural schools.

Throughout the 10 year period the National Programme for Gifted and Talented has suffered from a lack of priority (and sometimes interest) in the Department for Children, Schools and Families. Most policy interest in education during this period has been around the securing of floor level targets—A–C at GCSE, Level 4 at KS2, reduction of NEETs, Sure Start, etc. Hence the National Programme for G&T has sometimes appeared marginalised and those charged with driving forward this agenda at Local Authority and school levels have complained of lack of clear expectations from the Department and lack of penalties for non-compliance. In a period of strong accountability schools were not held systematically accountable for demonstrating their gifted and talented provision in school. Indeed some schools themselves complained of a lack of interest and knowledge amongst Ofsted inspection teams and School Improvement Partners. During the 2003–05 period this in balance began to be addressed with, for example, clear references to “support and challenge” in the White Paper, *Higher Standards, Better Schools for All* (2005) but this was not sustained in subsequent government documentation.

Non-governmental public bodies have also failed to factor significantly the National Programme for Gifted and Talented into their on-going work during the period and hence have not contributed to system-wide changes in attitudes in schools. For example, TDA, in its annual NQT surveys did not ask about the preparedness of NQTs to provide high levels of classroom challenge for the gifted and talented nor did they highlight gifted and talented in their national CPD priorities. Work in BECTA and NCSL has been equally slight. Set in this context the findings from Ofsted (*Gifted and talented pupils in schools*, 2009) are unsurprising.

#### *What is now known about in-school provision*

Over the last 10 years the National Programme has learnt much about school-based provision. It has confirmed the findings from the international literature and enabled a better understanding of how to achieve this optimal provision within the English education system.

Findings from Ofsted suggest that, during this period, most schools have engaged with this agenda, at least at a superficial level, but often with insufficient understanding so leading to the implementation of generic approaches and structures which do not fit comfortably in their school. Academic research in this field in the UK is underdeveloped and there has been no examination of whether the instruments and

structures being recommended by the Department and National Strategies are fit for purpose. So the reasons why most schools have failed to make the required progress is unclear but the impression is a combination of; lack of sympathy with the agenda, low priority in school, lack of expertise in teaching for high performance and inadequate leadership from Senior Leaders and governors.

In reality, good school provision requires:

1. A school-wide understanding of the nature of advanced academic performance and the routes to it.
2. An understanding of the values, attitudes and attributes associated with outstanding performance.
3. An understanding of the potential barriers to success for individuals and mitigations for them.
4. Structures and culture that deliver the above. There is no single structural approach that will fit all schools or all students.

A minority of schools do now have in place good provision with demanding curricula, tight monitoring of progress of individuals, an effective blend of in-class and additional opportunities and high expectations across the school. This good practice needs to be built upon using more robust mechanisms for recognising effective schools and more systematic incentives and methodologies for sharing practice. We also need national data showing system-wide progress and the proportion of schools reaching this status.

During this period a major success has raised awareness amongst students and parents in schools. Some students have gained real empowerment and are able to critique their experiences. Ofsted (2009) signalled that it was the pupils rather than the teachers who indicated that the level of challenge was inconsistent across their lessons, and some had requested more challenging work. Students should be more actively engaged in their schooling as these are the most adept learners with the strongest sense of how to “co-construct” (Leadbeater, 2004) their learning. At the same time this inability of teachers to create high levels of challenge consistently in lessons should be noted as the single most important target for change. This is so important that it warrants recognition as a national CPD priority.

#### *What is now known about out-of-school provision*

NAGTY proved conclusively that out-of-school informal learning has the potential to change lives and expectations.

- (A) In the 21st century technology has made informal learning readily accessible and increasingly impactful on student performance. For the most able students it provides a mechanism for empowering autonomous, self seekers after knowledge. High quality, non-school, academic learning, which uses web-technology to provide links to; experts, communication with like minded peers and on-line courses, etc can transform learning opportunities in areas that interest the individual student at any age—personalisation in action. Nrich (University of Cambridge) offers this opportunity in maths for even the youngest students. It can supplement and enhance school-based learning and motivate the pupil.
- (B) Intensive face-to-face with experts. These highly motivational opportunities can open the eyes of students to subject learning beyond the traditional school curriculum. Working with experts such as Chatham House or the Royal Shakespeare Company is the intellectual equivalent to football coaching at a premier club. New advanced skills are learned and expectations are raised. The student is better equipped for work in school and more motivated to do well. The longer the session the greater the impact with Summer Schools which are designed to study one subject for a week or two weeks offering the greatest impact (Ofsted 2004).
- (C) On-line chat and other contact with similarly academic students. For academically able students, especially in low achieving schools or from families with limited formal education, isolation can be a problem. The community effect of NAGTY proved immensely powerful in providing a support structure for these students enabling them to achieve highly and without emotional distress. NAGTY has been closed for two years but students still continue to support each other via NAGTY Forever, a site they created on Facebook so indicating its importance in their lives.

In short out-of-school opportunities can transform individuals but only if they are (a) frequent, (b) of high quality and (c) linked back to school work. It must be a comprehensive rather than a piecemeal approach.

In addition national identification schemes such as NAGTY entry can empower students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds but only if the identification process is seen as robust. School registers have not achieved a similar effect on student self-belief.

#### *The new proposals for the National Programme for Gifted and Talented*

The new proposals appear to have three strands:

1. Targeting gifted pupils from deprived backgrounds with a new £250 annual scholarship for up to four years, to help them develop their particular gift or talent from 2010.
2. A new online catalogue of learning opportunities for G&T pupils provided at local authority, regional and national level where pupils can “shop” for opportunities that suit their particular gift.

3. A new network of High Performing Specialist Schools that will focus on Gifted and Talented as part of their specialism, to work alongside local authorities in improving the quality of support for G&T learners across the country.

(DCSF July 2009)

These proposals do not constitute a comprehensive response to either the system requirements outlined in page 2 of this submission or the four components outlined on page 3. As in the 1997–2002 approach, the 2002–07 and the 2007–09 models; the new arrangements provide only a partial response rather than a thought through approach and again fail to build on what has been learned.

#### 1. *Targeting gifted pupils from deprived backgrounds*

Here the policy emphasis is on the “targeted rescue” end of the continuum rather than the universal provision end. In line with the recommendations of the Final Report of the Panel for Fair Access to the Professions (2009) a main focus is now to be gifted pupils from deprived backgrounds. It is however unclear how a small grant to individuals will help achieve this social mobility given the twin problems of inadequate academic performance and low cultural capital. The National Programme has gained good understanding of what is needed to achieve large scale social mobility in the G&T cohort. This response does not seem to build significantly on these findings. It does not appear to be a co-ordinated response to this issue and is unlikely to gain success.

For example, research evidence suggests that it is unlikely that appropriate students will be identified. Numerous studies in Europe, Asia and US (Frasier, M M, Garcia, J H, & Passow, A H (1995), Campbell, R J, Muijs, R D, Neelands, J G A, Robinson, W, Eyre, D, & Hewston, R, (2007), Patton, J M, Townsend, B L, (1997), McBee, M T, (2006), Phillipson, S N, and Tse, A K, (2007)) indicate under-representation of minority groups within selected cohorts. In the US Borland (2005) noting that in the National Educational Longitudinal Study of eighth graders (1991), children from affluent families were five times more likely to enter gifted programmes than their poorer peers.

Also, we have learned much about the level and types of support needed to secure social mobility. It is high-touch and the student needs regular support over a sustained period. Hence it is unlikely to be secured via a cash payment approach (vouchers) as identified in this scheme. In addition success seems not only to be related to access to appropriate additional opportunities but also to changes in the individual’s self-esteem and intellectual confidence. Hence a more structural response will be necessary if progress is to be made on this agenda.

#### 2. *A new online catalogue of learning opportunities for G&T pupils provided at local authority, regional and national level where pupils can “shop” for opportunities that suit their particular gift*

The experience of the levels of success of the contrasting model of delivery characterised by NAGTY and YG&T demonstrate clearly that an unmanaged directory of events is unlikely to be effective, at least in the short term. Reasons for this are as follows:

- Students do not find the concept of a directory attractive and need to see a reason to engage. Take-up of opportunities offered through YG&T was small whereas in NAGTY it was significant. This was because NAGTY had a social as well as an academic purpose and enabled students to join a club of like-minded individuals operating at a similar intellectual level and with similar interests. A directory is passive, it will not, in itself, create demand.
- A directory does not guarantee quality, adherence to any particular pedagogy, continuity or progression. It is therefore unlikely to provide a life-changing experience or significant enhancement to school learning.
- This approach does not offer an effective route for social mobility. £250 will buy very little access for the disadvantaged to these experiences, so this kind of provision is likely to join sport, art and music as essentially middle class and may serve to increase the social mobility gap.
- Supply of opportunities is likely to vary across localities and across subjects as no one is charged with managing the market or stimulating supply. Rural communities are likely to be the main losers in this approach.

#### 3. *A new network of High Performing Specialist Schools that will focus on Gifted and Talented as part of their specialism to work alongside local authorities in improving the quality of support for G&T learners across the country*

Evidence given to the Committee suggested that the existing set of Specialist Schools already identified did not always demonstrate effective provision, so this scheme will need to be strengthened if it is to be useful. Schools need to be expected to compete more strongly for the status and meet more robust requirements.

There is also some concern about positioning the main policy in schools. Consistent findings from HMI (1992) and Ofsted (2003) have shown lack of challenge in the classroom to be a on-going problem of longstanding. In addition, the literature base indicates that a dependency on the school as a key institution for delivery of gifted and talented provision may be problematic. Some (Bourdieu, in Lawrence, 1991 p 244)

suggest that life chances are not so much promoted by school as restricted by them. Hence this approach may serve to perpetuate the status quo with even the most gifted individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds continuing to be unlikely to achieve high attainment.

Overall, the new approach is passive. It has no advocates to drive forward improvements. No advocates operating on behalf of the students and parents (NAGTY), no national, regional or local change managers (Local Authority G&T staff or Regional bodies) and no mechanism for changing the attitudes and culture in society towards the value of investing in these children. Something more active and comprehensive is needed if transformational or even incremental, sustainable change is to be achieved.

In summary, the Government should be commended for persisting in its quest to find a sustainable model for gifted and talented education but the new arrangements look to be inadequate and a lost opportunity. They continue to be piecemeal, un-ambitious and conflicting in their intentions. It is unlikely that any of the 4 main goals for gifted education will be achieved via this model and another generation of children will be destined for under-achievement. The Government would be well-advised to conduct a proper review of this area in order to clarify goals before putting into place a long-term approach. As part of this they should look towards the modern, system-wide, international schemes which are setting the pace in this field of educational work.

The gifted and talented agenda is important for the country, for the school system, for social mobility and for individuals. It is not a special interest for a small minority of named students. We have learned much in the last 10 years of the G&T National Programme and now we need to capitalise on it, not ignore it.

So often UK has followed the USA but it is important that we do not do so here. In 2002 the US government passed the, No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which focused primarily on ensuring minimum levels of competence for all. Although it included a specific reference to gifted students, none-the-less overall it led to a waning of interest in gifted education and an outcry from some quarters.

“Even as our high-tech world and age of modernity demand critical thinking, creativity and deep analysis, federal education resources are focused on making every child at least average—with no thought to fanning the flames of those whose intellect burns the brightest.” Stanton decries NCLB, which “snuffs out” our “best and brightest”, as the institution that will end the United States’ “reign as the most powerful nation”. NCLB is the “Smartest Child Left Behind Act.”

Billie Stanton *Tucson Citizen* (26 November 2007)

It would be very unfortunate if after so much investment in this field, we, like the USA became deflected from this particular improvement agenda and allowed the quest for equality to lead to mediocrity. It is no coincidence that many of the top performing education systems (McKinsey and Company, 2007) have a strong emphasis on nurturing giftedness and creativity as a part of their pursuit of advanced student performance.

February 2010

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*Witnesses:* **Diana R Johnson MP**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, **Jon Coles**, Director General for Schools, Department for Children, Schools and Families, **Dr Geraldine Hutchinson**, Assistant Director, UK Services Group, CfBT Education Trust and **Professor John Stannard CBE**, National Champion, Gifted and Talented Learners, gave evidence.

**Q49 Chairman:** I welcome the Minister, Diana Johnson, who is a little poorly and has a rather bad cold. We are sorry to keep you waiting—we had a Division that slowed us all up a bit. I also welcome Jon Coles, Dr Geraldine Hutchinson and Professor John Stannard. I will consistently refer to Diana Johnson as Minister, but I will refer to the rest of you in first-name terms to speed everything up, rather than using Professor and Dr. Is that all right? I think we all know why we are here. No Committee has looked at gifted and talented since our predecessor Committee looked at it under Malcolm Wicks' chairmanship 10 years ago. The programme has had quite a chequered history, so we thought it would be rather interesting to dip back into it and see just what has become of it. We have had one evidence session already. You have the option to start either with a statement or go straight into questions. We always offer that option.

**Ms Johnson:** I think I'll make a brief statement. I apologise for my voice. Thank you for the invitation. Our gifted and talented programme aims to offer gifted pupils, including the exceptionally able, that extra stretch they need to engage them more in their learning, and in addition to provide extra support to help 14 to 19-year-olds from disadvantaged backgrounds to progress to competitive universities and professional careers. Since 1997, we have made significant progress in many areas of support for gifted and talented learners. That policy area has developed over the years. The first phase, from 1997<sup>1</sup> to 2002, saw gifted and talented pupils supported through Excellence in Cities. It was aimed at transforming the culture of low expectation and achievement by introducing more effective in-school and out-of-hours provision for gifted and talented learners, and was focused on able children in specific areas of deprivation. The second phase, from

2002–07, aimed to widen gifted and talented provision to the national level. The National Academy was introduced for the top 5% elite of 11 to 19-year-olds. The National Academy provided access to university-led summer schools and other outreach activities. The third phase, from 2007–10, aimed to widen provision yet further beyond the top 5%. The Learner Academy, supported by CfBT, is a virtual web-based academy to reach a wider gifted and talented community. This phase also saw the launch of City GATES. Those three phases have seen substantial achievements. We have introduced national quality standards for G&T education in all schools, established regional collaboration in support of G&T education in every government region, introduced a network of 170 high-performing specialist schools and introduced materials for teachers to help them tailor their planning and teaching. We now want to build on those achievements and move into the next phase of the programme. We believe that support for gifted and talented pupils should be school-led. We need to embed support for able pupils in school and personalise provision for those young people so that gifted and talented children can thrive. Most importantly, the new pupil and parent guarantees are at the heart of this approach. It is right that teachers, the people who know their pupils best, should be put in the driving seat in deciding what support will best meet the needs of their gifted and talented pupils. The pupil guarantee enshrines best practice and creates an entitlement to support so that every gifted and talented pupil and their parents will know what support is being offered to nurture their gifts or talent. We also want to support more disadvantaged pupils who may be more likely to need extra support to help them fulfil their potential. We are providing £250 per pupil aged 14 to 19 registered as gifted and talented and from a disadvantaged background. This is of course on top of the £1 billion that schools already receive for personalisation, which includes

<sup>1</sup> *Note by Witness:* The first phase actually commenced in 1999.

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1 February 2010 Diana R Johnson MP, Jon Coles, Dr Geraldine Hutchinson and Professor John Stannard CBE

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those who are gifted and talented, and the music and dance scheme, which provides bursaries for attendance at specialist institutions for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. We will also make available to schools a new online needs analysis tool to identify the type of additional stretch and support gifted and talented children need. We will also be releasing a series of materials to help teachers deliver additional challenge for their pupils within the school setting, and we are continuing to fund the regional partnerships to ensure that there is suitable provision to support gifted and talented pupils across England. Our changes to the gifted and talented programme will give better support to teachers delivering gifted and talented education, ensuring that gifted and talented is better integrated into schools and classroom practice, and will deliver to schools the funding they need to develop and support their gifted and talented pupils.

**Q50 Chairman:** Minister, thank you. With your opening statement you made it sound as though everything had been a wonderful, natural progression from a starting point with a vision, growing partly organically but developing systematically, whereas a leading professor in the first session said the whole programme had been inconsistent and incoherent. That view was more or less shared by the five witnesses earlier. Inconsistent and incoherent. First, the phase out of Warwick, then the CfBT phase. What do you and Jon Coles say to the voice that says, "It has not been a natural progression; it has alienated a lot of people out there because it has been inconsistent"?

**Ms Johnson:** When I started to look at gifted and talented, and the policies that had been put in place since 1997, I was struck by the approaches, which have differed over time, but when I thought about it and looked at it in depth, I thought that there was a sense of a journey, if you like, in this. It may be that some things have been tried and then we have decided that that is not the most appropriate thing to do. I suppose, at the end of the day, what we want to do is maximise the number of gifted and talented children and pupils who are getting access to the stretch and the support that they need to fulfil their full potential. Looking at the numbers of children and pupils who have been able to access help, over time that has increased considerably. If you look back to, say, the NAGTY at Warwick University, the numbers there were quite small. But if you look at the number of pupils now whom we have on the census in January, saying that there are 820,000 children who are gifted or talented, there is a bit of a discrepancy there. I think what I am attracted to in the new policy, "The Way Forward", is that it is going to be school-based, reach more children who are gifted and talented and provide the breadth of support to more children.

**Q51 Chairman:** We spend a lot of time in this Committee trying to judge whether a policy is effective. One of the central ways you can do that is to measure and see what the effects are over time. The Committee has been told that the longitudinal

study, as soon as it was passed on to CfBT, finished. So we don't know whether that £20 million or £25 million, quite a considerable amount of taxpayers' money, that we invested into those young people made any difference. What Department would stop a longitudinal study after five years? We don't know if those young people who were helped in the first five years had any benefit.

**Ms Johnson:** Perhaps Jon can come on to answer in a moment. But I would say that I am very clear that I want to know that when we spend public money, it has a direct effect at the other end. I am with you 100% on that. Obviously, it is quite difficult, isn't it—to extract the particular bits that you might put forward for gifted and talented children from the general education they receive. There is the difficulty in pulling that apart.

**Q52 Chairman:** The Department has some really good longitudinal studies that it continues to fund over time. Why stop this one? Is it because you're embarrassed, Jon, that you won't get the results that you thought you would get?

**Jon Coles:** I am afraid that I wasn't in the room when someone mentioned that study, so I am afraid that I don't know about that particular longitudinal study, and I will have to write to you on that. I would say that we have—I know that the Committee was interested in this—a published research report on the national academy and its impact, which is available publicly. So it's not as if this has been an unevaluated piece of work.

**Q53 Chairman:** No, but we want to know what happened to the students. Did it get them into what they wanted to do? Did it lead them on to great careers? Geraldine, you are part of CfBT. You took this over. Was it your decision to get rid of the longitudinal study, or was it the Department?

**Dr Hutchinson:** No, the longitudinal study was never part of the activities that we were asked to carry out as part of our contract.

**Q54 Chairman:** Minister, that looks incoherent and inconsistent.

**Ms Johnson:** Certainly, we will have a look at that and see what happened.<sup>2</sup>

**Q55 Chairman:** Yes. It's a lot of money—£25 million put into the first five years, and someone said, "Forget about it. Give it to CfBT, a different thing, and we won't even track the students that we spent the £25 million on."

**Jon Coles:** I'm afraid I don't know about the longitudinal study, or what that is a reference to. All I can say is that there was a thorough evaluation of the spending of that money, and the conclusion of that was put on the DCSF website. If there is a longitudinal study that I don't know about, I will write to you.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See Ev 36

<sup>3</sup> See Ev 36

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**Q56 Chairman:** There must be because the professor in charge of it has just told this Committee that it was there, and you scrapped it. You've made yourself rather exposed, not briefing your Minister before you arrived here. I was bound to ask you a question about that. You looked at the evidence. You knew the professor who was in charge of your five-year programme at Warwick University.

**Jon Coles:** This is our published report on that five years of work.

**Q57 Chairman:** Jon, you know the difference between a longitudinal study and a nice little gloss that you come up with, saying, "Over five years". Any civil servant can write that, but a longitudinal study tells us what the value for the taxpayer is.

**Jon Coles:** And that is analysed in this report, which is an independent evaluation report.

**Q58 Chairman:** What did it say on the value to the taxpayer?

**Jon Coles:** It is publicly available. As you've heard from your previous witnesses, there were a number of things that the academy did well and a number of areas where the objectives were not met in full, which is why we moved from that approach to a broadening of the national approach.

**Q59 Chairman:** But you have now got rid of it. You started one academy for five years, then stopped the longitudinal study, did your evaluation and moved on to a new sort of academy. CfBT has had only three years, and you have closed down the academy.

**Jon Coles:** Warwick had the opportunity to bid for—

**Q60 Chairman:** Did it want to?

**Jon Coles:** They chose not to.

**Q61 Chairman:** Honestly, looking at you as a client, I don't think I would have bid.

**Jon Coles:** They chose not to bid, which is obviously a matter for them. As the Minister has described—

**Q62 Chairman:** You weren't a good client, Jon. It was obvious. You weren't a good client. Its reputation was at risk because it is a serious university and it didn't want its reputation tarnished with the sorts of things that you were doing.

**Jon Coles:** Is that what they said to you?

**Chairman:** Yes.

**Jon Coles:** Okay. Well, as I say, I was not in the room at that point. Whether they did or not is obviously—

**Q63 Chairman:** They didn't say "tarnished" to be honest, but they didn't want to be associated with it.

**Jon Coles:** Okay. Well, that is a matter for them. We did have a—

**Q64 Chairman:** No, it is a matter for this Committee, Jon. What we're trying to drag out of you is why this longitudinal study stopped, and why you have closed down two academies. Quite honestly, we are still floundering to find out what the policy for gifted and talented is now.

**Jon Coles:** I can say again that I don't know about this longitudinal study. I don't know that there was one and I don't know that we closed it down, so I will have to write to you on that.<sup>4</sup> As for this, as the Minister has tried to describe, at the start of a policy it is really important to create a focus where there isn't one. That is what was done through the Excellence in Cities work back before 2000, and it is what the national academy was designed to do from 2002 onwards, but it was clear, and this research report makes it clear, that it is unaffordable to scale that up, and that is one of the things that the evaluation report says. Therefore, we needed to move to a different approach and we went out to tender for one. As I say, it was absolutely open to Warwick to apply for that had they wanted to—

**Chairman:** And they didn't want to.

**Jon Coles:** And they chose to—

**Q65 Chairman:** Let's just ask Geraldine, you won the contract to do it in a rather different way, didn't you?

**Dr Hutchinson:** That's correct. CfBT was awarded a contract from September 2007 to March 2010. It is a three-year contract. Our remit was quite different from that of the NAGTY programme in many ways, although we have sought to take the best practice from NAGTY and embed it in the learner academy. Our remit was to increase access, extending the age range from four to 19 years, and also to increase reach for more gifted and talented learners to be able to access independently information that they would need to progress. We also had a remit to tackle both excellence and equity, so another of the things that we had to build in to our programme was to target support towards disadvantaged learners as well. That was our total remit when we set out.

**Q66 Chairman:** I saw you in the room earlier when Annette, I think, asked if any of our five witnesses mourned the closure of your academy. Were you surprised that not one of them did? They seemed to be quite pleased that your academy had been closed down. Why do you think that was?

**Dr Hutchinson:** I obviously can't speak for the panel. Clearly, when the programme transitioned from NAGTY—bearing in mind that that was quite a different programme from the one that we were asked to create by the Department—we had a team of lead professionals, and we had a very highly-esteemed lead professional who did work closely with NAGTY to identify best practice so that we could take the best of what NAGTY had done and build it in to our programme. As fellow professionals, we fully acknowledged that they had done some really excellent work. For example, a lot of the materials that were in the library, and the research base materials on the learner academy, were sourced from NAGTY, and we did not want to lose that good practice. Our basis was to build on the best that NAGTY had developed, but obviously we had a much wider remit and we had to do much more in a very short space of time to reach very many more

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<sup>4</sup> See Ev 36

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individuals. For example, we were set a target by the ministerial taskforce to reach 250,000 learners through the learner academy. The membership of the academy now stands at 337,000, and we have had 1.9 million visitors to the academy, 500,000 of whom have sourced materials for the secondary-age phase and 300,000 of whom have sourced materials for the primary-age phase. In terms of reach, those are the sorts of things we have tried to create, and certainly our starting point was to look at what NAGTY had done, to visit colleagues at NAGTY, and to inform our practice from their work.

**Q67 Chairman:** But Geraldine, you're known to be one of the leading independent consultancies in the educational world, aren't you?

**Dr Hutchinson:** CfBT is.

**Q68 Chairman:** I know of your work, I know that you've done some good work as an organisation and Warwick is known to be a fine university with a leading research capacity. But they've closed them down and now they've closed you down. When were you told that you'd failed and they were getting rid of you?

**Dr Hutchinson:** We were informed in June 2009 that the programme would be changing significantly, and at that time there were several key changes to the programme, which we responded to, naturally, because we were under contract. One change was that the professional activities of our professional team would not be required any longer, meaning that those posts would be effectively made redundant. So our professional team and our lead professional were unfortunately made redundant in July 2009. We had a number of online study groups, moderated forums and faculty cafés that were part of the learner academy. They were well received by learners because, clearly, that's where they could get together, share and chat and identify as a group. That part of the learning academy, which was effectively the interactive bit, closed in June 2009. At that point—mid-2009—we were aware that there would be significant changes to the programme and to the learner academy. From that point we worked with—<sup>5</sup>

**Q69 Chairman:** Were you upset it was phased out?

**Dr Hutchinson:** CfBT was disappointed that a lot of the work that we had started would come to quite an abrupt end at that point.

**Q70 Chairman:** You can't be too disappointed, because you've got lots of other contracts.

**Dr Hutchinson:** At CfBT we have a high commitment to the work that we take on. We are a charity. Independently, CfBT is sponsoring a number of pieces of independent research into gifted and talented because we're genuinely interested, much as Deborah Eyre was saying, in looking at the methodologies internationally.

**Q71 Chairman:** John, just one question. Do you shed any tears, in your role as the champion of gifted and talented programmes, over two academies closing down? Does it not matter? Do we just keep on moving and changing?

**Professor Stannard:** Yes and no is the answer. I don't shed any tears about the current form of the Young Gifted and Talented Learner Academy disappearing, because it hasn't been terrifically effective. On the other hand, I do shed tears over the fact that we appear to be discontinuing some form of co-ordinated provision of services to our most able children, which bring the expertise of the community at universities and all the other potential contributors to those students. When the academy goes, that effort goes too. That's really important and it is probably the fundamental function of the whole thing. I believe that's what NGATY was doing successfully within a limited sphere. There is an underlying difficulty, for me. I should declare an interest here because I was previously, before this role, a principal consultant for CfBT and I came into this role partly at CfBT's suggestion and was then moved—repositioned—as an independent voice. So I no longer work for CfBT and I am an independent voice. The underlying problem with the YGT academy was strategic. NAGTY had great value and was impressive in many ways, although there are questions about the value for money that it produced. The question was whether it was scalable in any form that resembled what it was doing. Was it scalable in terms of being taken out to the whole nation and doubling, or more than doubling, the number of students who would get access to it? Was it scalable in terms of how much that was likely to cost, of what the consequences would be of trying to run it, and of the management, bureaucracy and everything involved with it? The scaling up was genuinely well intentioned. I think CfBT went into it with commitment and the best of intentions, but it was not destined to be a raging success in the system.

**Chairman:** Let's leave it there for the moment.

**Q72 Mr Stuart:** Minister, how do you respond to that? One of our earlier witnesses said that, just as you start to get things right, the policy disappears. We hear from the champion appointed by you that the underlying problem has been strategic; that we are discontinuing co-ordinated services to gifted children. This is a disaster area, isn't it?

**Ms Johnson:** I don't think it is. We have already learned from what happened in the past. The idea of moving gifted and talented provision into schools, so they can focus on it and mainstream it within what they are doing, is a better way of going forward. I talked about the pupil-parent guarantee. Parents and pupils will be very clear about what extra support they can access and what is best for them. It is not like in the past when perhaps there was a menu you could choose from as a pupil or parent: the child could go to this course or do that. This time round it is going to be about identifying what the child needs to stretch them. That is an exciting way

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<sup>5</sup> *Note by Witness:* From that point we worked with the Department to start the transition for close down.

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forward. There is a clear guarantee that each school is going to be responsible for its gifted and talented pupils and make the right provision for them.

**Q73 Mr Stuart:** That's back to '99, isn't it? It was all embedded in schools then. The whole reason why the Government changed the policy was because this Committee and others found that, if left to schools, insufficient attention was paid to it. It needed external leadership; it needed academic and other stimuli. We are just back to future. We are shredding all the good work that has gone on before. All the people we have heard today—seven experts outside the Department—have spoken with one voice, effectively. We are just going back and capping any benefits that could have been gained from this large public investment. Surely, you need to think and look again at making sure there is a stimulus outside schools; not just leave it to schools.

**Jon Coles:** I was in for the final 20 minutes to half an hour of the last session. Mr Chaytor picked up that all the previous five witnesses were fundamentally arguing that this has to be mainstreamed properly in schools; it has to be about teaching and learning in the classroom and developing professional expertise. That is precisely the direction we are going in. The things that are different are, first, the underlying capacity of the system and its focus on this issue. What the past 10 or more years have done is create a much sharper focus on this as an issue. There is a much greater understanding in schools. There is an expectation that everybody has a lead teacher for gifted and talented. There is an expectation that local authorities have gifted and talented co-ordinators. It has a status and a focus in the system.

**Q74 Mr Stuart:** May I interrupt? There were 4.6 million hits on the NAGTY/Warwick website in the past year—millions in the way of support there. What is going to happen to that material? It is not all going to be lost, is it, like the longitudinal study? We'll have somebody from the Department in a couple of years' time saying they have never heard of it.

**Jon Coles:** No. This April there will be a transition. The Committee has probably not yet heard that over the next year a lot of this work will transition into the National Strategies—the final year of the National Strategies contract. One thing we will be doing is making sure that the good-quality materials that have been produced will continue to be available through the National Strategies. A lot of the focused work that the National Strategies will do in their final year will continue to be there in support of teachers and others.

**Q75 Mr Stuart:** How will you ensure continuation after that? It doesn't give us a lot of confidence when we see domino after domino falling. You are adding this to National Strategies, which are themselves going out the window.

**Jon Coles:** Part of the final year of the National Strategies is going to be focused on making sure that all of the materials produced by the National Strategies and others that are good-quality web

resources are made available and continue to be available and updated beyond the end of that contract. That is one of the clear, focused pieces of work that will happen over the next year.

**Q76 Mr Stuart:** That's a promise, is it?

**Jon Coles:** That is one of the things we are doing in this period. Your previous speakers talked about accountability, and the potentially perverse effect. I am unapologetically in favour of accountability, which is a good thing and has positive effects on every system. Policy is now moving towards trying to get an accountability system that is focused on every child's progression—the lowest achieving and the highest achieving. That is one of the things that the report card is designed to do—to move away from the focus on thresholds and more towards progression as a measure of success. These things make the current state of development very different from that in 1999 when the first Excellence in Cities tranche was launched. We have a much sharper focus on that in the accountability system. The pupil and parent guarantees are designed to create some bottom-up pressure from parents on the system, and our expectation is that schools and local authorities will focus on that. That is why, as we heard from the first five witnesses, now is the moment to start to mainstream this and to make it much more a school-led activity.

**Q77 Mr Stuart:** Thank you. Minister, parents out there with primary school-age children who are not from disadvantaged backgrounds are getting a clear message that the new policy on gifted and talented isn't for them. How will you reassure them that this is not the end of the affair for new Labour and aspiration?

**Ms Johnson:** I completely dispute that. There is the universal offer from five to 19. It's about recognising in every school the children who are gifted and talented, and that includes primary schools. Schools should be working towards identifying those children and making sure that in the classroom they are stretched and given appropriate teaching. In primary schools, there are various ways of engaging with gifted and talented children. I have heard an example of a primary school where the most gifted and talented helped to run the school tuck shop<sup>6</sup> and the bank that comes into the school.

**Q78 Mr Stuart:** Future bankers then?

**Ms Johnson:** Possibly. You can engage with gifted and talented children, but the local authority as stakeholders will also provide support to primary schools. As the Minister, I was asking questions about what specifically we are doing in primary schools. I know that in secondary schools there is much more of a focus on the 14 to 19 age group because we want to make sure that those young people do as well as they can, and get into university and so on. But you are right that we need to keep our eye on primary schools and make sure that gifted and talented children are stretched.

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<sup>6</sup> Note by Witness: Healthy School Tuck Shop

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**Q79 Mr Stuart:** Even when there was a school census, some schools just did not submit the data. Now we are moving back to embedding this in schools to promote it without any external agent other than the Department, how do we know that they will follow up on it? How would we know that they would not have an ideological or other objection to identifying the gifted and talented and making sure they are stretched? Surely, that is what one thought was happening in 1999, but our predecessor found a somewhat depressing overall picture.

**Ms Johnson:** There are various ways that schools will want to engage with the school census and make sure that they are identifying all their gifted and talented pupils. Obviously, additional money is available for those children through the targeted scheme, so schools will not want to miss out on money. If money is available, they will want to identify the gifted and talented children who might bring that money with them.

**Q80 Mr Stuart:** Is the money just for those from a deprived background, or for any child?

**Ms Johnson:** For children on free school meals or looked-after children.

**Q81 Mr Stuart:** So middle-class taxpayers' children don't deserve extra help, no matter how gifted and talented they may be?

**Ms Johnson:** A school would want to identify all their gifted and talented children.

**Q82 Mr Stuart:** But they would not be given extra resources?

**Ms Johnson:** Within that, there is a group that would draw down additional funds. That is also the role of the SIP, which will look carefully at what schools are doing. When Ofsted goes into a school, one question that it will want to ask is, how is the school stretching gifted and talented children? Schools will be in a difficult position if they haven't identified who their gifted and talented pupils are.

**Jon Coles:** It is probably worth saying that one of the big differences in the school census now is that schools are expected to flag up gifted and talented children, and to identify those—

**Q83 Mr Stuart:** But some are not doing that, are they?

**Jon Coles:** Some 820,000 children are identified as gifted and talented. The overwhelming majority of schools do that. As the Minister says, there are some that don't and I think the implication of your question—that there are some schools that, ideologically, do not want to label some children as gifted and talented—is right. It is a minority of schools and there are now mechanisms through the National Strategies from this year, and through school improvement partners, to challenge those schools to do it properly.

**Q84 Mr Stuart:** Minister, as you say, the additional funding is for children from a deprived background only. It would appear that the whole idea of the

gifted and talented programme—picking and backing those who, one way or another, were the brightest and the best, regardless of where they came from; it was supposed to be an equitable, open policy—has now been entirely warped into one that is about deprivation only. Therefore, the equity versus excellence debate has been tipped entirely in the direction of equity, and excellence has now been lost. How would you respond to that?

**Ms Johnson:** I don't accept that. There is the universal offer for all children who are gifted and talented, first of all. That is a universal offer. Then there are specific targeted programmes to give extra support to children who have come from a disadvantaged background. I think that that is absolutely right and proper. Alongside that—as I mentioned in my opening remarks—is the music and dance scheme, which is open to any child who has a particular aptitude for music or dance. The fees that are then paid to, for example, the Royal Ballet school, are based on parental income and there is a sliding scale of what parents pay. Therefore, you can get pupils from more disadvantaged backgrounds alongside children who come from a more middle-class background. I think the universal offer and targeted support is the right way to go.

**Jon Coles:** The deep challenge in this is that £30 billion-odd of public money goes into the schools system. The challenge is how to make sure that in every single school every child gets a personalised education that stretches them and makes them achieve the best they can. For those who are the most gifted and talented, that should take them absolutely as far as they can go—and on into selected universities, into professional careers and so on. Any amount that we have ever spent on gifted and talented has been designed to create a focus and attention—to give additional support and focus—to the work of schools. Where we are trying to get to with our policy now, and where I think it is pushing us and pushing schools towards is, what I think one of your earlier witnesses talked about, to say: for every child a focused learning plan that enables them to progress, identifies precisely where they are, and pushes them to achieve the most they are able to. Now, in the end that has got to be about the £30 billion-odd of public investment in the schools system and not about the marginal resource only—though the marginal resource, as we know, has made an important contribution to that. That is the central challenge.

**Q85 Chairman:** Our job on this Committee is scrutiny of public monies. The first phase cost £25 million. I think that's right, isn't it? Thereabout. The second phase, CfBT, cost £42 million. That was over the estimate. That is a lot of taxpayer's money. I do feel some sympathy towards the Minister and to yourself, because of the churn in the Department—the change in the Department's title and the Ministers who have come and gone. Goodness knows how many Ministers we have had in the past 10 years and, Jon, how many civil servants we have had. The instability of this programme does mark it out for us. It is a lot of cash. We looked at when £50

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million disappeared in individual learning accounts, or the UK e-university from the Department—that was £100 million. This is £67 million and we are still asking, “Was this a good investment?” Who do we ask? You do not even remember the longitudinal study and I do not blame you for that. Where is the directorate of gifted and talented? There used to be a director of gifted and talented in the Department. Now he or she has disappeared. There isn’t one.

**Jon Coles:** There has never been a director solely responsible for gifted and talented and we still have a director who has responsibility for gifted and talented. Could I just say, I think—

**Q86 Chairman:** There was never a director of gifted and talented?

**Jon Coles:** There has never been a director whose sole job was gifted and talented, no. Never, in my memory. Certainly since 1999.

**Q87 Chairman:** There is a note here from a leading expert who advises this Committee that there used to be a gifted and talented director. This person no longer exists?

**Jon Coles:** There has never been a director responsible. So this is within the schools standards area—the director for schools standards was responsible for gifted and talented.

**Q88 Chairman:** For the person in charge of gifted and talented, what percentage of his or her job is it?

**Jon Coles:** At director level, it is not a huge proportion of her job—I am talking about the role of the director of school standards—but there are other staff who have gifted and talented as a full-time role in the department. It is worth remembering that it is in a very different place from where it was 10 years ago. I think you just need to look at your predecessor Committee’s report to see how different it is. There is a leading teacher responsible for gifted and talented in every secondary school, and every primary school must be part of a cluster with a leading teacher.

**Q89 Chairman:** This is exactly what we are trying to deal with. It used to be a flagship policy of the Government’s, but it does not seem to be a flagship policy now from where I am sitting.

**Jon Coles:** The point I am trying to make is that, in the system, in the schools, in reality and in the learning experience of every gifted and talented child, there is now much more substance to gifted and talented policy than there was then, because it is happening in every school, day in, day out. That means that, instead of always being focused on a central drive to get something established, the task has to be to allow the system to deliver effectively, and to support and challenge the system to improve quality all the time. That is the shift in policy.

**Q90 Chairman:** Jon, I shall be fair to you and the Minister, as is my wont. The fact is that the woman from local government in Rotherham was the closest

to supporting the view that you have just expressed. I am trying to be balanced in recording what happened earlier.

**Jon Coles:** A range of schools and local authorities would absolutely take that view.

**Chairman:** We heard one.

**Jon Coles:** One out of one.

**Q91 Ms Buck:** I have a question for the Minister following on from the question about targeting. The decision to target the available resources upon children from deprived backgrounds would have been made on the recommendation of a particular outcome measurement. Will the Minister clarify what that outcome measurement was?

**Ms Johnson:** As I understand it, it was about making sure that children from disadvantaged backgrounds had the support and opportunities to go on and, on the whole, enter university. I think that was the thrust of it. It is around the academic side of gifted and talented, and it is about getting as many people as possible from those disadvantaged backgrounds into universities.

**Q92 Ms Buck:** So was there any specified numerical target accompanying the refocused resources? Was there an expectation, for example, that, by refocusing resources on the 14 to 19-year-olds from deprived backgrounds, it would result in an extra 10,000 young people getting into university?

**Ms Johnson:** I will ask Jon if he knows that. I am aware that the City GATES programme covers the three city challenge areas in London, the black country and Greater Manchester. For those specific areas, it is about raising aspiration and making sure that the young people have the support they need. Whether that is translated into any numerical target, I am not sure. Maybe Jon can help me.

**Jon Coles:** I don’t think we have a target specified in that way as such, but we would certainly measure our success in terms of the achievement of those children and young people who are involved in the programme and their progression into university and into selective universities in particular. I don’t think there is a specified target, but those are the measures.

**Q93 Ms Buck:** So how will you have any sense of whether it is money well spent if it just an aspiration?

**Jon Coles:** Because we will still be able to measure it. We can still measure those things and see whether it makes a difference or not, and how big a difference. It is just that we do not have a set target for a particular number of young people going into university.

**Q94 Chairman:** It sounds a bit wishy-washy, Minister. You gave up the longitudinal study, which is not in your or Jon’s historic memory. Goodness knows who the Minister and the senior civil servant were at that time. *[Interruption.]* Are you still with us, Jon?

**Jon Coles:** Sorry, I am trying to establish from colleagues whether there ever was a longitudinal study—

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**Q95 Chairman:** Sorry, Jon, but I think that's really pretty naughty. The senior professor who ran the department told us only a few minutes ago that there was a longitudinal study that covered the first five years and that it was abandoned when CfBT got the contract. You are not doubting the word of a senior professor at one of our leading universities?

**Jon Coles:** I wouldn't dream of doubting the word of any of your witnesses in any way in front of this Committee, only to say that we in this room do not know of this longitudinal study, and we have quite a bit of history between us.

**Q96 Chairman:** But that's Karen's whole point, is it not? It is a worry that it all looks a bit wishy-washy. You do not know what has worked in the past, and you are not sure how you will measure it in the future.

**Jon Coles:** We have good-quality evaluation. It has been done by an independent evaluator.

**Q97 Chairman:** I hope that it is not CfBT, because it will be pretty cross if you were relying on it.

**Jon Coles:** No.

**Q98 Chairman:** Or the National Strategies, because you got rid of them, and that's Capita. You won't have any friends left in the private sector.

**Jon Coles:** I'm sure that we will always have friends in the private sector. We also have a huge amount of data. We have much better data than we have ever had before, because schools are required to flag up which children and young people—

**Q99 Chairman:** As the input is in, you will be able to tell me how many more talented and gifted young people are being identified, what they go on to do in their lives, what universities they go to, what professional qualifications they got, and how much money they earn.

**Jon Coles:** From our data set, we will be able to establish what progression was like for those who were identified as gifted and talented at various stages of their education, what was their progression like into further education and their achievements at the end of that. That is certainly something that we will be able to do for the first time because of this data.

**Ms Johnson:** Can I respond quickly to Karen Buck's question. I do now have something that I can share with you, which is the higher education access programme for schools. It works through Teach First advocates in the City Challenge areas. From the 2009 figures, 68% of cohort one, which is the first year of this happening, are attending university this October, and 27 are taking a gap year. Therefore, there are some statistics that we can let you have.

**Ms Buck:** It would be very helpful to have those, but they need to be contextualised, because they mean nothing without seeing it alongside some data on peer groups from other categories.

**Q100 Mr Chaytor:** Can I just clarify something. The young, gifted and talented learner academies are closing in the next month. The funding for the excellence hubs is being withdrawn. Is the City GATES programme continuing, or is that winding down as well?

**Ms Johnson:** That is carrying on as part of the City Challenge, which is time limited, so it is carrying on to the end of that.

**Q101 Mr Chaytor:** The City Challenge programme will finish—

**Ms Johnson:** In 2011.

**Q102 Mr Chaytor:** Of the previous infrastructure, the other part was the register, and the National Register is being wound down. Is that right?

**Jon Coles:** The key thing about the register is that we expect schools to continue to identify gifted and talented children and young people. We will continue to collect that data, and to report on them annually.

**Q103 Mr Chaytor:** So there will be a register?

**Jon Coles:** The data will continue to be collected, yes.

**Q104 Mr Chaytor:** In terms of the numbers on the register, my recollection is that when the Warwick Academy was functioning, the professor in charge said that there were 150,000 young people. Geraldine said that your target when you took on the contract was 250,000, but you achieved 337,000 members of your academy. Minister, you referred to 820,000, which is 10% of the age range. What I am curious about is how those young people are defined. Is it now agreed that 10% of the cohort are gifted and talented? Is that clear in guidance to schools? If you are saying on the one hand that the onus is on schools to identify them, and you have a figure that equates to 10% of the school population, are schools being told that explicitly?

**Jon Coles:** Schools are being asked to identify 5 to 10% of their cohort as gifted and talented.

**Q105 Mr Chaytor:** What happens if you only identify 5%?

**Jon Coles:** That is a legitimate choice for schools to make.

**Q106 Mr Chaytor:** Earlier, you said that there may be ideological reasons why some schools or authorities would not wish to identify children. Is that right?

**Jon Coles:** Yes, and there is a handful of schools—a small proportion of schools—that have not identified on the returns children who are gifted and talented. Those schools will certainly be challenged on that.

**Q107 Ms Buck:** I am still struggling to understand how this applies across the board. If you take a highly selective, highly specialist school that draws most of its intake from children who are already treated as higher achieving, what does it mean? To

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take 10% of a high achieving school and designate them as gifted and talented and then set them alongside and in the same cohort as the 10% of pupils who are achieving against all the odds and then putting them into the same cohort to be judged on their ability to get into university demeans the whole comparative process.

**Jon Coles:** The purpose is not comparative. The purpose is to make sure that all schools are properly identifying and stretching their most able pupils; in other words it is to try to make sure that every school is serving well the full ability range of children at that school.

**Q108 Ms Buck:** But then you use that data for a totally different purpose. That is what I'm getting at. I understand why it is done, even though I am not sure that it makes sense. But if we look at whether the programme is successful and having an impact and what proportion of those pupils, for example, would go on to university, you do not have a very good basis on which to make that judgment. Most of those pupils could be being drawn from the top 10% of the already high achieving pupils in high achieving schools.

**Jon Coles:** This was in relation to the 14 to 19 group of most disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for that additional sum of money. Among this group we know that there are issues about their progression to university. Some of those children and young people who we believe are capable of progressing, not just to university, but to selective universities, are not doing so. It is a completely separate debate as to whether that is about the school, the university, the wider community and the connections between those things. But the fact is that we want more of those able young people from deprived backgrounds to progress into our best universities, to put it in those terms. That is why that particular strand of work exists to tackle that specific problem. That is why we evaluate it in that way. For this wider work, we have a longitudinal dataset that we will be able to analyse over time. It is only building up over the first four years at the moment, but we will be able to analyse the data over time and compare those children with their peers in those particular schools and in other schools. We can look at whether they have progressed faster or less fast than their peers in those schools and in other schools. We can look at them as a cohort, but also considering like for like, school for school. We will be able to provide pretty rich data for schools to enable them to compare themselves not just against the national average, but against other schools that are similar to them and have performed very differently with their gifted and talented pupils. There are different things at work, but these data give us a much stronger basis to enable schools to look at like for like. Precisely as you say, a non-selective school in a selective area would be in a very different place from a grammar school in the same area. But the other non-selective schools in that area will be able to compare themselves, look at how well they have done for their most able children and so on. So that is the benefit of the national data.

**Q109 Mr Chaytor:** Can I get this right? We have the special programme for 14 to 19s, which is firmly set in the context of improving social mobility and improving access to the most selective universities. But we have a uniform programme as well from which all schools will benefit. Isn't the flaw that those schools that are already doing extremely well for their most able pupils will receive the same benefit as those schools that are not doing extremely well? I can see the point of comparing schools in similar circumstances and trying to remedy the differential performance, but surely it would be far better to target the funding on the schools that are not achieving as well as they might be?

**Jon Coles:** There is always a debate in policy between the universal and the targeted. It is rather like a means-testing debate. There are costs and benefits to targeting failure, if I can put it like that. Often, you put the resource into places that are doing less well. That has the benefit of helping them to improve if it is tied in the right way to effective practice, good support, the right challenge and so on. On the other hand, the universal programme has the benefits of equity, lower overheads in terms of targeting, and of rewarding success as well as rewarding failure—if I can put it like that. In other words, to put it at its crudest, the most deprived children deserve the additional benefits that this resource will give them, whether they happen to be in a school that is doing well for them or not. The point of it is to say that children from very deprived backgrounds, who don't get many of the benefits that middle-class children of similar ability get because of their personal home circumstances, should have access to those opportunities. That is the point of the additional £250 for those children. It is to give them benefits that they would not otherwise get.

**Q110 Chairman:** It's pretty slim pickings though, isn't it? It's £250 over how many years?

**Jon Coles:** It's £250 per child per year.

**Q111 Chairman:** That's not a lot of money if you're really taking gifted and talented seriously, is it? Let's ask the professor who is the champion of gifted and talented. It sounds like quite thin gruel to me.

**Professor Stannard:** The purpose of the policy is that the money goes into the mainstream, through the standards fund into the school. That is a very substantial pot. £250 per pupil per year is a very small amount. At best, it probably draws the school's attention to the need to target those children and do something for them. While the amount of provision is quite small, it does not mean that those children would not get attention and would not benefit from the school paying more attention to them.

**Q112 Chairman:** What do they spend the money on?

**Professor Stannard:** If a school has numbers of these children, it can pool the money and import expertise into the school or enable children with additional funding from the school to go out and benefit from additional teaching or courses. If there is particular talent in the school, it might be enough to enable

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them to access activities and events that they might not otherwise get to. There are a variety of ways in which the £250 could be spent very productively. I don't think it is a waste of money, but, as you say, it is a small amount.

**Jon Coles:** It is worth saying that the funding is scaling up by a factor of three. The picture that you are suggesting is that there is less emphasis on this. Actually, in 2009–10, we are spending about £1.2 million on this. Next year, we will spend £3.7 million on it. That is a major scaling up of this individually focused additional support.

**Q113 Chairman:** Will that mean more getting £250 or all of them getting £750?

**Jon Coles:** It is more getting £250.

**Q114 Mr Chaytor:** Under the new arrangements, what will be the main means of providing external support? As the funding is going to the school, will it be entirely the school's responsibility to decide what external support or experience is available for its young people?

**Ms Johnson:** I think it will. I just want to say that I think the parents are quite important in all of this. I keep mentioning the parent-pupil guarantee. Engagement with the parent and discussing with them what would be best to stretch their child will be quite important.

**Q115 Mr Chaytor:** Yes, but what if the parent is useless, as happens from time to time?

**Jon Coles:** Not in your constituency though, of course.

**Ms Johnson:** I'm not saying that all parents will be engaged in the same way, but on the whole, parents are interested in seeing their son or daughter do well if they are talented in a particular area.

**Q116 Chairman:** But Minister, what about John? Would he not be a more authentic voice in asking how many parents know that there is a gifted and talented option?

**Professor Stannard:** I think all parents whose children were identified for the YG&T Academy would know because they had a letter and were informed.

**Q117 Chairman:** Yes, but if other people knew about it, they might have felt aggrieved that their child was not seen as gifted and talented. I believed all my children were gifted and talented. Weren't yours?

**Professor Stannard:** Absolutely, and so was I! The interests of parents are paramount. The onus is as much on the school as it is on the parents, and the new pupil guarantee underlines the need for schools to involve parents. One of the things that often comes out of my work is that even if schools are identifying able children, many are still quite reluctant to engage with parents about it. Sometimes, the children are on the register and the parents do not even know about it. Local authorities have to work very hard with schools to persuade them that they need to do that. There is a good deal of uncertainty in schools about going down that

road. Some schools use expressions like, "It's opening a can of worms", "It's taking the lid off the pot" or "We'll have lots of pushy parents". There is that in the system. There are worries in schools about it, and they have to be assuaged. With the new guarantee, they will probably be persuaded that they have to do it, and that will be a strength.

**Q118 Chairman:** I know a lot of parents who think their children are gifted and talented at playing soccer. They turn up on Saturday mornings in freezing weather with little kids to give them that opportunity. Minister, you talked about dance and that sort of stuff. Do we look at gifted and talented young athletes?

**Ms Johnson:** Yes, we do.

**Q119 Chairman:** So what did we do when they closed the Beckham academy overnight? Most of the kids who commuted there from the age of four upwards suddenly found that it had closed. What did you do about that, Minister?

**Ms Johnson:** That is a very good question. It is not my policy, however, to deal with sport. It is the policy of my colleague, so I am sorry if I am not quite up to speed on this one. Do you know, John?

**Chairman:** You were big on dance.

**Ms Johnson:** Dancing and music are mine, so I know a little bit about them.

**Professor Stannard:** We have the Youth Sports Trust, which is run out of the DCMS. That is a major structural network of secondary specialist sports colleges that work with associated partner secondary schools. Each of the secondary schools has associated primary schools. The network covers the whole country, and it is really quite organised. Some outstanding work goes on. In fact, I am going to its celebration conference shortly.

**Q120 Chairman:** When I go into my schools in my constituency and ask about gifted and talented, they all think that it is about the brilliant mathematician at the back of the class, who has the natural ability in a tough science-type subject or languages. They feel a bit alienated by that. If it was a broader gifted and talented offering, covering dance, sport and cricket—I would add—they might view it differently rather than it being an exclusive little coven of kids who are good at maths.

**Professor Stannard:** I understand that the policy intention, and the messages that go out from the Department for Children, Schools and Families are that it is very broad based. It is gifted and talented. That is what the definition actually states on the website.

**Jon Coles:** This is hugely important. As a former mathematician and, like everyone else in the room, absolutely convinced that I am terribly gifted, I think it is very important to identify mathematicians who are seriously able. As one of your previous witnesses said, thinking like a mathematician is hugely important in that we must not pretend that it is not. But the talented end is about talents other than academic talents. It may be music, it may be dance or it may be sport. We actually invest £2.3

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million in the gifted and talented strand of our youth sports strategy so there is serious investment in the elite of talented sportspeople in the country. That is a serious focus, too.

**Chairman:** That was a byway. David.

**Q121 Mr Chaytor:** That has pre-empted my next question, which was about the difference between gifted and talented. Jon, you are the first person in the room this afternoon to give a definition. The concept of gifted means exceptionally conceptually able, but the concept of talented could apply to any activity.

**Jon Coles:** Yes, that is correct. So gifted is about essentially academically able. You could argue about the semantics of that.

**Q122 Mr Chaytor:** My constituency primary schools have the lowest proportion of children defined as gifted and talented anywhere in the country at 2.2%. The highest is 15%. So what does that say about the understanding that schools have of the concept of gifted and talented, or the way in which the Department has advised schools as to how they should designate gifted and talented? Would you accept, Minister, that there is some confusion here that needs to be resolved?

**Ms Johnson:** I am very happy to go back to the Department and ask it to look at that. Like yours, my constituency is not a terribly—how can I put this? It has disadvantage, and it strikes me that if disadvantaged communities are not having their gifted and talented pupils recognised, we need particularly to look at that. I am struck by what you say.

**Q123 Chairman:** Isn't it a problem with Jon? All my hackles were raised by his comment about maths. Some years ago, we looked at admissions policy. The dead easiest thing—the one easiest thing in the world to do—is to tell if a kid is good at maths. The Cambridge and Oxford colleges and Imperial College all tell us, “You give a mathematician a child with a pencil and a piece of paper, and they can tell you that.” That is why more gifted kids from working-class backgrounds get into the leading maths departments in our country. All the smarm and gloss and everything else that you can give to a child cannot mask the fact that they are or are not good at maths. I am worried about the more difficult areas that we are looking at, rather than the easy one.

**Jon Coles:** This is really important. It is one of the reasons why it is so important that we say to every school, “Identify 5 to 10% of gifted and talented.” That is an issue that we have wanted to tackle. Some schools that are reluctant to identify gifted and talented have tended to be either the non-selective in the selective areas or those serving particularly deprived communities. That is one important thing. Within that, we have produced guidance and advice to schools about how they make sure that they do not disproportionately select the middle class and those with, as you said, gloss and so on.

**Q124 Chairman:** You got rid of the longitudinal study. If you had kept that, Wayne Rooney might have been discovered on it.

**Jon Coles:** I need to find out about the longitudinal study, Mr Chairman. I think that we are all clear that, whatever it was—I am reliably informed that it was not in the contract that we had with national academy. We need to find out more.<sup>7</sup>

**Q125 Mr Chaytor:** Let's go back to the definition, then. If the definition is now much wider than I think anybody in the Committee or even the room assumed until your answer to the question, this must have implications for what you described earlier as the central strand of the policy, which was widening access to the most selective universities. If a significant proportion of the funds is now available for enhancing sporting talent, musical talent or talent in the visual or performing arts, there is proportionately less available for getting youngsters from poorer families who are good at physics, maths, chemistry and languages into the most selective universities.

**Jon Coles:** The aim of that particular strand is focused on the gifted; in other words, on the academically able. That is what the money is for, and it is focused on gifted children from deprived backgrounds.

**Q126 Mr Chaytor:** Why are we so confused about this? Why was none of this in the briefing material? Is it all written down somewhere? Do schools know about it, or are your Ministers just making it up as they go along?

**Chairman:** No, the man at DCSF who was in charge of this has moved to “Closing the gap”, apparently.

**Jon Coles:** I don't recognise that.

**Q127 Chairman:** It really is hard to identify who is in charge in the Department, Jon. Do you want to give us a name?

**Jon Coles:** The work of gifted and talented is part of a division within the Department called “Narrowing the gap”. The divisional managers or deputy directors in the Department responsible for that division are Nick Baxter and Katie Farrington—it is a job share between them. They are the senior civil service job share responsible for that work.

**Q128 Mr Chaytor:** Is there somewhere a clear description of the definitions that you have given us, and a clear description of the allocation of the budget and the weighting for the different kinds of gifted and talented?

**Jon Coles:** There is, and we will make sure that you have it.

**Q129 Chairman:** Is it the same as it was 10 years ago, or does it change all the time?

**Jon Coles:** I believe I am right in saying that the definitions of gifted and talented are unchanged over that period.

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<sup>7</sup> See Ev 36

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**Q130 Chairman:** Geraldine, you would know about that because you got the successor contract. You would have looked at what it meant, wouldn't you? You bid for the contract?

**Dr Hutchinson:** We did.

**Q131 Chairman:** Was it the same as the Warwick lot had?

**Dr Hutchinson:** We did take the NAGTY definition of gifted and talented, but obviously the focus of our contract was to extend the vision for talented within the learner academy.

**Q132 Chairman:** Was it to extend it or broaden it?

**Dr Hutchinson:** Well, extend it in terms of the age range that we were focusing our activities on.

**Q133 Chairman:** What about the concept? Does it extend to dance or sport?

**Dr Hutchinson:** It does.

**Chairman:** It has the whole bunch in it. John, do you agree with that?

**Professor Stannard:** Yes. The definition's on the website—

**Q134 Chairman:** But John, why is it—you're the Tsar and the top man—when we go to our schools, they say, "It's exclusive; it's about science and maths." They never say, "It's about finding the next sports person, dancer or whatever." Why is there this total misconception about what the definition of the Department is?

**Professor Stannard:** I think there are implementation problems with this. The direction of travel has taken time, but has become clear now. It's got to be mainstreamed in schools. There is a bit of déjà vu about that, as you said. I agree with that. There is evidence in the system that the majority—increasing numbers—of schools are aware of what these requirements are. And the Ofsted report underlined this. The schools were saying to Ofsted that they wanted clearer messages from the Department about matters of definition, proportions of students to be identified and what was expected of schools and so on. All of that is to be found in the Department, but I don't think it is getting its way through the system. The reasons for that have to do with a much more pervasive emphasis on the whole "Narrowing the gap" agenda.

**Q135 Chairman:** Sounds like they're falling down the gap, let alone narrowing the gap.

**Professor Stannard:** It is perceived, I think, in schools and at local authority level—I spend a lot of my time talking to local authorities and schools—to be a low priority. Gifted and talented is not seen as something that is a high priority for schools. I was talking to a director of children's services last week. I said, "I want to come and talk to you about gifted and talented, by the way," and she said, "Oh well, that's not really on my agenda at the moment. I've got so many other things to deal with." What has happened over the past decade or so is that very large proportions of local authority and school budgets

have gone to sustaining children at threshold targets, and moving children across threshold targets. We are now moving to a position where we want to say that this must be mainstreamed in schools. If it's going to be mainstreamed in schools, we've got to see it much more in the centre of schools' attention. That means it needs more accountability around it; it needs Ofsted to be stronger; it needs a clearer framework of requirements from the Department to come straight down to schools, so they are not in any doubt about it; and it needs some more guidance on the funding and how that should be allocated in schools. At the moment, that remains to be done.

**Q136 Mr Chaytor:** A question to John about the point at which it is best to identify children.

**Professor Stannard:** Seven. In the early years, it is tricky because children develop—

**Q137 Chairman:** Jon, you look highly amused by that. What's wrong?

**Jon Coles:** I just enjoyed the definiteness.

**Professor Stannard:** Between seven and 11, primary schools should be identifying children. They should keep a clear register that should be accountable and open to the public, in terms of parental engagement with it and so on. But it might be quite fluid. As children begin the transition towards secondary school, probably about 10 years old, primary schools should form a clear view about whether these children really have potential. They should make sure that is properly transacted with and transmitted to the secondary school. There should be some exchange about the progress of those children across that transition phase, which we all know is critical.

**Q138 Mr Chaytor:** Will the SATs result not achieve that objective by themselves?

**Professor Stannard:** No, not necessarily. If you look at the data, there's no cause for complacency here. We know well that many children—thousands, in fact—will get a Level 3 at Key Stage 1 and still only get a Level 4 at Key Stage 2. Other progression data will give us a similar story. It is a question, of making sure that primary schools are properly on the case with this. Primary schools are weaker than secondary schools, in relation to G&T, if you look at the national picture. Fewer primary schools identify fewer children than in secondaries. We have to get on the case with primary schools. Primary schools have some different problems, including capacity challenges in dealing with very able children, which secondary schools sometimes have, but not to the same extent. How primary schools develop and incorporate support and bring more expertise into the curriculum, is all part of this picture.

**Chairman:** We're winding up. Last one.

**Q139 Mr Chaytor:** Just a last question to Geraldine. Why did a former Minister—not our colleague the present Minister—feel it necessary to write to schools telling them to distribute the packs that you

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were sending out under the academy? Why weren't head teachers distributing the packs that you were sending out?

**Dr Hutchinson:** We mailed hard copies of packs. We also e-mailed every school with a link to the documents that were in the packs. There was a postal strike at the time that the packs were sent out, but also there's a lot of flux and change in every school, so when the link is e-mailed to a school to a named e-mail contact many of those bounce back because either the teachers have moved onto a new role or they have moved schools. We would then have to go back to that school and say, "Can you identify and make sure that the right person gets this information?" So at times there seems to be a blockage in the system in respect of the right person getting hold of the information.

**Q140 Mr Chaytor:** This is the postal strike and turnover among teachers, not recalcitrance of head teachers being unwilling to distribute the packs?

**Dr Hutchinson:** I'm not aware of any head teachers being unwilling to distribute packs. It's not something in any of the feedback that came back to us. We know what we sent out. We know that we sent the e-mail links. If links bounced back, we could investigate those and chase them and have them sent again.

**Q141 Chairman:** Jon Coles is being polite. He's all ideological. Does that mean the NUT, Jon?

**Jon Coles:** I wouldn't like to give a view about their union affiliation. I wouldn't know.

**Q142 Chairman:** But seriously, Minister, has winning over the unions been one of the problems?

**Ms Johnson:** Individual teachers might have strong views about gifted and talented, but it has certainly not been raised as an issue with me.

**Q143 Chairman:** If it's now going to be mainly focused on children from more deprived backgrounds, will that just encourage people with more means to look to the private sector if they've got a gifted and talented youngster?

**Jon Coles:** I want to clarify this point. This is really important, because the main thrust of gifted and talented policy is not merely on the most deprived, but across the board. There is £1 billion of money that has gone in—

**Chairman:** It's only the extra bit of money—

**Jon Coles:** It's just a small extra piece of money that is focused on making sure that children who couldn't otherwise afford it get a range of opportunities that those who can afford it take for granted.

**Q144 Chairman:** So the new model army for gifted and talented includes all the talents.

**Jon Coles:** It does.

**Chairman:** We look forward to communicating with you further. Minister, you've been stoic, given your cold. Thank you to all of you for the evidence you've given today. Those of you who would like to continue communicating with the Committee, which I think means these two over on the right—you have to—please be in touch with us to ensure that this short look at gifted and talented is as good as it can be. Thank you, team.

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### Memorandum submitted by CfBT Education Trust

#### INTRODUCTION

As an experienced education service provider to governments worldwide CfBT understands the political environments in which national programmes develop and change. We also understand the practical implications of these changes and provide flexible design and delivery mechanisms to meet the needs of our clients.

In the case of the YG&T programme we are acutely aware of the tension between the competing claims of excellence for some and equity for all. In designing and delivering the YG&T programme for the DCSF we have sought to increase access (City GATES) and provide challenge and stretch (Learner Academy).

The programme has engaged with almost 340,000 G&T learners over three years. In addition we have designed and developed a programme of support for City Challenge schools and learners with the particular focus of supporting learners' progression to good universities. To date 3,042 attendees have benefited from this programme.

We are disappointed that we shall no longer be working with the DCSF in the direct delivery of the Government's G&T policy but we believe that the successful legacy of our YG&T programme can be built upon for future learners.

CfBT drew on its own empirical research and broad delivery experience in designing and delivering the YG&T programme. We shall continue to build upon and develop this far-reaching evidence for the benefit of all learners.

This document details CfBT's design and delivery of the YG&T programme and its successes which I hope the Committee finds useful in its examination of the programme.

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PROGRAMME TIMELINE

This timeline shows major events and activities in the YG&T programme from its inception with CfBT to closure in 2010.

2006

Dec 06 Bid for NPGATE contract

2007

Mar 07 Contract awarded

April 07 Management of NPGATE programme commences

May 07 Expressions of interest and tendering for suppliers to the new Learner Academy

May to Aug 07 Transition from NAGTY to YG&T. Pilot planned for CfBT-designed credits scheme

Aug 07 Soft launch of YG&T at World Conference for Gifted & Talented Education (Warwick University)

Sep 07 YG&T website launched

Oct 07 Welcome letter to all former NAGTY members. DCSF concludes credit scheme cannot go ahead

Nov 07 Catalogue of “out-of-classroom” provision available on website  
Appointment of National Champion for G&T—John Stannard  
Strategic Thinking Forum established

Dec 07 CfBT asked to design City GATES Programme working with City Challenge areas Greater Manchester, London and the Black Country

2008

Jan 08 CfBT asked to design a National Register and Online Analysis Tool

Apr 08 Schools-led membership launched—validation of membership by teaching staff  
City GATES programme initiated

May 08 Major communications campaign—information pack to heads of all maintained schools, stock of programme membership packs to all LA G&T leads

Jun 08 National Register consultations with teacher focus groups and LAs

Jul 08 City GATES pilot commences

YG&T information pack to heads of Independent schools

Aug 08 City GATES programme launched in London & Greater Manchester

CfBT recruits full-time Regional Coordinators for each of the City Gates areas

Sep 08 YG&T magazines for learners launched

Oct 08 City GATES programme launched in the Black Country

Launch of YG&T competition for G&T lead teachers

2009

Jan 09 Eco Builder online learning tool for KS3 launched  
YG&T promoted at BETT, England’s largest education technology show  
City GATES networking events for G&T leads held in the Black Country and Greater Manchester

Feb 09 National Register launched  
YG&T website refreshed with new Primary and Secondary pages

Mar 09 Funding for second round of commissioning withdrawn

Jun 09 Professional team given notice of redundancy

May 09 City GATES Needs Analysis Tool improved

Jun 09 CfBT given notice of YG&T contract termination  
YG&T Online Study Groups and Discussion Forums closed  
John Stannard speech about the “New Direction” at London Regional Partnership conference  
City GATES networking event for G&T leads held in London  
City GATES programme DVD launched

Jul 09 Decision to discontinue YG&T magazines

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Sep 09	National Register Online Analysis Tool launched City GATES Progression Academy packs sent to schools City GATES newsletter “Make your Mark” launched City GATES Parents’ Booklet launched YG&T transition programme began
Dec 09	CfBT made aware that City Gates and Progression Academies will cease 31 March 2010
<i>2010</i>	
Jan 10	YG&T consultation process for programme closure began Notice of programme closure posted to YG&T website
Feb 10	Website closed 12 Feb <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Online Needs Analysis Tool no longer available</li> <li>— National Register no longer available</li> <li>— Online booking for Progression Academies no longer available</li> </ul>
Mar 10	Last Progression Academy takes place on 26 March Helpline closes 29 March YG&T Programme closes 31 March

#### CORE PROGRAMME

CfBT Education Trust was contracted by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to design and deliver the Young, Gifted and Talented (YG&T) programme, formerly referred to as the National Programme for Gifted and Talented education (NPGATE), in 2007.

The Government’s procurement of its gifted and talented provision came at the end of the University of Warwick’s contract to deliver the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY).

The new YG&T programme was very different to that previously delivered through NAGTY and aimed to provide opportunities for those children and young people aged 4–19 identified as gifted and talented in order to deepen and develop their knowledge, understanding and skills in the areas in which they excel and support them in reaching the limits of their potential.

The YG&T programme consisted of two particular strands:

- A Core Programme based on an interactive website, the Learner Academy. G&T pupils would be included on a National Register. They would each have a modest “credit” to spend on services.<sup>1</sup>
- Regional Partnerships and Excellence Hubs, incorporating groups of HE institutions.

#### LEARNER ACADEMY

The central element of the core programme delivery was the Learner Academy the “virtual academy”—an online resource and access point for workshops and courses for learners, teachers and providers delivering a programme of G&T accredited activities designed to aid progression and encourage self-motivation.

The Ministerial Task Force set CfBT a target of recruiting 250,000 members to the Learner Academy. And, despite active marketing to recruit members being stopped in September 2009 membership of the Learner Academy stands at 229,854 learners. An additional 107,000 former NAGTY members also have been transferred to the Academy.

Since November 2008 there have been more than 1.9 million visitors to the Learner Academy. Almost 0.5 million of these have been accessing secondary resources and a further 300,000 accessing primary resources. The most popular resources have been the secondary and primary home pages, discussion forums and the Classroom and Institutional Quality Standards tools.

Through the Learner Academy there were:

- 15 online study groups.
- 10 moderated discussion forums.
- 15 faculty cafés.

Feedback through the forums and faculty cafés shows that both were highly regarded by learners as places to meet and share ideas with other like-minded young people. These online facilities were discontinued in June 2009.

Access to opportunities is also available through:

- 82 accredited providers covering all curriculum subjects, both academic and vocational, including arts and sports delivered on a local, regional and national basis.
  - 431 events in 2009 with 29,588 places made available by these providers for learners.
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<sup>1</sup> This element of the programme was later replaced by City GATES.

From September 2008 a termly primary and secondary magazine were produced for learners available through the Learner Academy and in hard copy on request. These magazines stopped publication at the end of the summer term 2009.

#### REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

There are 10 Regional Partnerships, one in each of the nine government regions and one to cover rural areas. They are a consortium of local authorities who receive funding from the YG&T programme in order to create provision at a local and regional level.

For example:

- The North East Regional Partnership offered 10 events for 300 Year 1–6 pupils in seven different venues.
- West Midlands continue to develop their highly successful Publishing House Me website for learners to showcase and critique each other's work.

#### YG&T HELPLINE

The YG&T Helpline provided an informed point of contact for all stakeholders (learners, parents, teachers, providers, etc) to feedback and ask questions. Since September 2007 there have been more than 44,000 contacts with the Helpline by telephone and email.

#### PARTNERSHIP SUPPORT

The YG&T programme also funded and facilitated a wide number of partnerships supporting gifted and talented learners including:

- Teach First (Higher Education Access Programme—HEAPS).
- National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) contributed to the development of the parental booklet for City GATES and supported parent enquiries through the YG&T website.
- National Association for Able Children in Education (NACE)—developed the City GATES Needs Analysis Tool.
- Centre for Urban Education (CUE), Manchester Metropolitan University—established and managed a series of “Focus” groups and “Action Research” teams.
- Crelos—providing tutors and tutor training for Progression Academies.
- Social Mobility Foundation (SMF)—delivering pre-internship inductions, internships and mentoring initially in law, to 50 learners (starting November 2007) initially in London and now nationally.
- University of Wolverhampton—to provide a Regional Coordinator for City GATES in the Black Country.

#### CITY GATES

When the DCSF decided that the national credit scheme could not go ahead, an attempt was made to retain the concept of an individual credit scheme for a more targeted and limited group. CfBT designed City GATES which became part of the wider City Challenge Programme focused on breaking the cycle of disadvantage and educational underachievement in three areas: London, the Black Country and Manchester.

City GATES began in September 2008 and aims to:

- Increase aspirations amongst G&T learners aged 14–19 (Yrs 10–13) in the three areas.
- Increase progression to higher education (particularly to the most competitive universities and courses).
- Narrow the attainment gap for students from challenging backgrounds.
- Ensure every educational institution has a Higher Education partner.

The cornerstone of the City GATES programme is the provision of a £400 scholarship for each pupil identified as G&T from a disadvantaged background (eligible for Free School Meals). CfBT was set a target of reaching 1,500 learners and during 2009–10 £630,800 was given in scholarships which equates to 1,577 learners in 322 schools.

These scholarships have been spent on:

- Progression Academy workshops.
- University access programmes.
- Materials, books and local activities.

- Mentoring, coaching and subject specific tuition.
- Travel and accommodation expenses.

Schools and learners have commented that scholarships have made a substantial difference to quality of lives, aspirations and motivation.

To date, City GATES has worked with 47 local authorities in total: 33 in London, four in the Black Country and 10 in Greater Manchester.

#### ONLINE NEEDS ANALYSIS TOOL

The Online Needs Analysis Tool is available through the Learner Academy for all G&T learners to identify their strengths and weaknesses and areas for development to enable them to apply for university. 4,000 learners have used the tool since September 2008. Access to the Online Needs Analysis Tool ceased on 12 February 2010.

#### PROGRESSION ACADEMIES

Progression Academies provide out of school provision providing intense focused tutoring and mentoring in a range of skills including motivation, critical thinking, independent learning, communication and social skills to support progression to university. The first one ran in January 2009 and to date 195 workshops, based on a series of 10 modules, with 3,042 learners attending and 167 schools engaged, have been delivered. Some modules will not be delivered as they were scheduled for summer 2010 and Progression Academies will stop in March 2010.

As a result of attending Progression Academies:

- 97% of learners feel more motivated.
- 97% of learners feel more ambitious.
- 94% of learners feel more inclined to try for a place at university.

#### PARTNERSHIPS

City GATES has established and embedded links with universities in each of the Challenge areas through Regional Coordinators who focus on embedding City GATES in schools, and direct G&T leads to bespoke provision in their area. Regional Coordinators are able to respond to individual needs. CfBT employed four Regional Coordinators.

It is too early for a summative evaluation of City GATES however evidence and feedback suggests that the programme is having a significant impact.

#### EXCELLENCE HUBS

The YG&T programme funds nine Excellence Hubs (in the nine government regions) which are partnerships of 36 universities who are working with local authorities and schools across their regions. They deliver resources and support for G&T learners in the form of out-of-school master-classes, residential summer schools, workshops and university visits aimed to challenge and inspire G&T learners.

In 2009–10 the Excellence Hubs will deliver services, events and mentoring to approximately 43,500 G&T learners in primary, secondary and further education.

Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>½ day workshop on quantum mechanics</li> <li>Science workshop and lab activity</li> <li>1 day Shakespeare workshop</li> </ul>
Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fibonacci fun day</li> <li>1 day art masterclass</li> <li>6 day summer school for five subjects</li> </ul>
FE—6th Form Y12 & 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 day art and design summer school</li> <li>5 day science summer school</li> <li>Spectroscopy and synthesis</li> <li>Polymer chemistry and nanotechnology</li> </ul>

Anecdotal evidence indicates that in some areas the Excellence Hubs have been highly successful:

- Some universities are receiving up to 10% of applications from local young people.
- Significantly enhanced relationships between schools and universities.
- Universities have become more responsive to schools' needs, doubling opportunities in the last three years.

- Schools and local authorities have welcomed targets towards children in care and receiving free school meals.
- Teachers are clear that universities can enhance support for G&T pupils, by exposing them to challenging academic environments and new ideas.
- Research shows the significant contribution universities can make to nurturing bright pupils particularly those facing adversity.

#### NATIONAL REGISTER

The National Register was developed as part of the YG&T core programme and is a database of information about schools and learners identified as being G&T within any given local authority.

As part of the National Register an online analysis tool was developed, which enables local authorities to make year-on-year comparisons and analyses by phase, gender, ethnicity and FSM which informs G&T provision planning. The National Register is regularly used by schools and local authorities for reporting, planning and monitoring the G&T cohort. In 2009 more than 12,000 visitors used the facility.

*February 2010*

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#### **Letter to the Chairman from Diana R Johnson MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools, Department for Children, Schools and Families**

On 1 February, when Jon Coles and I gave evidence to the Committee, we promised to write to you about the longitudinal study referred to by Professor Deborah Eyre. I would like to apologise that neither I nor my officials were able to answer your questions about that research.

Following further investigation my officials have established that the longitudinal study that Professor Eyre referred to when giving evidence was as a series of studies and surveys of students enrolled in the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY)—both quantitative and qualitative—which were undertaken on a regular basis and the data triangulated to enable assessment of NAGTY. The outcomes were disseminated in occasional papers, academic journal articles, and academic and professional conferences.

I attach one of NAGTY's occasional papers which contributed to the wider study.<sup>2</sup> As you will see the study was survey based and comprised a random sample of enrolled members of NAGTY. From the information gathered it is clear that NAGTY did not conduct a single longitudinal study that involved tracking the same students over a period of time.

As you know, in 2007 the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth ended and the Department set up a new Learner Academy, run by CfBT. This was designed to provide a virtual web-based academy and to reach a much wider G&T community including young people in primary schools. The Department decided to focus the activity of the Learner Academy on the individual learners themselves, rather than wider research into G&T issues and therefore, when drawing up the contract for the Learner Academy, DCSF colleagues did not include a research dimension. As part of this, and given that the purpose of NAGTY's studies of learners was to trace the impact of the Student Academy which was closing in 2007, the Department did not ask CfBT to continue with the studies into participants in the NAGTY programme. The Department has however asked ACL to evaluate the impact of the CfBT Learner Academy

My officials have contacted CfBT who have confirmed that they did receive the final reports and occasional papers produced by NAGTY, which they subsequently published on the YG&T website. They cannot trace having received any raw data in relation to NAGTY's research.

My officials are also monitoring the progression of Gifted and Talented learners though the information they gather from schools via the school census. The new Ofsted framework also refers specifically to the need to evaluate how well gifted and talented pupils progress in relation to their starting point.

As the Committee are aware, and as Jon mentioned when he gave evidence, the Department funded ACL Consulting to conduct an independent evaluation of NAGTY in October 2006. I attach a copy of the evaluation report.<sup>3</sup> It concluded (page 5) that:

“NAGTY did become a UK centre for international expertise on gifted and talented education—we do not have sufficient evidence to say that it became the centre.

The evidence does not in our view suggest that NAGTY established itself as the key point of reference for the English gifted and talented community. NAGTY assembled an effective research team which, for those in the know, produced some valuable work. The problems were that: relatively few people were “in the know”; the research team was open to criticism for being too close to NAGTY; and that some of the research it conducted did not appear to be directed at the “big issues” (at least as perceived by others) in gifted and talented education.”

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<sup>2</sup> Not printed.

<sup>3</sup> Not printed.

Jon and I also agreed to confirm the targeted support funding allocations. As Jon explained when he gave evidence, schools will be receiving £250 funding for each of their gifted learners who are eligible for free school meals (FSM) or classified as looked after children. Using the latest school census data available, my officials will determine the number of FSM eligible gifted learners in Year 10. It is anticipated that schools will receive the funding, including supporting guidance, for each of those pupils through the School Standards Fund in May 2010.

Finally, Jon and I offered the Committee a description of the G&T identification criteria, a copy of which my policy colleagues sent to your Clerk, Kenneth Fox, on 5 February 2010.<sup>4</sup>

*March 2010*

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<sup>4</sup> Not printed.

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