



Local accountability in the National Education Service

Early Years, Education and Skills Policy Commission



Thank you for taking part in the Labour Party's 2019 National Policy Forum Consultation, the Party's process for getting input from our members, supporters and stakeholders on how we shape our policies.

This booklet is one of eight policy documents published by the Labour Party as part of our consultation this year.

Each document contains sets of questions for you to answer. You do not need to answer every question, nor is there any specific way to answer them. We suggest picking the questions most important to you and using them as a guide to write a few lines or paragraphs on what you think about the issues in this area.

At the end of the document you can find a guide on how to send in your ideas to us and other ways to get involved in the consultation.

There are seven other documents that might interest you covering different areas of the Party's policies, you can find them in the consultation pack or online. If you have an idea or issue you would like to talk about that is not covered in this year's consultation, you can submit these to us too via www.policyforum.labour.org.uk

Whether you're a Labour Party member or not, we want to hear your ideas on how the next Labour government should tackle the challenges our country faces, and build a more equal Britain for the many, not the few.

Want to know more about how Labour makes policy?

You can learn more about how Labour makes policy, further details about the 2019 Consultation and find policy events in your area on our website www.policyforum.labour.org.uk

ACCESSIBLE MATERIALS

The Labour Party is an inclusive member-based organisation that prides itself on being accessible to all who share its values. If you would like an accessible version of these documents please email us at policydevelopment@labour.org.uk to discuss how we can best accommodate your requirements.

Local accountability in the National Education Service

Since 2010 the education of our citizens has been treated as a commodity, something which can be bought and sold.

From the tripling of tuition fees in higher education to the acceleration of the academies programme, the Tories have adopted a market-based approach to education and consequently the system has become increasingly fragmented, opaque, and individualistic.

Over the past eight years there has been an increase in the number of education institutions that are no longer rooted in their local communities, with the needs of the private sector prioritised instead. As a result local, democratic accountability has been eroded. Every day across the country parents, learners, and local communities are shut out of decisions that affect them, while private companies are bolstered to drive educational change.

This has perhaps been most visible in the school system, but the voice of the local community is noticeably absent across other parts of the education system as well.

The decimation of Sure Start centres and maintained nurseries, combined with an increase in private, voluntary and independent nurseries (PVIs), means that local and parental voices are crucially missing from early years education. In further education the Government consistently favours the opinion of employers over the local community, learners, or parents.

This doesn't just have a negative impact on local communities and learners, it's bad for wider education outcomes, and for society too.

We are inviting people across the country to join us in developing proposals for a new local, democratic accountability system for the National Education Service, to ensure that from cradle to grave, every stage and every part of the education system reflects the needs of the many, not the few.

Background to the consultation

At Labour Party Conference 2018, the Shadow Secretary of State for Education, Angela Rayner MP, set out Labour's intention to end the academies and free schools programme and bring all publicly funded schools back into the mainstream public sector, ensuring they are democratically accountable to the communities that they serve.

This announcement followed the work of the Early Years, Education and Skills Policy Commission, who consulted on the principles that will underpin the National Education Service (NES) in years to come.

The principles we developed with members last year set out our vision for the National Education Service. Our task is to now further develop the policies that will help us make it a reality.

This consultation is specifically focused on principles 6 and 7 of the National Education Service charter and seeks to build on the policy passed by Labour's Annual Conference.

In 2018 conference agreed that 'the main task in education for a Labour government will be to recreate a coherent, planned and appropriately funded national public system which is accountable to its various stakeholders and communities.'

"6. As education is a public good, ensuring that all citizens receive a high quality education is a collective endeavour. **The National Education Service will promote collaboration and cooperation between learners, the education workforce, parents and carers, trade unions, governing bodies, civic society, and employers.** It will be structured to encourage and enhance cooperation amongst all parts of the education system and across different boundaries and sector"

"7. **Staff, learners, parents and carers, local communities and the public will be collectively responsible for the National Education Service and the education institutions within it.** They will be empowered, via appropriate democratic means, to influence change where it is needed and ensure that the education system meets their needs. The appropriate democratic authority will set, monitor and allocate resources, ensuring that they meet the rights, roles, and responsibilities of individuals and institutions."

Creating a culture of collective responsibility in education

The Conservatives' market-based approach has meant that education in England is now largely seen through the lens of individual gain; an individual pursuit with purely economic returns.

But we know that the benefits of education go beyond its impact on the earning potential of individuals. Education is a public good; we all benefit from people receiving a high quality education in the form of happier, healthier, more socially and economically active citizens.

The challenge we face is to embed this view of education throughout the institutions of the NES.

Viewing education as a public good is not only important for learners and wider society. It's also necessary in creating an inclusive and equitable high quality education system.

To achieve the education system we want, we need the education of our citizens to be seen as a collective endeavour, something in which we all have a role to play. We need individuals, local communities, and society to be collectively responsible for the National Education Service.

Reinstating local democratic accountability

The Government's market-based approach to education has also seen the erosion of local democratic accountability, at every stage of the education system.

It's clear this has to change. With the National Education Service, local communities will be empowered to influence change where it is needed and guarantee that the education system meets their needs.

This will not only ensure that the education system is responsive and supportive of the needs of the local community. It will also help us achieve the wider aims of the National Education Service.

The Conservatives have created a culture of distrust in education. But, when people no longer trust in the system, education reform is likely to be slow and superficial. By reinstating local democratic accountability, and involving local stakeholders in the creation of shared education aims trust can be built.

Ensuring that any local accountability system is reciprocal

Accountability under the Conservatives is a top-down, often punitive system that over-allocates blame to education professionals and education institutions.

We want accountability under the National Education Service to be different.

While education institutions need to be accountable to the system, to students, and to communities, we believe that at the same time parents, citizens, and local communities ought to be accountable to their education institutions.

Moreover, politicians and education policymakers ought to be accountable to schools and their communities.

At a local level, this means building relationships and trust between education institutions and the various communities. It means creating an environment in which all actors recognise their obligations and commitments to each other and to learners, in the state and in communities.

Looking forwards, not back

In our haste to rectify the damage the Conservatives are doing to our education system, it could be tempting to simply return to what has been done in the past. But this would be a wasted opportunity.

The National Education Service is unlike anything else in the history of education policy in England and its development offers us the opportunity to consider radical, new ways of thinking about education.

Questions to answer

1. How can we create a culture in which education is accepted and valued as a social good from which we all benefit and to which we all contribute?

- a. What policies should be introduced under the National Education Service to support this?
- b. What information and data should a Labour government publish or stop publishing?
- c. What changes can be made and implemented at a local level?

2a. What can the following groups contribute towards making the National Education Service accountable, inclusive and democratic and relevant to individual, local and national needs? Are any voices missing?

- Parents and carers
- Staff and Trade Unions
- Learners
- Local Communities
- Employers
- Early years providers
- Schools
- Further Education Providers
- Adult Education Providers
- Universities
- Children's Services

2b. What should these groups expect from each other, as part of an accountability system based on the principles of inclusivity, dialogue and reciprocity?

2c. What evidence should institutions provide to demonstrate expectations are being met?

3. What structures, channels, and mechanisms would need to be put in place at a local, regional and national level to support a high quality, accountable NES?

4a. Should there be a single democratically accountable structure for the NES that deals with each part of the system and its institutions at local and national level?

4b. If so, what could this look like? What would it need to consider to ensure education institutions retain appropriate levels of autonomy and independence?

4c. If not, what should local, democratic accountability look like for the following education institutions? What resources should it set, monitor and allocate?

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| i. Early years providers | iii. Further Education Providers |
| ii. Schools | iv. Universities |

5. What impact could devolution have on a local accountability structure?

6. What should be the role of the following in a local democratic accountability?

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| i. Local authorities | iv. Local Enterprise Partnerships |
| ii. Combined authorities | v. Regional School Commissioners |
| iii. Metro mayors | |

Thank you for taking the time to read our consultation document.

We want to harness the views, experience and expertise of our members, stakeholders and the wider public. If you would like to respond to any of the issues in this document, there are a number of ways you can get involved:

- 1. Online:** The best and easiest way to send in your ideas and join the discussion is via our online home of policy making:
www.policyforum.labour.org.uk/consultation2019
- 2. By post:** If you have written down your ideas, you can post these to us at:
The Labour Party,
Policy Unit,
Southside,
105 Victoria Street,
London, SW1E 6QT
- 3. At your local party:** You may want to discuss your ideas with other members of your CLP or local branch. You can suggest to your CLP Secretary that a policy discussion is held at a future meeting.
- 4. Regional Policy Forums:** Look out for events hosted by your regional office, local parties and National Policy Forum Representatives.

You can find out more about the 2019 consultation, upcoming events and more details on how Labour makes its policy at

www.policyforum.labour.org.uk

Follow us on Twitter for regular updates during the consultation

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Please send your ideas before the consultation period ends, it runs until Sunday 30 June 2019.