The Challenge for Greater Manchester

Education and Skills in the Era of Devolution

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About the author

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Ruth researches and writes about poverty and inequality in the UK, with a particular focus on education and on spatial inequalities. In education, she is best known for her research on the ways in which context makes a difference to school processes and practices, and on the effect of education policies over the last two decades on educational inequalities.

She currently heads the Inclusive Growth Analysis Unit (IGAU) which is a partnership between the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the University of Manchester. IGAU aims to make sure that poverty reduction is central to decisions and debates about economic growth in Greater Manchester and other UK cities, and to help develop research-led solutions. More details can be found at www.manchester.ac.uk/inclusivegrowth

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Introduction

This report is written as Greater Manchester moves into a new era of city-region governance with the election of its first metro mayor and as it formulates its strategy for the city through to 2040, with a core theme of inclusive economic growth.

> *By 2040 Greater Manchester will be one of the world's leading city regions, reaping the benefits of sustainable and inclusive growth across a thriving Northern economy. It will be ever more self reliant, connected, dynamic, inclusive, digitally-driven, productive, innovative and creative. A destination of choice to live, work, invest and visit, GM will be known for the high levels of happiness and quality of life our people enjoy. No one will be held back, and no one will be left behind: all will be able to contribute to and benefit fully from the continued success of Greater Manchester.*
>
> (Draft Greater Manchester Strategy, February 2017 p.9)[1]

The centrality of education and skills to this vision is self-evident. Thus it is a source widespread frustration that, while other crucial aspects of urban life can now be planned at a city-region level, the organisation of education and training remains fragmented. Myriad actors and stakeholders are involved, and very few powers are held by the Combined Authority or any GM-wide partnership.

This report starts from the position that all aspects of education and training from age 0 to adulthood should be seen as part of the same system, contributing to GM's social and economic objectives, and that devolution and particularly the election of a Mayor provides an opportunity to bring that strategic coherence.

It therefore aims to do two things:

- To set out an overview of that whole system and some of the issues and challenges it faces, since this holistic view is rarely presented[2].
- To make some suggestions about what an education and skills system for GM might look like and some issues that might be prioritised.

[1] https://www.**greatermanchester**-ca.gov.uk/.../14a_gm_**strategy**_refresh

[2] There is GM-wide analysis of parts of the system, skills for example, as well as analysis for particular local authority areas, but it is rare to see the system as a whole, nor understand how its different parts contribute to the educational journeys of Greater Manchester's citizens from the early years of life through school, college and/or university and into the labour market.

In calling the report “the Challenge”, I deliberately invoke the Greater Manchester (schools) Challenge of 2008 to 2011[3] when at least for a short period, one part of the system was enabled by central government to develop a sense of shared purpose and priorities, and to pool expertise across the system. Although this report is not confined to schools, these principles of shared endeavour in pursuit of equity across our city-region lie at the heart of its proposals.

The report is an independent one, produced as part of an ongoing programme of work on inclusive growth. I am not expecting everyone to agree with the suggestions made, much less that they will all be enacted! But I hope that the report will at least prompt some useful debate about how we might progress as a city-region, and what we might be setting out to achieve.

[3] Ainscow, M. (2015) Towards Self Improving School Systems. Abingdon and New York, Routledge. Hutchings et al. (2012) Evaluation of the City Challenge. London DFE-RR215

Chapter 1: A City-region approach? A Cradle-to-Career System?

Summary

- The report is not arguing that all education and training should be brought under the control of the combined authority!
- It argues for a strategic approach that recognises the centrality of learning and skills to city-region social and economic objectives and which recognises connections between phases of education. Collaborative strategic planning is what is proposed, not a GM command and control model.
- The focus is on these bigger issues, not on the immediate policy issues arising under devolution, such as the Adult Education Budget and Apprenticeship Levy, nor discussion of particular additional powers that might be sought from central government. While these are important, the report is concerned with the broader issue of creating a shared understanding of the whole system and some possible responses to the challenges faced.

A Cradle-to-Career System

I start by briefly setting out the rationales for a city-region approach and a cradle to career system, and setting some of the contributions and limitations of this work.

To be absolutely clear, I am not arguing that all delivery of education and training in GM should be brought under the control of the GM Combined Authority! While there are many arguments in favour of a publicly-run education and training system, we are a million miles from that situation currently and in this report I am concerned to make a pragmatic contribution that reflects the current situation. Even in a fully public system, arguments could be made for retaining a local scale of delivery much smaller than the city-region.

The two arguments I am making, though, are as follows:

First, knowledge and skills are integral parts of urban life and our hopes for the places we live in. They enable economic participation, innovation, creativity and productivity, cultural participation and identity, wellbeing, empowerment, social integration and social mobility. We are increasingly coming to think of many of these things as responsibilities of city-regions, with local authorities and other partners working together, so it makes sense also to think of our education and skills system at the city region level. The strongest arguments here are perhaps economic – if GM is a functional

economic area in which we can all participate and benefit, then the education of people in all parts of the conurbation should be of equal concern. There may be local delivery, but there needs to be city-region strategy, and some capacity to plan and direct resources.

Crucially I am not proposing that we see GM as an island. Cities import workers and citizens. While this report is focused on the GM system, educating local children, young people and adults this is only one way in which cities meet their skill needs. Graduate retention, commuting, attractive and affordable housing and neighbourhoods are all important parts of city-region strategy that need to be considered alongside our own education and training offer. And GM's citizens may want to be geographically mobile. Arguments about the wider (non-economic) benefits of learning aside, we should be wary of gearing education and skills systems entirely to the needs of the current or anticipated GM economy. But at the same time, the majority of people do look for local employment and chances to participate in their local communities, and it is quite right that city-regions should be looking ahead to future economic developments and making appropriate local opportunities available through their education and training offers.

So education and training should not be seen purely as transactions negotiated between individual 'consumers' and 'providers'. They should be seen as public goods, vital elements in creating the inclusive and prosperous cities we want to live in. This means they should be part of city-region strategies. Bringing education and training to the local level also enables us to understand how to respond best to local contexts, and share that expertise locally in networks of professionals.

Second, all learning and training should be seen as one whole system. There are multiple reasons for this. One is that all phases contribute to overall city-region goals. Ideally, we need to be able to make strategic choices – for example about the balance of resources and effort going into early education vs adult education, and to understand the knock on effects on budgets from one phase to another. The high proportion of college budgets currently going into GCSE resits is one example. Another reason is that it is the same learners that progress from one phase to the next. A wonderful early years system will have little effect on life chances if learners cannot make progress between the ages of 16 and 18, and it makes no logical sense (although it is imperative in practice) for institutions to be putting 'phase-related' objectives beyond broader social and economic objectives – for instance success in GCSE grades over successful transitions to further education or work. A 'phase-based' system, such as we have now, may enable appropriate specialisation of delivery, but it does not enable a focus on learners and their progression. Of course, a 'phase-based' system is what we have in England, so the structures and funding within which providers work will continue to shape the system. But this is no reason why a city-region like Greater Manchester cannot explore, collaboratively, what it would mean to try and work collectively and strategically across phases, within existing limitations.

Much of the current discussion around devolution, education and skills is currently focused on specific new powers or opportunities, such as how the adult education budget should be spent and how the benefits of the Apprenticeship Levy could be maximised. These are important but they are being considered elsewhere. In this report I am trying to do something different – to take a whole system view and develop a system-wide understanding to help establish a strategic cradle-to-career approach.

Chapter 2: The Greater Manchester Education and Skills System

Summary

- Greater Manchester has a large and complex system of education provision: over 2,200 early years providers, 1000 schools and over 400 further and adult education providers.
- Accountability arrangements are different in each phase. Understandings of the scope and purpose of education are also arguably different.
- The pattern of provision varies a lot by local authority area. For example the majority of secondary schools in Bury are community schools, while there are none in Manchester. Over 70% of 16 year olds in Salford go on to FE colleges, compared with around one quarter in Stockport, where the majority are in sixth form colleges.
- The expansion of the Academies programme has fragmented existing structures for coordination in the school system, which is now 'school-led'. New organisations are now developing to provide school to school support: 76 Multi-Academy Trusts operate in Greater Manchester as well as 42 teaching schools, but there are concerns that not all schools get the support they need.
- There are GM-wide approaches to some aspects of early years and post-16 education and training, and arrangements for the school system are beginning to develop. There is no cross-phase GM coordinating body to develop an education and skills strategy as a whole for the city-region.

Introduction

This chapter briefly describes the 'system' in Greater Manchester, although this is better described as a number of systems for different phases, all of which (the school system particularly) are experiencing substantial review and change under the influence of national education policy. Much of this information may be familiar to professionals working in each phase but by putting it all together I hope to provide a basis for thinking about how a GM-wide and cross-phase strategic approach could be developed and operationalised.

Early Education

The system in early education is one of diverse provision overseen by local authorities, which have a responsibility to secure the provision of education in high quality settings and Ofsted, which inspects quality.

In GM in 2016, there were 2214[4] providers of early education for 3 and 4 year olds. 59% were private and voluntary providers (including childminders). 38% were maintained schools, with most of these being nursery classes in primary schools not separate nursery schools. The remainder were independent or special schools. Private and voluntary providers tend to be smaller, so the proportions of children in the different kinds of provision do not match the numbers of providers. Overall in 2016, 67% of GM funded 3 and 4 year old places were in maintained schools, and 30% in private and voluntary provision. This picture varies by local authority - in Manchester for example the proportion in maintained schools was 77%, compared with 58% in Wigan. 1207 providers offered funded places for 2 year olds[5]. These were overwhelmingly private and voluntary providers, with just 68 being maintained schools (of which 32 were in Bolton).

It is also worth noting that, especially for the first three years of life, the education system tends to be seen as only one part of the system concerned with children's development, alongside health services and parenting support. Education itself is seen more broadly: unlike in later stages of education, assessment by education professionals includes measures of social and emotional development. There is also a more integrated approach with other agencies including holistic assessment, signposting and referral.

Schools

The school system has rather less diversity of provision, although this is changing rapidly, but more complex responsibility structures. There are currently (as at March 2017) 854 mainstream[6] primary schools in Greater Manchester. About half (51%) of these schools are community or voluntary controlled schools (run by the local authority). A further third are voluntary aided (usually faith schools, run by their governing bodies) and 1% run by other Foundations. 111 (13%) are academies and there are 8 primary free schools.

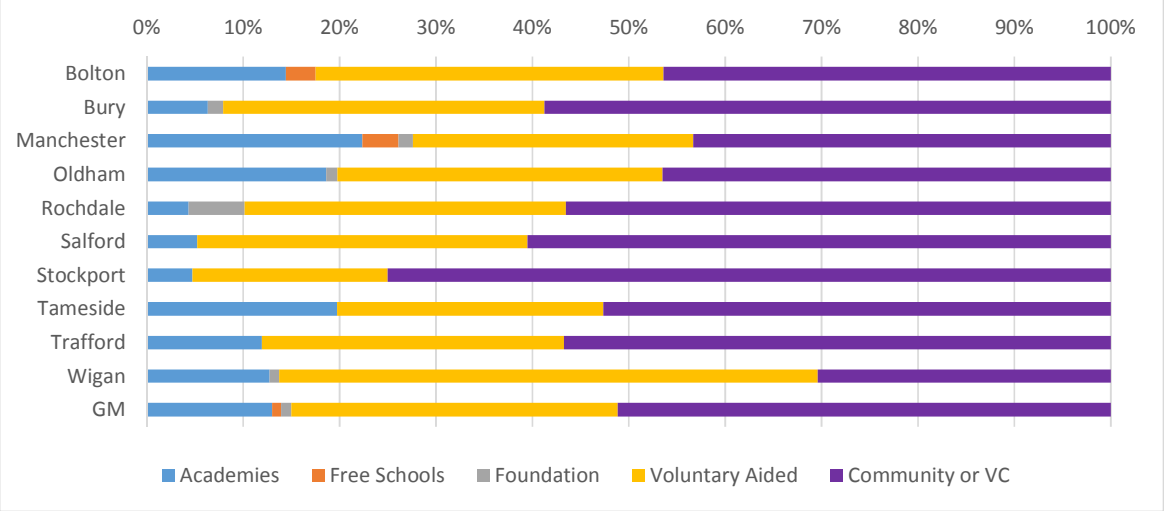
[4] Source: DfE Statistical First Release 23/2016
[5] Many (perhaps all) of these would be the same providers as for 3 and 4 year olds but we cannot identify this in the publicly available data.
[6] The vast majority of children are in 'mainstream' state-funded primary and secondary schools. A minority are educated in special schools or 'alternative provision' and a minority are also in independent schools.

In the mainstream secondary sector[7], there are 163 schools. Just under a quarter of these (24%) are community or VC schools. 45% are Academies with an additional 5% being Free Schools (4 schools), UTCS (4) or Studio Schools (1 school). 19% are Voluntary Aided and 7% Foundation. This is a very different picture of the school system than we would have seen 10 years ago, when the majority of schools were community/VC schools, with a small number of secondary academies introduced in the most challenging areas.

Other types of school are not identified by age of student. Overall there are 90 independent schools in the non-special sector, and 86 special schools, of which 45 are community special schools and the remainder a mixture of independent, Academies and free schools. There are also 16 Pupil Referral Units and 5 alternative provision Academy schools.

This pattern of school provision varies substantially by local authority, as shown in Figure 1 and 2. Contrasts in the secondary phase are particularly striking. Manchester has no community or VC schools, and Trafford and Oldham just one each. By contrast, 9 of Bury's 13 secondary schools are of that type. How LAs have approached Academisation has therefore produced a whole host of different arrangements for ensuring school quality and these are still changing.

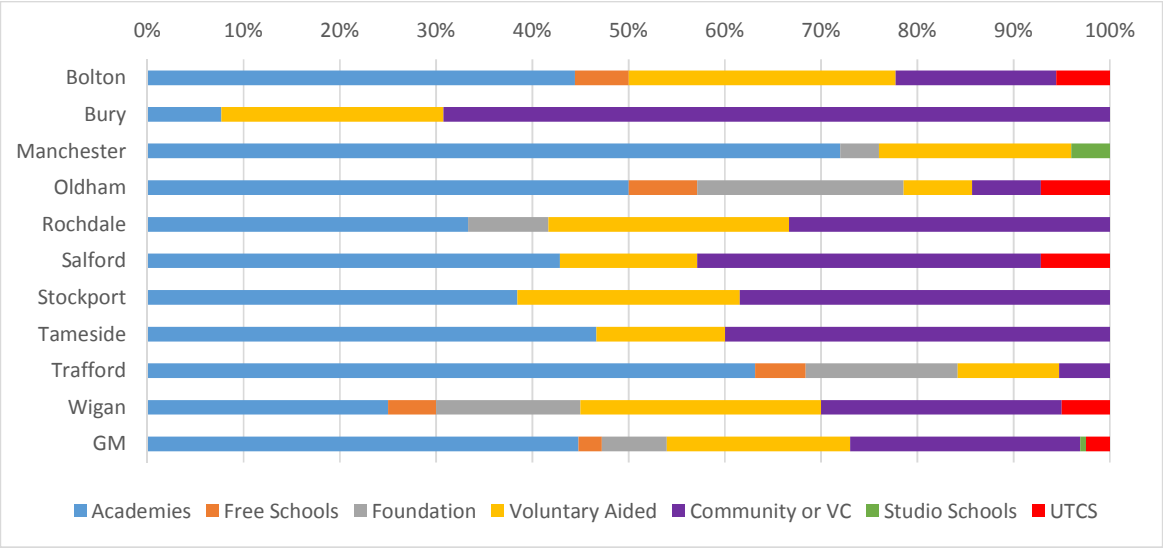
Figure 1: Types of Mainstream Primary School by GM Local Authority March 2017



Source: Edubase

Figure 2: Types of Mainstream Secondary School by GM Local Authority March 2017

[7] In addition to these secondary schools, 4 schools in GM are 'all through primary and secondary schools' of which two were Academies, 2 VA and 1 Community School.



Source: Edubase

As in the early years phase, local authorities have responsibilities for securing school places and Ofsted inspects quality. But there is also a growing number of multi-school federations and trusts which are providing support services including advisory functions, professional development and HR services, which would have previously been provided by local authorities to community schools. These are an increasingly important part of the school system.

In addition to the ten local authorities, there are now 76 Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) operating in Greater Manchester, involving 177 schools, just under a fifth of all schools.[8] The majority of these (55) have just one or two schools in Greater Manchester, although they may have other schools outside the conurbation. The one with the largest number of schools (The Enquire Learning Trust) runs 10 primary and special schools across Tameside and Trafford. Other MATs with a large presence in GM include Focus Academy Trust (7 schools), Bright Futures Educational Trust (6), The Dean Trust (6) and United Learning Trust (6).

A recent House of Commons Education Committee report on MATs concluded that: they have varied capability to raise pupil performance; some have expanded too quickly with negative consequences for the support they provide; not all have adequate relationships with local communities; and there are concerns about 'untouchable' schools which MATs do not want to take on. However, high performing MATS have a role in sharing good practice and there is a need for

[8] Source: Edubase. A majority of Academies are in multi-academy trusts. 54 schools are in single academy trusts.

structures to promote this. The report also suggests that some local authorities should be allowed to establish MATs.[9]

The Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) has a key role in system development and school support, including deciding on applications from school sponsors and improving underperforming mainstream schools by providing them with support from a sponsor, as well as intervening in underperfoming Academies. In the current structure, the RSC covering GM also covers the whole of Lancashire and West Yorkshire.

Another emerging feature of the school system is 'teaching schools', which have a role beyond provision of education in their own school. Teaching schools coordinate and deliver school-based initial teacher training (ITT), continuing professional development, and support for other schools, not necessarily in their local area. ITT and CPD are also provided by universities, and jointly in school/university partnerships, but the pattern of provision is emerging in a market-driven fashion, rather than a planned one in response to need. In GM currently there are 42 teaching schools, 17 of which are part of larger Teaching School Alliances. There are teaching schools in all local authorities in Greater Manchester, but they are not evenly distributed. Trafford has 8, while Stockport and Tameside have only two each. Wigan has no secondary teaching school, Tameside no primary teaching school. There is no publicly available about the coverage of teaching school activities.

In contrast to early years education, school-based education has been, for a long time, more narrowly concerned with academic achievement. Changes under the last Labour government to introduce a broader set of objectives, measures and working arrangements (notably Every Child Matters and extended schools) have been replaced by a more narrowly defined academic focus under the Coalition and Conservatives.

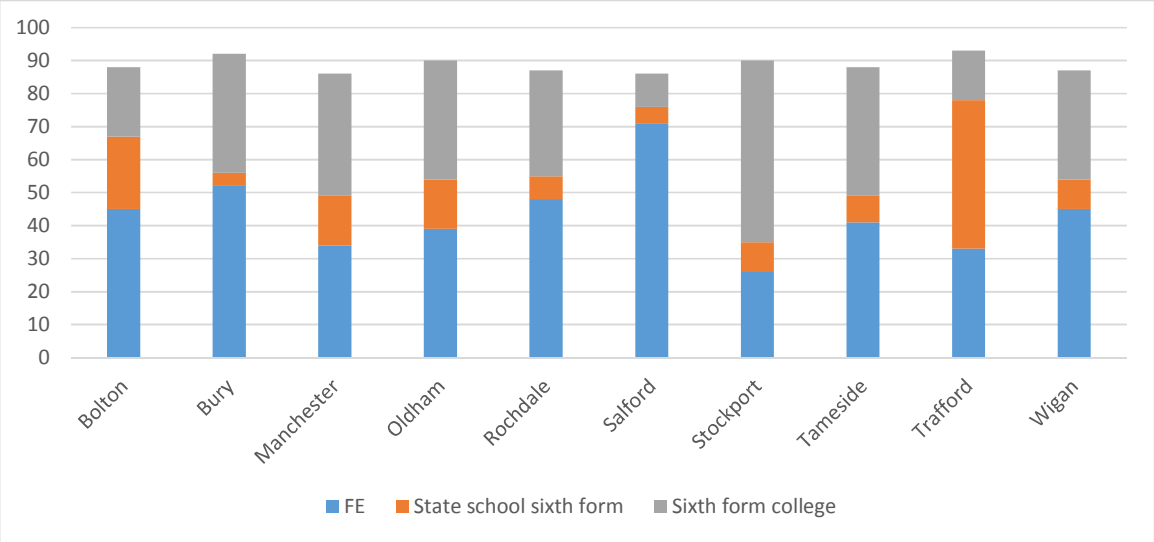
Provision for 16 to 18 Year Olds and for Adults

The landscape for 16 plus provision is even more complex. Young people are now required to be in full time education, training or work with training until age 18, which they may do in a whole range of settings including school sixth forms, sixth form colleges, general FE colleges, and work-based learning with employers. The GM system is also undergoing change following the FE Area Review in 2016. Here I report the current situation.

[9] House of Commons Education Committee (2017) Multi Academy Tursts https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmeduc/204/204.pdf

Across most of GM, a higher number of 16 year olds than nationally continue their education in FE colleges, making this sector particularly important. However, these arrangements vary a lot by LA. Nearly half of Trafford's 16 year olds stay in school sixth forms and more than half in Stockport transfer to sixth form colleges (Figure 3). These patterns will not necessarily determine the quality of education provided, but they will shape the options available, and possibly the level of academic and social integration/separation at this age group. For example, in Salford 72% of 'non-disadvantaged' pupils at KS4 go on to FE college, but in Stockport only 22% do so, compared with 42% of their disadvantaged peers.

Figure 3: Percentages of 2013/14 KS4 cohort going into different sustained education destinations



Source DfE SFR 01/2017. Note that other young people go into employer based apprenticeships or training and independent school sixth forms

Some of these same providers and others including HEIs, local authority adult education services, independent training providers and non-profit organisations provide adult skills training and higher level qualifications. Some providers are locally based, others work across the conurbation and beyond. GM has four universities, Bolton, Manchester, MMU and Salford which contribute particularly to higher level qualifications. Analysis by New Economy[10] identifies 438 adult education and skills providers (in 2014/15) delivering courses funded by the Skills Funding Agency, of which the top 10 accounted for 62% of the market, and 340 apprenticeship providers of which the top 10 accounted for 34% of the market. In 2014/15, fewer than 20% of apprenticeship starts were delivered by colleges.[11] The post-16 system is widely recognised as difficult to negotiate for all

[10] New Economy (2016) Greater Manchester Skills Analysis 2015/16
[11] DfE (2016) Greater Manchester Area Review final report

parties. For learners, this is reflected in ongoing work to improve advice and guidance and the Mayoral manifesto pledge to set up a UCAS-style clearing system for apprenticeships. The 2016 Area Review also noted that employers complain of duplication and complexity, resulting in numerous 'cold calls' from providers.

Ofsted inspects FE providers and additional quality assurance is provided by the Skills Funding Agency.

GM-wide Structures and Organisation

The 'system' described here is one of dazzling organisational complexity. Strategic integration of its activities is made additionally challenging by the fact that accountability mechanisms are structured by institution and phase, not on the basis of collective accountability for learners throughout their educational journey, nor on an area basis. This means that institutions have different and sometimes competing incentives.

There are collaborative approaches and structures within each phase. Early years outcomes have been a priority in GM's growth and reform plan and there is strong joint working between local authorities and other partners. This has resulted in the development of an 'Early Years Delivery Model' focusing on the first three years of life and including the whole range of services including maternity services, health visiting and family support as well as encouraging the take up of free early education. This is now incorporated into the GM Start Well strategy. Post-16 providers collaborate in a Learning Provider Network which has over 100 members; an FE colleges group; and GM Higher which is a collaboration of universities and FE colleges working to improve the provision of information, advice and guidance about progression routes to higher education (HE). For schools, new structures are developing in response to the changes in the system. In 2016, a Greater Manchester Learning Partnership (GMLP) was established, including local authorities, teaching schools, and the Regional Schools Commissioner. It currently has sub-groups working on school improvement, workforce, primary ITT and teaching school alliances and is itself a sub-regional group of the North West School Improvement Partnership Board. There are plans to develop a GM Education and Employability board to build on the GMLP's work.

Currently, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority has powers over very little of this system – only the commissioning of adult education outcomes and from 2018/19 a devolved adult education budget (but not apprenticeships). I would also argue that there is no overall strategy for education.

GM's Work and Skills Strategy[12] takes an overarching view of skill supply and demand and does include a pledge to improve attainment from compulsory education. The Skills and Employment Partnership (SEP) and the Work and Skills Executive Group provide the strategic direction, oversight and planning. However, the SEP has no close involvement with the compulsory education or early years systems[13] , and there are no GM wide powers. Thus is not surprising that the strategy makes no detailed recommendations as to how this can be achieved. It should also be noted that the SEP is focused on work on skills, not on education per se: a body responsible for education might have some additional or different objectives for a city-region education system, such as cultural and social development and social integration and cohesion.

This fragmentation of responsibilities is one of the key challenges for Greater Manchester as it moves into an era of city-regional governance. In the next chapter, I leave these organisational issues behind and consider the substantive challenge. What are the issues facing the GM education system, from early years to adulthood?

[12] Greater Manchester Work and Skills Strategy and Priorities 2016-2019. https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/downloads/file/202/gm_work_and_skills_strategy_and_priorities_2016_to_2019

[13] Local authority children's services are one of fourteen representatives on the SEP, with the majority of the rest focused on work and the post-compulsory phase.

Chapter 3: System performance, issues and challenges

Summary

- The overall picture is not as bad as many people believe, and has been improving.
- There is some evidence of a 'legacy' problem, with lower number of highly qualified residents and higher numbers of people with no qualifications than nationally, but this situation is improving quickly.
- The attainment levels of children and young people currently or recently going through the education system in GM are very close to the national level – at some ages better.
- However, like the country as a whole, GM is being held back by large socio-economic inequalities and there are significant geographical variations. Changing this would have a much greater impact on Greater Manchester's levels of attainment and qualifications than aiming for increases to the national average across the board.
- It can be argued that national averages in any case fall below what GM should be expecting, and that focusing just on educational attainment is too narrow a view of the desired outcomes of the education system.
- There is no general crisis in the quality of provision, but there are some issues that need to be addressed.

An overview of educational attainment and qualifications in Greater Manchester in 2016

It is not uncommon, when speaking to people about education in Greater Manchester, to find that their understanding of the situation is that educational attainment is some way adrift of the national norm, and that there are serious problems both in terms of quality of provision and outcomes. On the whole, the data do not support this understanding.

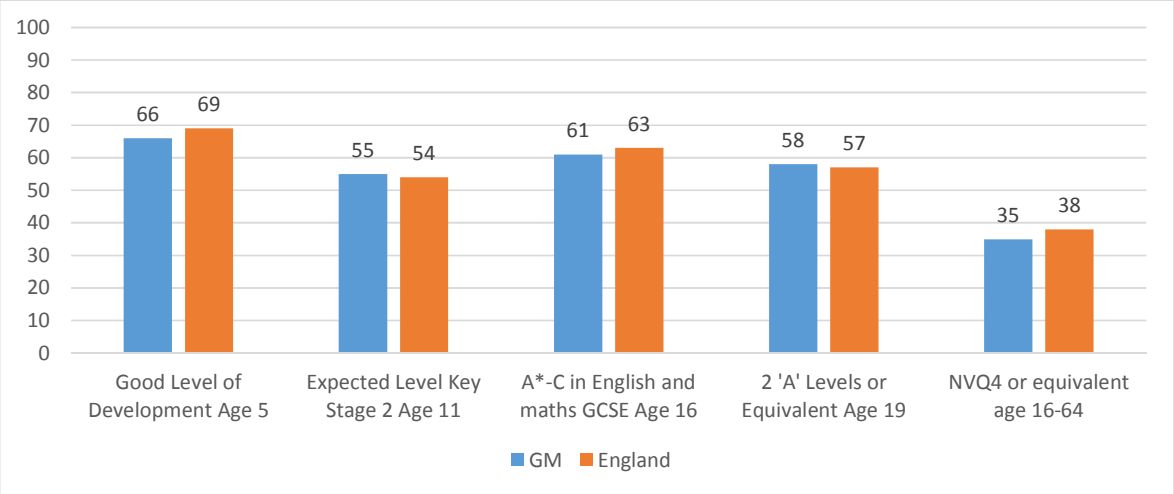
Figure 4 shows levels of development/attainment at ages 5,11, 16 and 19 and qualifications in the working age (16-64) population in 2016, using benchmark expected levels.[14]

[14] As is the norm, because of the measures available, I report on educational attainment as measured in school tests or courses. Attainment in (mainly academic) tests is not the only aim of education, and an excessive focus on raising standards in itself may be counterproductive and have adverse effects on other valued educational experiences and outcomes, including those relating to employment. I return to this in Chapter 4.

There is to some extent a legacy problem. In the adult workforce, around three percentage points fewer GM residents had NVQ 4 or equivalent[15], and a slightly higher proportion (10% compared with 8%) had no qualifications (not shown). However, gaps between GM and England for current cohorts going through the education system are small. In 2016, the biggest gap was at age 5[16] – where greater Manchester was three percentage points adrift of the England figure. At age 11[17] and 19[18], GM was slightly above the England figure.

Based on these figures, if the same proportion of GM children/young people had reached the expected levels as in England as a whole, around 1200 more would have done so at age 5, and 650 at age 16, but around 300 fewer would have done so at age 11 and 180 at age 19.[19] For these cohorts, aiming at the national level, on its own (which is a standard policy aspiration for places that have historically trailed that level) would make relatively little difference now in GM. The working age population is of course much bigger. A three percentage point difference in the whole working age population in GM is equivalent to around 50,000 people fewer with higher level qualifications.

Figure 4: Percentage Achieving Different Levels of Attainment/Qualifications in GM/England 2016



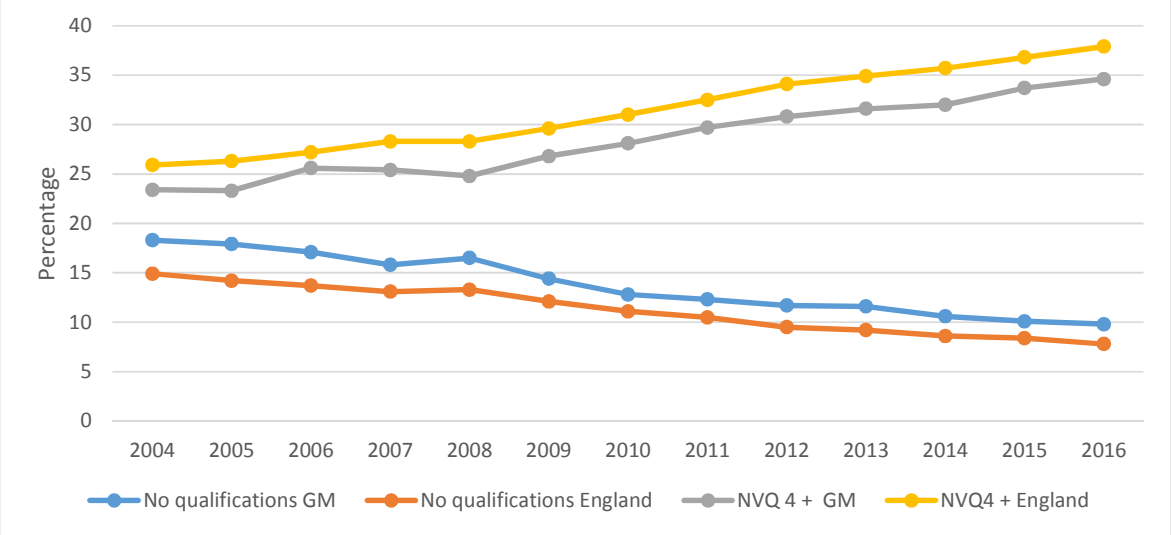
Sources: DfE Statistical First Releases SFR 50/2016, SFR62/2016, SFR03/2017, 01/2017 and Annual Population Survey (APS). All data up to 19 are for state funded schools/colleges only.

[15] NVQ Level 4 is equivalent to BTEC Higher National Certificate or Higher National Diploma.
[16] The EYFSP is assessed by teachers at the end of the final term of the year in which children are 5. Development therefore takes place in the home environment, nursery/childcare settings and in the reception year at school. EYFSP has 17 areas of which 12 are in the 'prime' areas of communication and language, physical development, personal ,social and emotional development or in literacy and mathematics. The others cover understanding of the world and expression, art and design. A good level of development' (GLD) means having reached the expected level in all of the three prime areas and literacy and numeracy.
[17] A new benchmark 'expected level' at KS2 was introduced in 2016, see later text for details.
[18] The benchmark at age 19 is a Level 3 qualification – 2 'A' levels or equivalent.
[19] There are many different ways of making this calculation, which would provide different numbers. The approach here is the most simple, making no adjustments for pupil characteristics or area. It is intended to give a rough idea of the scale of the issue.

Recent trends

There has been a substantial improvement in qualification levels in the adult population in recent years. Figure 5 shows the trends since 2004. The proportion highly qualified has risen steadily especially since 2008, although it is not clear to what extent this is accounted for by in-migration of more highly qualified workers, upskilling of existing workers, the accrediting of workers' existing skills through initiatives like Train to Gain or the replacement in the workforce of older workers by younger ones with higher qualifications. The gap between GM and England on this measure has been persistently around three percentage points. Proportions with no qualifications have fallen markedly, and on this measure the gap with England has closed.

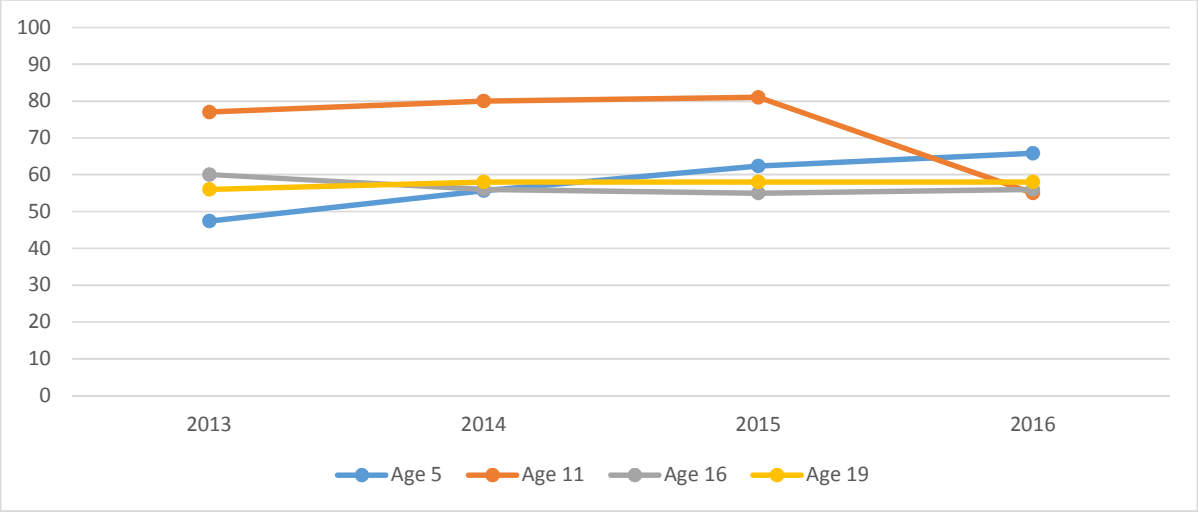
Figure 5: Trends in Qualification Levels in the Population Aged 16-64, GM and England



Source: Annual Population Survey from Nomis

For younger cohorts, I have looked only at very recent trends (see Figure 6) mainly due to changes in performance measures, but longer time series could be constructed and would be useful. Recent trends in GM match national trends and in both the GM and England case, reflect changes in curriculum and assessment, as the following paragraphs explain.

Figure 6: Trends in Attainment/Qualifications in GM 2013-2016



Sources: DfE Statistical First Releases SFR 50/2016, SFR62/2016, SFR03/2017, 01/2017

For age 5 measures, Figure 6 shows a large improvement in Greater Manchester which mirrors a national trend of rapid year-on- year improvement following the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) in 2013. For most of the 17 early learning goals, the increase in proportions reaching the goal has been around five percentage points in this period, and for writing and mathematics it has been more than ten percentage points. If this reflects genuine improvements in development, it should have a striking effect on primary school results in a few years' time. It may, however, also reflect increased familiarity with the profile and its assessment, and an increased focus on English and mathematics, which is not universally agreed to be a beneficial change.[20]

Age 11 measures show a slight improvement to 2015 and then a large fall in 2016. Pupils reaching the end of KS2 in 2016 were the first to have studied the more demanding Key Stage 2 curriculum introduced by the Coalition government. In addition, in 2016, the basis for assessment also changed. The new 'expected level' was designed to be broadly similar to the old Level 4b instead of the old Level 4 which had previously been the expected level[21]. The GM fall from 81% to 58% reaching the expected level mirrors a national fall (80% to 54%). As Figure 6 shows, this seems to bring proportions of children reaching expected levels at age 11 more in line with the proportions

[20] We cover this debate and these data in a little more detail in the recent Human Development Report for Greater Manchester (Rubery et al. 2017)
[21] Due to curriculum changes this is not an exact equivalence and in fact in 2016, considerably fewer children reached the new level than had reached the old level 4b.

reaching expected levels at other ages (between 50% and 60%). DfE's position on this is that although the new tests are more demanding (so results could genuinely be lower), a period of adjustment can be expected while schools get used to the new materials.[22] In other words we may expect to see an upward trend from 2017.

At GCSE, the graph shows the trend in the previous headline measure (5 A*-C including English and maths) rather than the new headline introduced in 2016 and reported above, in order that a time series can be observed. A slight drop in performance in and since 2014 reflects changes to school performance tables and GCSE curricula, which also led to a fall nationally.

Thus while Figure 6 seems to show some dramatic changes in children and young people's achievements, the reality is probably much more stable. Perhaps the key thing to note is that gaps between GM and England as a whole showed no change in this period at ages 11 and 19. For the early years, the gap narrowed slightly, from 5 percentage points in 2013 to 3 in 2016, while for GCSE it widened slightly from one to two percentage points.

The quality of provision

Quality of provision can be assessed in a number of different ways. In the compulsory education phase, it is usually gauged by the results of Ofsted inspections, and this is now extended to early years and adult education.

By this measure, there does not appear to be a widespread quality problem in GM education, certainly not in the early years and primary phases. There are more difficulties in secondary schools and post 16. As at December 2016, there were 11 inadequate primary schools in GM (out of 854) accounting for fewer than 1% of pupils. A higher proportion of secondary schools had problems – 9 out of 167 at December 2016, but still this accounts for only 3% of secondary pupils. [23] These numbers vary depending from one inspection period to the next. In August 2016, just 6 primaries and 8 secondaries were rated inadequate.

In the primary phase, all GM authorities in 2016 had a higher proportion of children in good or outstanding schools than the national figure (90%). For the early years, only Rochdale, Stockport and Bolton equalled or exceeded the (high) national figure of 95%. All others except Bury (85%) exceeded 90%[24]. This was not the case for secondaries. Oldham, Rochdale and Tameside had two-

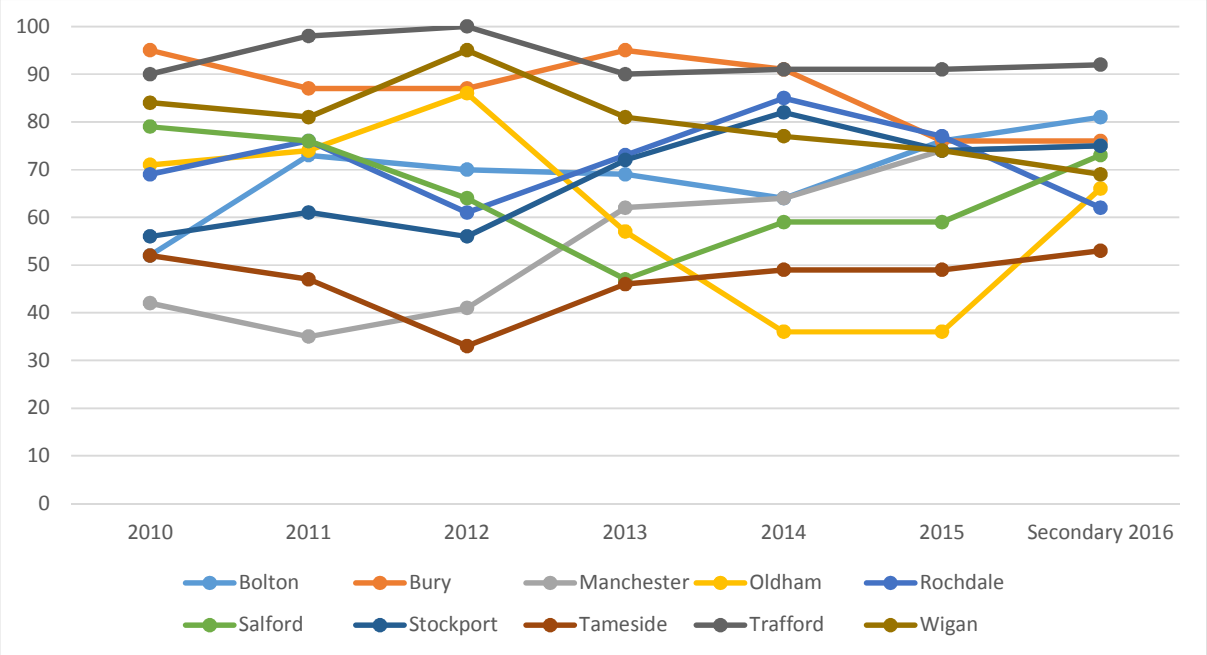
[22] DfE SFR 39/2016

[23] Ofsted: Maintained Schools and Academies Inspection Outcomes

[24] These data refer to childcare and childminders not to nursery schools or provision in nursery classes.

thirds or fewer of their secondary pupils in good or outstanding schools, compared with 82% nationally and 92% in Trafford. Figure 7 shows these trends over time. There is considerable year-on-year variation because numbers of secondary schools are small, so one or two schools changing their inspection grade can have a significant result. The continued high performance of Trafford is notable here, as is the steady rise in Manchester. Tameside has performed particularly poorly on this measure over time. Interpreting this data, it is important to recall that it is more difficult for institutions in very challenging circumstances to be highly graded by Ofsted. Differences in grading may reflect poor management or teaching which can be remedied at the school level, but may also reflect inadequate resources in relation to need, or the inspection framework itself which may not be sensitive to some of the very valuable work that schools do in supporting children and families in disadvantaged areas[25]. This points to the need for a close local understanding of particular schools and contexts to support school improvement efforts.

Figure 7: Percentage of learners in good or outstanding secondary schools 2010 to 2016 (August)



[25] Allen (2016) Social Inequalities in Access to Good Teachers (Education Datalab Blog April 28 2016), Lupton, R. (2005) 'Social Justice and School Improvement: Improving the Quality of Schooling in the Poorest Neighbourhoods'. *British Educational Research Journal* 31 (5): 589–604.

In the post-16 sector, as at August 2016, five local authority areas in Greater Manchester had 100% of learners in good or outstanding provision – Bury, Manchester, Salford, Rochdale and Trafford. In Oldham, Stockport and Bolton, between 59% and 74% of learners were in this kind of provision. Proportions are currently much lower in Wigan (42%) and Tameside (26%). These figures depend heavily on the performance of the FE college in the area. At August 2016, four of ten GM FE colleges were assessed as "requires Improvement". However, it is important to bear in mind the volatility of these inspection data, given that large proportions of learners are in relatively few institutions. Just three years ago the same enquiry would have revealed that 100% of places in Wigan and Tameside were good or better, but just 37% in Manchester.

These Ofsted measures, however, only tell us about the quality of individual institutions. They are not a measure of system adequacy. System adequacy would include institutional quality, but also measures of the fit between supply and demand, funding in relation to need, content (eg curriculum), take-up in non compulsory phases and so on. Many of these are determined by national policies and resources, and they are arguably more important in non compulsory phases of education. When all children have to be at school, it is easy to point to quality deficiencies by individual institution. For adults, some of whom will be learning and others not, institutional quality is a much smaller part of the picture compared with whether learning can happen at all (due to course availability, information, funding and so on).

It is way beyond the scope of this report to review system adequacy comprehensively. However there clearly are issues of system capacity, funding, and take-up. One issue is the variable take-up of early education.[26] Take-up of early years education for 2, 3 and 4 year-olds in 2016 was generally above the national figure for most GM LAs, but there were some areas with low take up for particular ages (Oldham and Bolton for 2 year olds, and Rochdale, Manchester, Wigan and Oldham for 3 year olds), and others with particularly high take up, notably Trafford for all ages and Stockport for 2 and 3 year olds. This is a crucial element of ensuring a good start in life. Take-up of adult skills training is another issue – this is falling in GM as nationally[27], with explanations focusing on substantial funding cuts as well as demographic factors. New Economy's analysis[28] shows a fall in the number of post-16 course starts of about one-fifth since 2011, from approximately 599,000 in 2011/12 to 470,000 in 2014/15. While much policy emphasis is on apprenticeships, it is salient to note that these make up just 6% of starts (around 30,000) - the vast majority are in education and training. Since the majority of GM's medium term future workforce is

[26] Since 1998 all 4 year olds have been entitled to a funded early education place and in 2004 this was extended to all 3 year olds and from 2013, to disadvantaged 2 year olds.
[27] Explanations for this usually focus on substantial cuts in funding for courses, as well as demographic factors.
[28] Ibid.

already in the workforce, a decline in adult training should be of real concern. In a consultation with stakeholders carried out by New Economy and the University of Manchester in 2015[29] and reported to the Skills and Employment Partnership, a whole host of additional issues were identified as needing attention in the post 16 system: the balance and quality of provision; the need to focus more on opportunities for learner progression; low employer demand for skills and lack of employer engagement; and cross phase issues such careers advice and guidance and the need to spend adult skills budget on Level 2 general education for young people who have not succeeded at school, Some of these and others were raised in the GM Area Review – which also highlighted employer concerns – about the need for streamlining and reducing complexity, assurances about the quality of all providers, and the need for colleges to build stronger links with employers to meet apprenticeship demands. The Review also highlighted the need for colleges to work collectively to address the wider skills issues across Greater Manchester, including providing high quality accessible training, aligned to priority areas, up to and including levels 4 and 5.

While the public perception of education and skills in GM may be one of institutional failure, system adequacy issues, which are at least partly within the gift of central government, may actually be more acute. While I cannot explore the detail in this report, this is precisely why a cradle-to-career perspective is so important. There are implications for devolution. While a common response to the devolution context is that city-regions should acquire powers to step in when institutions are failing, it may be more important that they have more funding, autonomy and coordination to deal with system adequacy issues.

Reasons not to be complacent

I also want to be clear that while these quality data suggest that there is no crisis in GM education overall and that attainment is already close to the national average, this doesn't mean that nothing needs to be done.

First of all, many people might argue that national averages are too low – that to meet Greater Manchester's aspirations, more than two thirds of children should have a good level of development at age 5, or higher grades in maths and English GCSE for example. Although it is important to remember that 'expected levels' are always set at levels that large proportions of children do not reach[30], many people have pointed to higher levels of success in London schools, particularly for disadvantaged children and young people. In 2016, 66% achieved A*-C in English and maths

[29] Cartwright, J. et al (2015) Devolution, skills and labour markets – consultation report. Available from the author or the Skills and Employment Partnership.
[30] Sociologists of education argue that in reality this is one of functions of an education system – to sift and sort people and preserve existing social hierarchies and divisions.

compared with 61% in GM. In its report on Northern schools a year ago[31], IPPR North argued that it should be London's level of attainment that the North of England should be aiming at, since it cannot expect to compete with London economically if its young people leave school less well qualified.

The same arguments might apply to levels of education and skill in the adult workforce. Arguably the city-region should be benchmarking its adult skills against those of the most high-skilled and most highly productive economies in the world, and in relation to future demands, not against current national averages. Skill demands are growing – in Greater Manchester the strongest job growth in the immediate future (five years) is forecast in digital, creative, business, financial and professional services, as well as construction and retail, and across all sectors the majority of expansion demand will be for people with Level 4 qualifications and above[32]. At the same time, many people would caution that qualifications are not the only outcomes we should desire from our education system and that there is a need to focus also on softer skills, knowledge and dispositions that equip people for the other aspects of their lives as individuals and citizens.

Second, there are clearly some parts of the system, mainly in the secondary and post-16 phases, which require improvement. There is a continuing need to make sure that the highest quality provision is in the places it is most needed, that problems are identified early, and support provided where institutions are struggling.

Third, and a major reason not to be complacent, is that beneath the overall results is a picture of deep and wide inequalities. Learners from particular social and economic groups are systematically being left behind, just as they are nationally. Addressing these issues would have a transformative effect for many more individuals than simply aiming to match the overall national level, and it would also boost overall results well above the national norm. This is the subject of the sections which follow.

Socio-economic inequalities

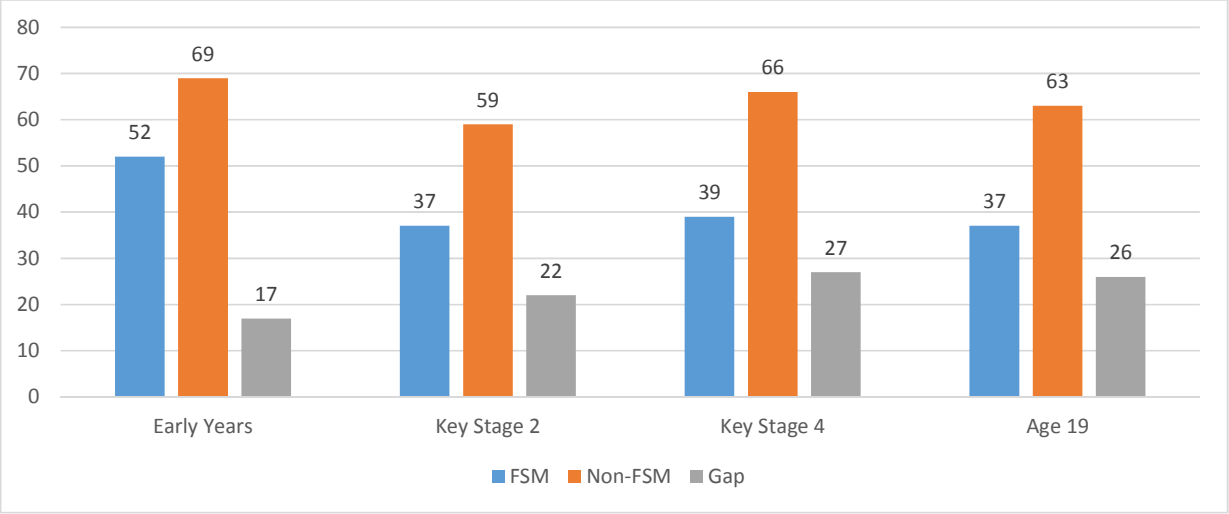
The most striking gap in educational attainment in Greater Manchester is socio-economic. Usually this is measured by the difference between the attainment of those eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) and everyone else[33], although increasingly it is recognised that there are many families in low-waged work who will not be eligible for FSM but whose economic circumstances are only

[31] Clifton, J., Round, A. and Raikes, L. (2016) North Schools: Putting Education at the Heart of the Northern Powerhouse.
[32] New Economy (2016) Greater Manchester Skills Analysis 2015/16
[33] Sometimes a category of 'disadvantaged' is used, based on eligibility for Pupil Premium funding, but this is not consistently used in all datasets and years so we use FSM here.

marginally better, if at all, than those who are.[34] 'Free school meal gaps' also reflect the characteristics of the non-FSM population. In some areas these will be very different from those of FSM-eligible children. Other areas have greater social homogeneity.

Figure 8 shows the size of Free School Meal gaps at each age group using the benchmark measures examined in Chapter 1. For GM as a whole in 2016 there was a gap of 17 percentage points in the early years, widening to 22 percentage points at Key Stage 2, 27 percentage points at the end of Key Stage 4, then 26 points at age 19.

Figure 8: FSM/non-FSM attainment gaps in Greater Manchester 2016



Sources: DfE Statistical First Releases SFR 50/2016, SFR62/2016, SFR03/2017, 01/2017

Differences in success rates are also evident in access to university. DfE publishes data on the percentage of all 15 year olds in state funded secondary schools who go on to university, by FSM status. These data are older, showing young people who were 15 in 2009/10 and whether they had entered university by the time they were 19 in 2013/14. An estimated[35] 23% of those eligible for

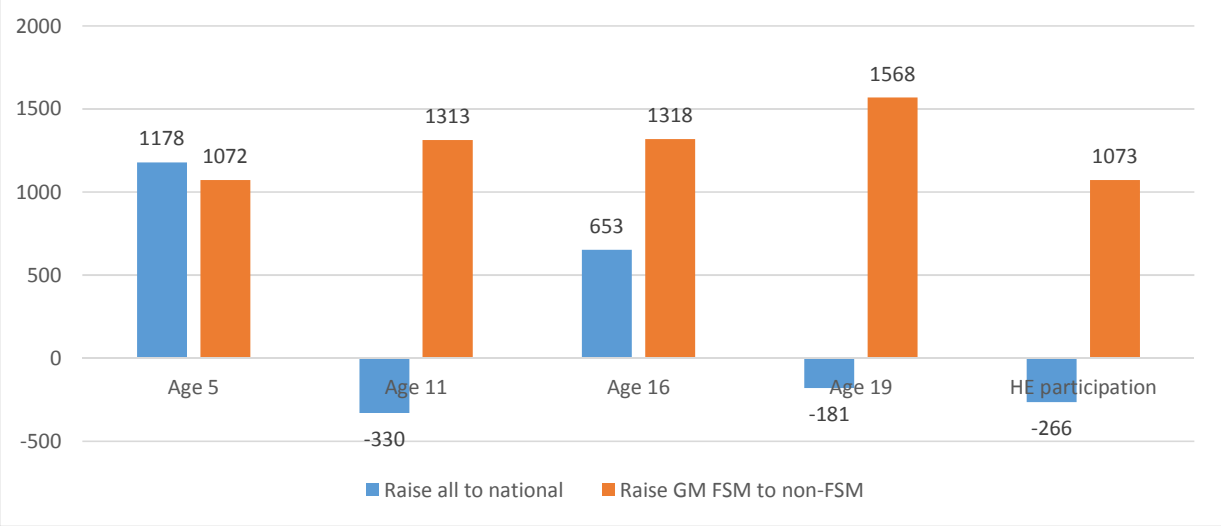
[34] Analyses by area deprivation (NEP, IPPR North) is another way of considering the relationship between socio-economic advantage/disadvantage and attainment, and allows more gradation. Such analyses show a steady gradient of attainment, with attainment rising as area deprivation decreases. DfE is currently consulting on how to define 'ordinary working families' for the purposes of monitoring educational progress. It estimates that around one third of children are in households below the median income but not eligible for Pupil Premium.
https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-leadership-analysis-unit/analysing-family-circumstances-and-education-1/

[35] DfE publishes these data for local authorities, not for GM as a whole, and does not publish the underlying student numbers in this particular data release. To calculate a GM figure I have used another DfE data source (SFR01/2017) showing numbers of 15 year olds in the state sector who would be 19 in 2013/14.

FSM had done so, compared with 41% of those not eligible for FSM. Free School Meal gaps in university entrance are smaller if we only consider those who have reached the end of Key Stage 5 (A Levels) but they still exist at that stage. In 2013/14,in GM, 45% of those counted as 'disadvantaged'[36] went on to university, compared with 53% of those not disadvantaged, with a much more substantial gap for higher-ranking universities. Only 8% of those disadvantaged accessed the top-ranked third of universities, compared with 21% of those not disadvantaged.

It is evident from the size of these gaps that much more difference could be made by raising the achievement of those on FSM to the level of those not on FSM than it could by raising the aggregate attainment in GM to the national level. Figure 9 shows the difference, again not adjusting for any other differences, area or pupil characteristics.

Figure 9: Numbers of Additional Children/Young People who would have reached benchmark levels in 2016 (2013/14 for HE) if those eligible for FSM had achieved the same as those not eligible, compared with the difference if the GM rates of attainment had been at the national rate



Sources: DfE Statistical First Releases SFR 50/2016, SFR62/2016, SFR03/2017, SFR01/2017

A key point to note is that socio-economic gaps in GM are almost exactly these same as they are nationally. At every level, the gap in the most recent year varied by no more than one percentage point, with the exception of age 5, where the GM gap was two percentage points smaller than the England figure. The absolute level of achievement for FSM pupils/students also varied from the England figure by no more than one percentage point, except for age 5 where 2% fewer of those on

[36] 'Disadvantaged' students are those who would have been eligible for FSM at any point in their secondary school career or who had been in local authority care i.e. most of those eligible for Pupil Premium funding

FSM had a good level of development than in England (the smaller gap being accounted for by the fact that non-FSM eligible children were slightly further behind children in England as a whole). There has been no change between the size of gaps at GM and England age group at any level since 2013.

IPPR North (2016)[37] looking at national data, has demonstrated that FSM gaps also tend to be the same whether schools are graded outstanding, good, requires improvement or inadequate by Ofsted. Both disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students do better in more highly rated schools, but by the same amount. Improving schools, therefore, with current models, does not seem to be the way to close disadvantage gaps.

A further point not illuminated by this 'gap analysis' is the difference in trajectories that young people experience at age 16. Although Greater Manchester does relatively well compared with the national average in terms of numbers of young people achieving Level 3 (two A levels or above) by age 19, more than 40% of young people do not reach this level. For young people who have not reached the expected level at age 16 (more than 60% of those on FSM as Figure 8 shows), navigating the post-16 phase can be particularly challenging, compared with the smooth transition into A levels that many more academically successful and better resourced young people will enjoy. Of those in FE colleges who have nor gained a C grade in English and maths GCSE on entry, the proportion who subsequently achieve these grades is under 10% in most GM LAs, in line with national patterns. Some young people achieve a higher level of learning (any improvement on their previous attainment) despite not getting these GCSE grades, but significant proportions (40% or more in most GM local authorities) do not do so. They are effectively treading water[38]. Latest data show that 47% of young people eligible for Free School Meals in Year 11 had not achieved Level 2 with English and maths by the time they were 19 in 2016, compared with 74% not eligible for FSM.[39] These young people are least likely to be able to enter high quality apprenticeships or jobs with good wages and prospects, and most likely to need to return to education and training in adulthood in order to improve their skills and prospects.

[37] Clifton, J., Round, A. and Raikes, L. (2016) North Schools: Putting Education at the Heart of the Northern Powerhouse.
[38] Rubery et al. (2017) A Human Development Report for Greater Manchester.
[39] DfE: Level 2 and 3 attainment in England: Attainment by age 19 in 2016

Other inequalities in outcome

There are other differences in attainment levels between social groups in Greater Manchester. Girls outperform boys at every assessment stage. The gap at age 5 in Greater Manchester in 2016 (for those reaching a good level of development) was 16 percentage points, similar to the Free School Meal gap. At the end of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 it was smaller (7 and 8 percentage points respectively). All these gaps are in line with the national average. No gender breakdowns are available for Level 3 attainment at age 19 for local authorities: nationally the gap in favour of girls was 10 percentage points in 2016. Greater educational success for girls has been feeding into adult qualifications for many years now – in Greater Manchester women are now consistently better qualified than men in every age group below 50, a reversal of the situation familiar in previous generations.[40]

Young men from poorer backgrounds are particularly likely to be at risk of low qualifications. In 2016 at age 5, boys on Free School Meals in GM were 26 percentage points adrift of the national figure for all pupils, compared with 6 percentage points for girls. At GCSE level they were 22 percentage points behind, compared with 16 for girls.

Differences between ethnic groups in GM are evident and show more variation from the national average, but the data are hard to interpret. Only data for broad ethnic categories is made publicly available: white, mixed, Asian, black, and Chinese (although these latter students are too few in number for analysis at the local level). This makes it impossible to understand differences within groups – for example between young people of Pakistani and Indian heritage, or from African and Caribbean backgrounds, groups which tend to have different socio-economic profiles. People from different ethnic groups tend also to reside in different areas, and are thus faced with different economic as well as educational opportunities. Unpacking the reasons for different levels of attainment, at different ages and in different places, and the interactions with social class, family income and gender, is important but beyond the scope of this report.

Headline differences between broad ethnic groups in 2016 were not consistent between the different assessment stages. In the EYFSP, white and mixed children were more likely to be assessed as having reached a good level of development (68% for both groups) than black children (65%) and Asian children (60%). These figures for Asian children were well below the national figure for that group (68%), while all other groups trailed the national figure by three percentage points. At Key Stage 2, white (56%) and mixed (57%) groups again had higher levels of attainment than Asian or black groups (both at 51%). 'Asian' was the only group for which the GM figure

[40] Ibid.

lagged the national figure (51% compared with 56%). At GCSE, however, the position was reversed. Nationally, of these four groups, Asian young people had the highest success rate in achieving A*-C in English and mathematics (68% compared with 63% for white and mixed groups and 60% for black). This was also the case in GM (64% for Asian, 61% white, 59% mixed and 58% black). Data by ethnicity are not available at local level for Level 3 qualifications at 19. However, nationally, the white ethnic group had the lowest proportion qualified in 2016, 55%, compared with 59% for the next lowest group (Black Caribbean) and 85% for the highest group (Chinese).[41] National data also suggest a particular issue for white British young people on FSM. Just 27% of these achieved Level 3 by age 19, compared with 47% for the next lowest group (Black Caribbean, on FSM) and 77% for the highest achieving FSM group (Chinese, not on FSM). Data for entry to higher education at national level also show these patterns. In 2016, the university entry rate at 18 for English domiciled, state-school Chinese young people was 58%, compared with 43% for Asian, 38% Black, 33% mixed and 29% White. Just 7% of white young men on FSM living in the lowest participation neighbourhoods went to university, compared with 60% of Asian young women not on FSM and living in the highest participation neighbourhoods.[42]

Finally, young people with special educational needs (SEN) are much less likely to reach expected levels of attainment than those without. These patterns vary by age. Here I report GCSE data for 2016. There were approximately 19,000 young people with identified needs in state funded secondary schools in GM in 2016. Just under a third of these had moderate, severe or profound learning difficulties. Most of these young people would have difficulty accessing the school curriculum even with support – nationally 11% of those with MLD achieved A*-C in English and maths and fewer than 1% of those with severe or profound difficulties. 19% had social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH) and 17% specific learning difficulties (eg dyslexia or ADHD) while 7% had autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) and the remainder a range of physical, sensory and other disorders or difficulties[43]. National rates of success at benchmark levels (A*-C in English and maths) were low for all these groups – just 24% for those with SEMH, 31% with ASD and 32% for those with specific learning difficulties.[44] School systems focused on economic productivity might tend to overlook these young people. In systems focused on inclusion, we would expect a sophisticated understanding of who they are and how well their needs are being met.

[41] SFR 16/2017 Table 12c.
[42] https://www.ucas.com/corporate/data-and-analysis/ucas-undergraduate-releases/equality-and-entry-rates-data-explorer
[43] DfE SFR 20/2016
[44] Data at local authority level are only available for all students with SEN support, not by the nature of need. For most GM local authorities, these data were suppressed for confidentiality reasons in 2016 (DfE SFR 03/2017 Table LA13) although this was not the case for many other local authorities.

Spatial disparities

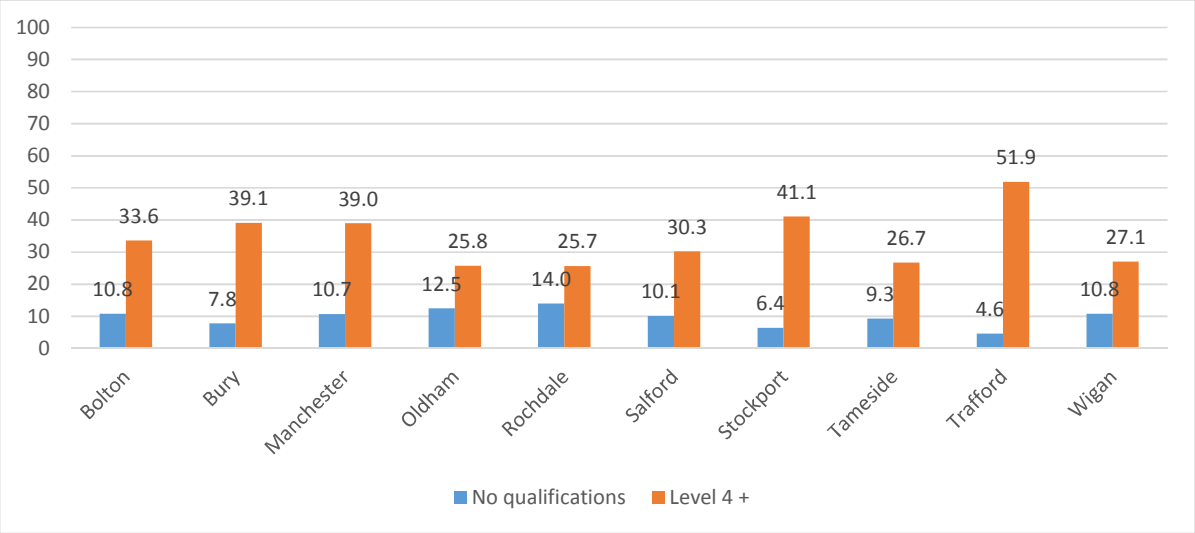
So far, I have reported differences between the educational achievements of different groups of people at the Greater Manchester level. But there are also substantial differences between different parts of the conurbation. These are partly a product of differences between people – affluent areas where families are well resourced have higher levels of achievement among younger people, and higher levels of qualifications in the adult population because people in higher-paying jobs can afford to live there. Different ethnic groups are more highly represented in some local authorities. But place factors, such as the quality of schools and colleges and the nature of the local labour market will also matter. Tackling these geographical disparities is fundamentally important to the Greater Manchester aspiration that people right across the conurbation should be able to participate in and benefit from economic prosperity.

I concentrate here on the headline messages.

First it is evident that historic patterns associated with the industrial and social history of Greater Manchester (the location of industrial work and desirable housing) persist to a large extent. In Oldham, Rochdale, Tameside and Wigan, only around one quarter (23 to 27%) of people aged 16 to 64 were qualified to Level 4 or above in 2016, compared with 39% in Manchester and 52% in Trafford (Figure 10). Among older workers (aged 50 to 64), around one third (34%) in Manchester, Oldham and Tameside had no qualifications, compared with 18% in Stockport and 21% in Trafford. Many of these workers may of course have skills that they are using in the workplace, although they do not have qualifications. Nevertheless they are more at risk of lower pay or non employment than more highly qualified workers.[45]

[45] See Rubery et al (2017) op.cit for a fuller account.

Figure 10: Qualifications in the working age population (age 16-64) by local authority, 2016



Source: ONS Annual Population Survey, from Nomis

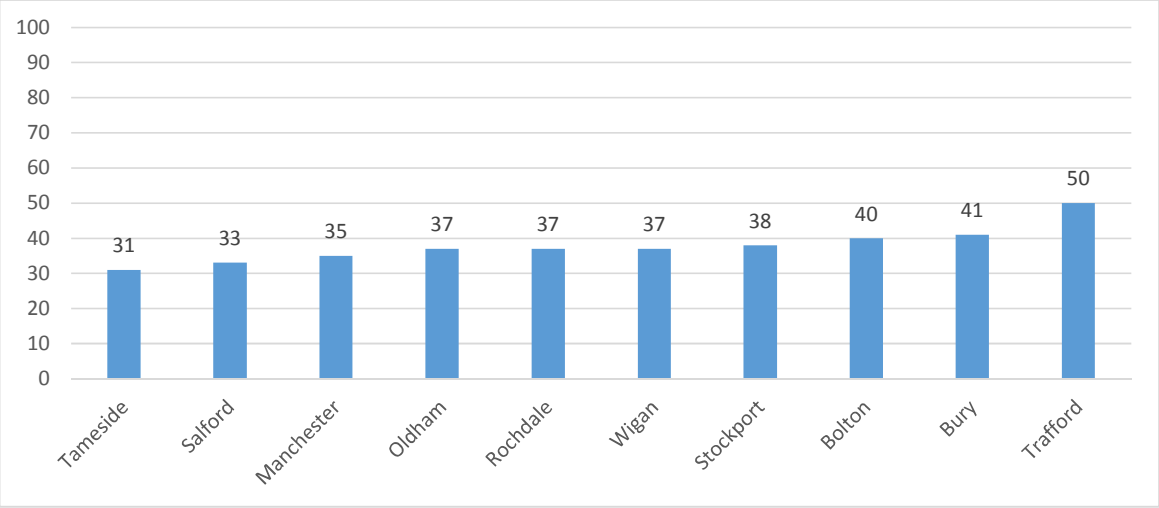
Second, geographical differences remain stark among younger generations. To illustrate this, I show data for two cohorts - those who were 19 in 2013/14 (born in 1994/5) and those who were 5 in 2016 (born in 2011). Socio-economic differences between local authorities are evident in the proportion of children eligible for FSM in each case. For instance at age 16 in 2016, 27% of the cohort in Manchester were eligible, between 18 and 20% in Tameside, Oldham, Rochdale and Salford, 15% in Bolton and Bury, 11 or 12% in Stockport and Wigan and 9% in Trafford. These figures vary by age group but are broadly in the same pattern.

By the time the 1994/5 birth cohort were 19, 50% of those in state-funded schools in Trafford had entered university, compared with 31% in Tameside and 33% in Salford (Figure 11). These numbers have increased rapidly, by around 9 to 13 percentage points in most GM local authorities since 2007, but the gap between the top and bottom authorities on this measure has barely changed. A finer-grained analysis shows much more pronounced local variations (Map 1). Within Manchester LA, HE young participation rates for electoral wards[46] ranged from 8% in Benchill to 55% in Didsbury. Trafford had a low rate of 14% (Bucklow) and a high of 76% (Bowdon), while in Tameside no ward was below 18% or above 34%. Map 1 shows low rates of participation across

[46] This analysis (from HEFCE) is based on 2001 electoral ward boundaries and five cohorts of young people, who were aged 18 between 2006-07 and 2010-11 academic years. The young participation rate is the proportion of the 15 year old cohort entering HE at 18 or 19.
http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/HEFCE,2014/Content/Analysis/Young,participation/Gaps/Gaps_analysis_classifications.xlsx

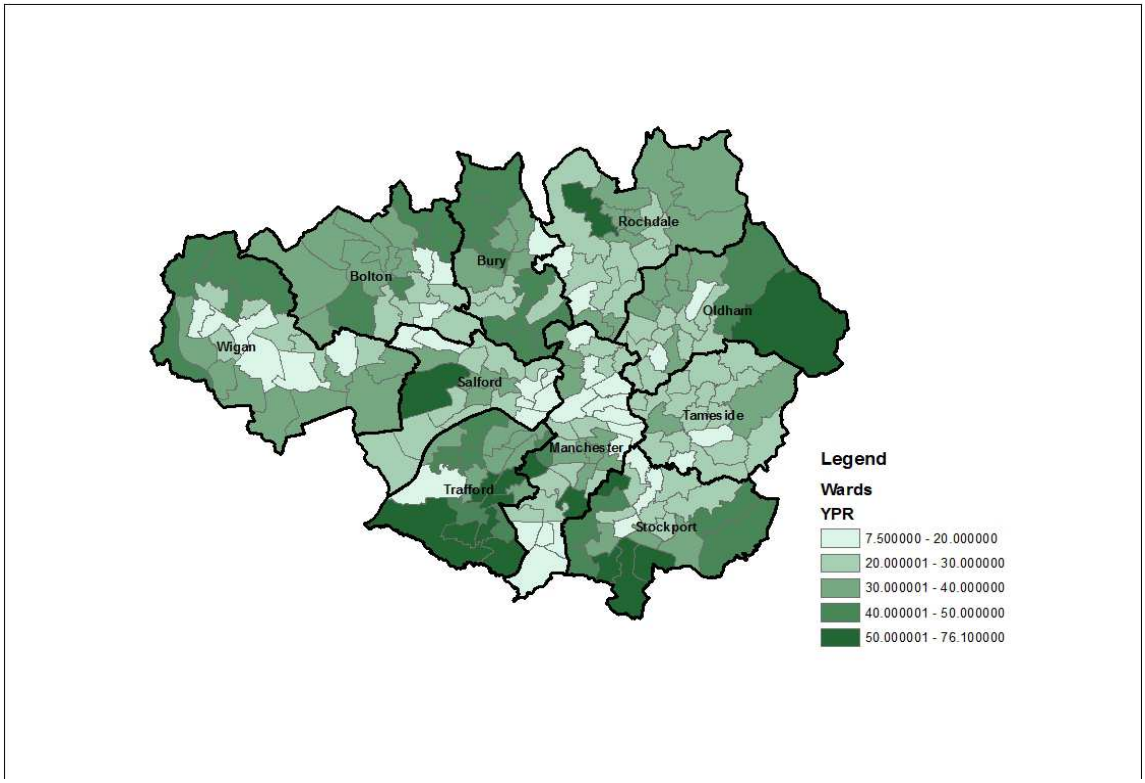
North and east Manchester, the inner part of Salford and parts of Wigan and Bolton but also in particular wards in Stockport, which also has areas with very high participation.

Figure 11: Percentage from state schools at age 15 entering higher education by age 19 in 2013/14



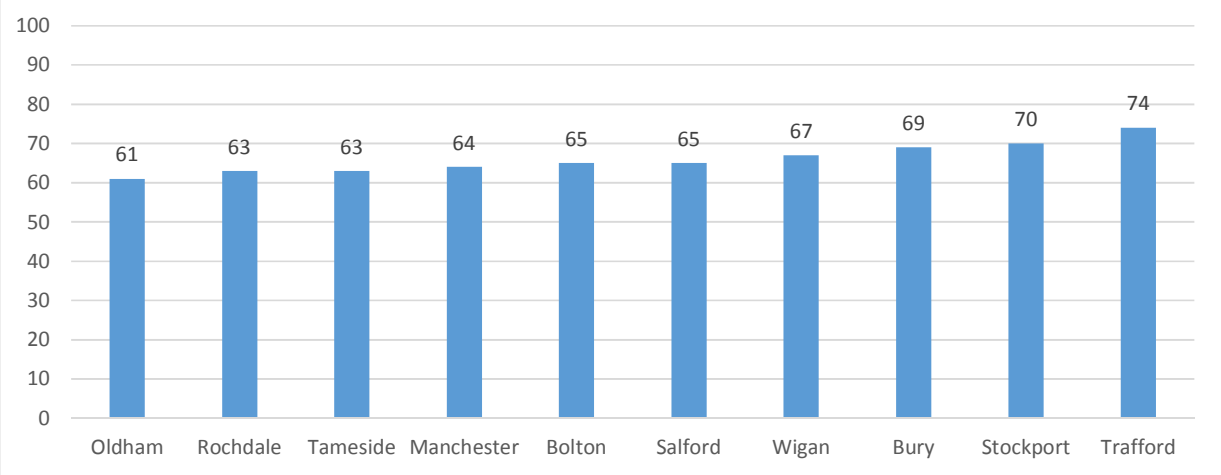
Source: DfE SFR37/2016

Map 1: Higher Education Young Participation Rate (cohorts age 18 between 2006 and 2011)



Children aged 5 in 2016 are the most recent cohort for whom we have any measurements. Geographical differences persist here too, with 74% of children in Trafford having reached a good level of development compared with 61% in Oldham and 63% in Rochdale and Tameside (Figure 12). Comparing Figure 11 (19 year olds) and Figure 12 (5 year olds), the overall scale of differences and the high performance of Trafford stand out, as does the somewhat larger gap between local authorities at 19 than at age 5, as might be expected. But it is also noticeable that some local authorities (Salford in particular) appear to be doing rather better for the younger cohort than the older, while the reverse is true for Oldham and Rochdale.[47]

Figure 12: Percentage achieving a good level of development at age 5 in 2016



Source: DfE SFR 50/2016

Third, the structure of opportunity differs across GM as we have already demonstrated, both in relation to the type and quality of provision. Beyond the scope of our analysis here, young people's life chances and expectations of education will also be being differentially shaped by where they live: the quality of housing; neighbourhood conditions and services; transport; social networks; and the opportunities available in the local labour market.

Fourth, the same broad social and ethnic groups have different rates of success in different local authorities. One striking issue is the different levels of attainment of Asian children and young people. Looking at the 2016 data, although there were exceptions, on the whole Asian children and young people did worse in GM local authorities than they did in England as a whole. They did

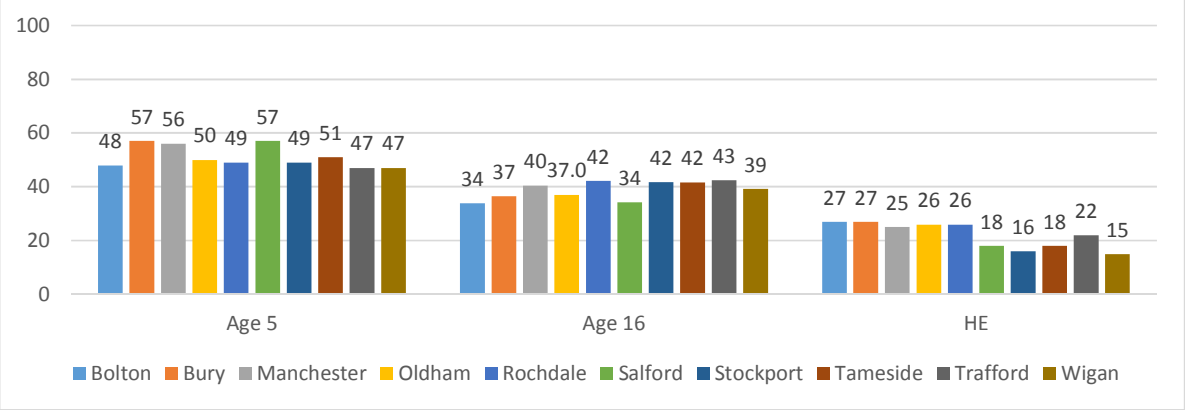
[47] We cannot tell, from available data, how current 19 year olds did when they were 5, since the EYFSP was not in operation. However, this analysis both suggests the persistence of geographical disparities and the possibilities for change.

particularly poorly in Oldham. At age 5, 51 % of Asian children in Oldham were assessed as having reached a good level of development at age 5, 10 points adrift of any other GM local authority. 41% achieved the expected level at age 11, seven percentage points lower than the next lowest, Rochdale, while 56% achieved A*-C in English and maths at GCSE, compared with a GM figure of 64% and a national one of 68%. White children in Oldham were not the lowest attaining in all age groups.

Children and young people eligible for Free School Meals also had different outcomes in different local authorities, and these outcomes varied by age group (Figure 13). Interestingly, it is not the case that these children always did best in 'high performing' authorities. In some cases (for example Salford at age 5, Manchester, Rochdale and Tameside at age 16 and Bolton, Oldham and Rochdale for access to HE) they did better in the less advantaged (and usually lower scoring overall) local authorities where they were greater in number. Free school meal gaps are also highly variable (Figure 14). Trafford, Stockport and to a certain extent Wigan had higher FSM gaps than other areas, and (as Figure 13 shows) entry to higher education for FSM pupils in these LAs was actually lower than in some poorer areas where FSM pupils tended to do less well at GCSE.

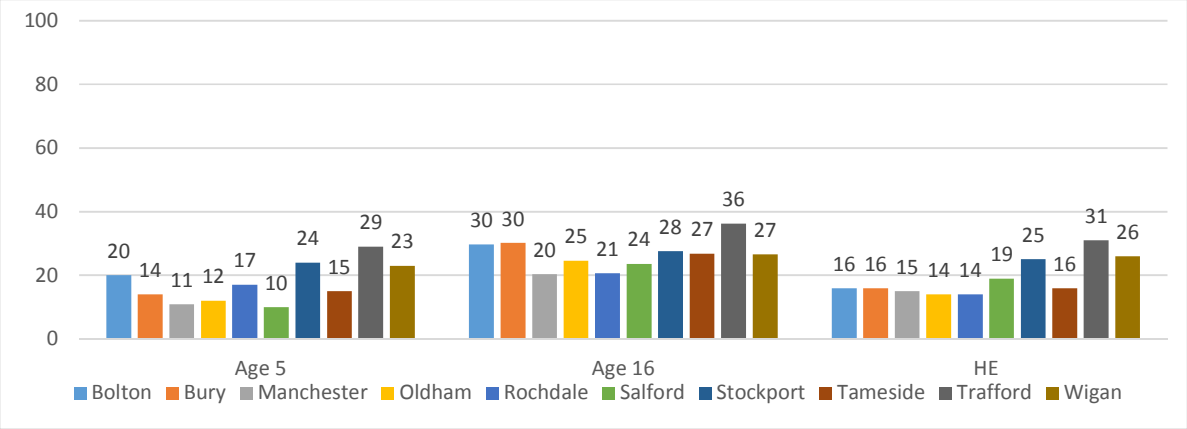
City-wide governance potentially presents new opportunities to address these spatial disparities. Potentially, a Greater Manchester system could organise itself to focus effort on its least successful areas in order to transform achievement overall. This is the subject of the next chapter.

Figure 13: Percentage of FSM-eligible students reaching different benchmark levels by LA



Sources: DfE Statistical First Releases SFR 50/2016, SFR01/2017

Figure 14: FSM/Non FSM gaps by at different benchmark levels by LA



Sources: DfE Statistical First Releases SFR 50/2016, SFR01/2017

Chapter 4: Towards a Different Approach

Doing things differently in Greater Manchester

The data presented in this report show that not all of the common narratives about education in Greater Manchester really apply. There is some evidence of a 'legacy problem' in the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial high skill economy, and there are quality issues in some parts of the system. Like other areas, GM is also dealing with the instability and change in the school system, with variable quality in the support provided to schools and risks that some schools will be 'left behind' in this new landscape.

However, Greater Manchester's main challenge is not that it falls way behind the national averages for attainment nor that its schools and colleges are failing. Instead, two key issues emerge:

- That GM is held back by social and economic inequalities. Increasing equity is fundamental to raising levels of education and skills overall. This includes reducing the disparities between different parts of the conurbation.
- That current structures do not enable a strategic approach, a situation which is becoming ever more complex as school system reforms roll out.

At the same time, GM, like other parts of the country, is dealing with a decline in adult education funding and historic inadequacies of the English vocational educational system.

I argue, therefore, that challenge under devolution should not be framed as one of driving standards up to national averages through intervening in failing institutions – in other words, pursuing national policies better locally, perhaps with some extra powers. Rather it is a challenge of developing a strategic and coordinated approach at the city-region level in order to develop different approaches, which will make a greater impact on educational inequalities and equip all of Greater Manchester's residents with the skills and knowledge they need in the 21st century.

Devolution, with its focus on the city-region scale and the soft powers of the office of Mayor, provides an opportunity to re-think what we want to achieve with our education and skills system and to convene actors within the system to collaborate towards shared objectives. As delegates at the Greater Manchester Fair Growth conference in November 2016 put it, the Mayor is in a position to articulate a "more ambitious vision" for a system that better serves the needs of local people and businesses - a system which will be the envy of the rest of the country because GM has had the courage and imagination to do things its own way.

In this chapter, I suggest what this might look like: the kinds of structures and actions that might be considered if Greater Manchester was to take up the challenge of doing things differently here.

A strategic and co-ordinated approach

A starting point is to consider what it might mean to take a GM-wide strategic approach. Discussions to date have tended to centre on the question of new powers, as well as on the possibilities arising from new policies such as the Apprenticeship Levy. These are important. However, focusing exclusively on the transfer or delegation of powers from central government, and on the immediate possibilities, may obscure the need to put in place other important elements of a systemic and strategic approach, some of which could be achieved by collaboration and the realignment of existing resources.

A strategic approach for Greater Manchester could go a lot further, adapting the whole system in the interests of greater excellence and equity, using existing resources to maximum effect. It would almost certainly lead to calls on central government for different approaches to policy and funding, but at the same could demonstrate a model of joined-up place-based working that will demonstrate the value and potential of such changes.

The Greater Manchester Challenge which operated between 2008 and 2011, and its forerunner the London Challenge, offer an example of some of the elements of such an approach. The Challenge:

- Adopted a positive, trusting and supportive approach, based on building on and sharing the expertise already in the system.[48]
- Used system-wide data to identify key priorities and to link schools into similar 'families' as a basis for collaboration
- Engaged experienced school leaders as advisors, working with schools in a bespoke way
- Fostered school-to-school collaboration
- Focused on disadvantage and narrowing attainment gaps, and on 'Keys to Success' schools facing the deepest challenges.

The evaluation[49] report also states that an area-based approach enabled schools to develop shared objectives for the system, for instance around raising aspirations.

[48] The 'affective' impact of the Challenge is highlighted in the evaluation report and by Tim Brighouse, Head of the London Challenge, who described how that initiative was born out of a narrative of crisis in London schools but was deliberately turned around by him to develop a positive and ambitious tone. See Brighouse and Fullick eds (2007) Education in a Global City: Essays from London

[49] Hutchings et al (2012) op cit.

However, while school improvement issues might be addressed by schools working together more systematically, we also need to consider other aspects of the education and skills system and how learners move through the system as a whole. There are limitations as to what can be achieved if schools are only concentrating on outcomes at age 16 or academic outcomes at age 19, while problems remain in the post 16 and adult phases, or if some children are already a long way behind by the time they enter school.

As a basis for further discussion, I suggest five system design principles for GM going forward, and some examples of how these might be reflected in specific actions.

- An **overall vision and strategy for learning in the city-region as a whole.**
    - Linked to GM's social as well as economic objectives.
    - Developed through consultative structures that bring all relevant stakeholders to the table (including young people and adult learners, parents, teachers, employers and unions as well as those more typically represented in education and skills policy decisions).

- A new **cradle-to-career approach,** bringing all aspects of education from 0 to adulthood into one system. The right structures and mechanisms would need to considered – widening the new Education and Employability board for example, or setting up a new office (eg of Education and Skills Commissioner) or a new portfolio. Objectives would be:
    - to enable a strategic and shared view of priorities;
    - to strengthen links, share expertise and where needed build consistent approaches between phases (within areas and across the city region);
    - to develop collective accountability for outcomes;
    - to enable a stronger focus on learner progression and successful transition to avoid people being left behind.

- **Oversight and coordination of system resources** including:
    - Reviewing the type and quality of provision in all phases in relation to current and future need and having a clear understanding of strengths and deficiencies.
    - Establishing a GM overview of teacher demand and supply, and developing local systems if necessary to support teacher recruitment and retention in the most challenging schools and areas.
    - Developing a strategic approach to teacher education and professional development based on a set of shared understandings of the skills and knowledge needed in Greater Manchester contexts and on patterns of recruitment and retention.
    - Investigating new sources of funding (for example, business rate income, endowment funds) to expand apprenticeship and adult learning opportunities, including career advancement programmes for people already in work.
    - Advocating for additional resources and powers from central government when needed.

- **Intelligent accountability and better intelligence**
    - Developing analysis and intelligence capacity at the GM level to identify providers, areas and issues for intervention. At present there is no GM intelligence function for the system as a whole.
    - Developing better measures:
        - To focus on progress and successful school-work/adult life transition rather than just on end-of-phase performance.
        - To capture a wider range of children's and young peoples' outcomes and progress that more roundly reflect the social and economic goals of the city-region than narrow educational outcomes.
        - To recognise and incentivise the valuable work that educational institutions and others do towards city-region objectives that is not recognised in existing accountability frameworks (for example schools working with employers and community organisations on work placements, colleges working with schools, institutions opening facilities for community use).

- **Making maximum use of system capacity and moving knowledge around**
    - Establishing a city-regional hub or hubs for knowledge sharing through online platforms and professional learning events, including case studies of practice and access to research findings.
    - Identifying schools in need of support, including those that are that are not being well supported by MATs or Teaching Schools, and coordinating support to them [this might be done through coordination with LAs and the RSC or by pushing for a GM Schools Commissioner, as the Mayor's manifesto proposes).
    - Developing ways to broker more systematic links with businesses, cultural institutions, and third sector organisations.
    - Working with GM's universities to maximise their contributions to building a 'learning city', through links with schools, colleges and employers, teacher development, widening participation and graduate retention, as well as research and analysis capacity.

A focus on equity

Building a stronger system, however, will not necessarily address the problems of educational inequalities that are identified in this report. To achieve its overall strategic approaches, GM must have a stronger focus on equity.

There is a vast body of educational research both on 'closing the attainment gap' and on broader versions of educational equity which focus more on learners' experiences and whether the education system allows everyone equally to develop their capabilities and potentials, and treats

them equally. It is impossible to even attempt an adequate synthesis here[50]. However, two key points need to be borne in mind.

One is **that most of the causes of educational inequalities lie outside the school/college**[51]: in inequalities in material resources (food, heat, space, clothing, books, computers etc); in the practical and emotional challenges of living in poverty (such as insecurity, transience, conflict, anxiety, bereavement); in the different educational, social and cultural capital deployed by different social class groups; and in the economic opportunities available in different places, and their impact on future expectations. These issues can be seen as the 'social determinants' of educational achievement gaps.

This does not mean that schools and colleges cannot make any difference. Schools and colleges make a difference through inspiring and high quality teaching. They can also do better or worse at helping to address these underlying issues (for example in providing food, clothes and emotional support, supporting families and communities) or minimising their effect on learning and life chances (for example removing stigma, building confidence and hope, providing space and resources for homework). However, school effectiveness researchers have consistently found that only between 8% and 15% of the difference in student attainment tends to be accounted for by differences between schools. While the quality of educational institutions is important, it is not the only or main thing that will make a difference. In a time of cuts to family incomes and community support services in the poorest areas, it is perhaps not surprising that educational attainment gaps are not narrowing despite significant education policy efforts. This means that efforts to improve schools need to go hand in hand with efforts to reduce poverty and to mitigate its effects on education.

A second overarching finding is that **the dominant policy approaches for reducing educational inequalities that have been pursued in recent years are not very effective.**[52]

Since 2010, the most explicit strategy for addressing socio-economic inequalities[53] has been the introduction of per pupil funding targeted at raising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils (the Pupil Premium), accompanied by an emphasis on spending this money on research-backed interventions

[50] I have provided a small number of key references. Further sources can be made available to support more detailed review of these issues, both the problems and the solutions.
[51] Raffo, Carlo, Alan Dyson, Helen Gunter, Dave Hall, Lisa Jones, and Afroditi Kalambouka. 2009. *Education and Poverty in Affluent Countries*. Routledge. Anyon, J. (2005) *Radical Possibilities*. New York, Routledge; Kerr, K., Dyson, A. & Raffo, C. (2014). *Education, disadvantage and place.* Bristol: Policy Press. BERA Commission on Poverty and Policy Advocacy: https://www.bera.ac.uk/project/bera-research-commissions/poverty-and-policy-advocacy
[52] See Lupton,R. Thomson, S. and Obolenskaya, P. Chapter 4 in 'Social Policy in a Cold Climate: Policies and their Consequences since the Crisis (2016, Policy Press) for an overview of evidence on Pupil Premium, Academies and other recent policies.
[53] It is notable that any focus on ethnic or gender inequalities has almost entirely vanished in recent years at national level.

that are shown to work in raising attainment. Thus far there has been a negligible change in the 'disadvantage gap'.

Critics have pointed out that this is partly because in the context of rising costs and falling budgets, it has been hard to for schools to protect the new funding for the designated purposes.[54] Specifically, the per-pupil approach is intended to target resources on individuals, not to support the more effective working of schools as a whole nor of system factors such as the recruitment and retention of the best teachers in the poorest areas[55]. However, research has demonstrated the considerable additional organisational challenges that schools in most challenging contexts can face: the need for additional para-professional roles and the need to for teachers to adopt broader roles in relation to families, communities and other agencies; a sense of 'firefighting' in the face of high student mobility, emotional and behavioural problems and local crises and conflicts; more highly charged emotional contexts; problems with staff recruitment and retention and so on.[56]

A wider critique is that the approach [focusing on specific interventions] is too narrow. 'Interventions' are only a small part of teachers' work and take place in a much broader context. While gains can be made from specific changes to practice, or by short-term programmes to accelerate learning or remedy problems, it could be expected that other factors such as curriculum, broader pedagogic approach and teacher skill, class size and the effective deployment of support, and the school climate (including issues of safety and bullying) would be much more influential on children's learning. The pro-poor interventions funded by the Pupil Premium taking place in a broader context: one of narrowing curriculum, less forgiving assessment, and a high level of pressure on schools to deliver increasing levels of attainment particularly in English and mathematics. Education research demonstrates that such approaches can lead to:

- practices of exclusion and social sorting within institutions that are demotivating and can see the least experienced teachers allocated to the learners who need the most support; [57]

[54] Carpenter, Hannah, Ivy Papps, Jo Bragg, Alan Dyson, Diane Harris, Kirstin Kerr, Liz Todd, and Karen Laing (2013) Evaluation of Pupil Premium. London: DFE.
[55] Allen, R, Mian, E. and Sims, S. (2016) Social inequalities in access to teachers. http://educationdatalab.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Social-Market-Foundation-Social-inequalities-in-access-to-teachers.pdf
[56] Lupton, R. (2005). Social justice and school improvement: improving the quality of schooling in the poorest neighbourhoods. *British Educational Research Journal* 31(5), 589-604
[57] Kutnick, P. et al (2005). The Effects of Pupil Grouping: Literature Review. DfE Research Report 668. Gillborn, D .& Youdell, D (2000) Rationing Education. Buckingham: Open University Press, Reay, D and Wiliam, D (1999) "I'll be a nothing": Structure, agency and the construction of identity through assessment. British Educational Research Journal 25(3), 343-354

- standard and limited 'pedagogies of poverty',[58] [59] focused on behaviour management, rote learning of basic facts, tests and marking, which neither engage nor stretch students who do not have access to a wide range of other educational resources.

These more systemic issues need to be adequately addressed in order to give individual interventions a chance to add up to significant changes in educational opportunities. While teachers may be getting better at monitoring, planning, goal-setting and assessing in order to 'drive up standards', and some pupils will be benefitting from this, there are good reasons to doubt that will produce a significant shift towards more equitable experiences and outcomes.

Evidence on Academisation also suggests that this is not a route to a higher equity system[60]. Some large Academy chains working mainly in London have been particularly successful overall and with disadvantaged learners. However, there is considerable variability between Academy chains and some schools are not in chains.[61]

This means that if GM wants to seriously consider tackling its educational inequalities, it cannot just reproduce national policy. It will need to do something different. Local discussion will be needed to determine what that should be. But again, some core principles and some suggested actions can be proposed drawing on research in the field[62]. These are:

- **Identifying the aspects of the current system that are barriers to success** for the groups identified in this report and others, and working out which could be dismantled by local action. These could include:
    - System factors such as advice and guidance, admissions policies.
    - Elements of practice, such as curriculum and pedagogies, student support, the costs of the school/college day[63].
    - Beyond institutional factors, such as travel costs, information, and employer support for adult education.

- **Building knowledge and capacity within the system to develop alternatives:**
    - Learning from teachers and schools working in the most challenging circumstances to develop both curriculum and pedagogies that are engaging, challenging and effective[64]. The Mayoral manifesto commitment to a Curriculum for Life is an

[58] Haberman, M. (1991). The pedagogy of poverty versus good teaching. *Phi Delta Kappan, 73*(4), pp. 290 – 294.
[59] Lupton, R. & Hempel-Jorgensen, A (2012). The importance of teaching: Pedagogical constraints and possibilities in working class schools Journal of Education Policy (27(5) 601-20
[60] The Academies Commission (2013). Unleashing Greatness: Getting the Best from an Academised System. London: Pearson and the RSA.
[61] Hutchings, M., Francis, B. & DeVries, R. (2014) Chain effects. Which academy chains have done most to advance low income students? London: The Sutton Trust.
[62] There are many resources that might be drawn on here, for example Ainscow, M. et al (2013) Developing Equitable Education Systems; the British Educational Research Association's 'Fair and Equal Manifesto' and the resources supporting it, https://www.bera.ac.uk/project/respecting-children-learning-from-the-past-redesigning-the-future.
[63] See, for example Mazzoli Smith and Todd, L (2016) Poverty Proofing the School Day: Evaluation and Development Report. Newcastle University.
[64] See this Australian example: Munns, G., Sawyer, W., & Cole, B. (2013). *Exemplary teachers of students in poverty.* London: Routledge.

important step in this direction but the work also needs to extend to mainstream curriculum and pedagogic approaches.
    - Developing school/school and school/university partnerships to support teacher enquiry and teacher professional development around equity issues[65].
    - Spreading knowledge of 'strength-based' approaches which draw on the 'funds of knowledge' of children and their families.

- **Developing place-based multi-agency approaches to address** "social determinants" of educational underachievement, building on previous experience with the extended school programme[66] and current examples being developed around the principle of 'Children's Zones' or 'Children's Communities'.[67]

- **A focus on the equitable distribution of resources.** While GM may not currently be able to control resources, the city-region could develop an 'equity audit' of resource distribution which could help hold central government to account, identify needs for additional investment, and support strategies for collaboration. For example:
    - Understanding the distributional impact of school funding changes.
    - Understanding the distribution of teachers and where there are shortages of experienced teachers in situations of high need.

As will be evident, achieving these things at a system level would need to embedded in broader measures to draw on and share the existing expertise in the system, plan and distribute resources, use data intelligently and develop systems of multi-agency working. System design and a focus on equity need to go hand in hand.

Concluding Remarks

In this report, I have attempted to sketch out the main issues relating to education and skills in Greater Manchester, both in terms of system features and 'performance'. I have argued for a GM-wide strategic approach, and offered some initial suggestions as to what this might look like. Crucially, I have argued that we need to reject the dominant narratives of poor performance and school failure and develop a shared understanding of the real issues holding Greater Manchester back, principally socio-economic and spatial inequalities.

The key claim is that we need a new approach in Greater Manchester, based on collaboration and shared accountability, and crucially, focused on greater equity. While some new powers may ultimately be needed to deliver this effectively, and new policy opportunities will certainly need to be

[65] Beckett, L. (2016). Teachers *and academic partners in urban schools: threats to professional practice.* Abingdon: Routledge.
[66] Cummings, C., Dyson, A., & Todd, L. (2011). *Beyond the school gates: Can full service and extended schools overcome disadvantage?* London: Routledge.
[67] Dyson, A., & Kerr, K. (2013). *Developing children's zones for England: What's the evidence?* London: Save the Children.

exploited, more important, I suggest is to set out a shared vision and establish new systems of working together to make better use of our existing resources. Although there are clearly constraints (not least funding and accountability measures), I've argued that GM should be looking to lead national policy not to follow it, demonstrating that more equitable outcomes can be achieved when educational professionals and others work in different ways and when city-region education systems channel their resources effectively to where they are needed most.

The report makes no pretence to be exhaustive. There is a vast body of data available on education and different readers will want to see different kinds of breakdowns and trends, at different scales. There is also a vast body of educational research which speaks to these topics, only lightly touched upon here. The report is also limited in its scope. Perhaps the key issue here is that it is focused on the system and supply side issues, not on current or future demand for education and skills (in economic or in broader social terms). It also focuses on learners who are in Greater Manchester. As I emphasised at the start, cities also import people who have education and skills, and export them. These dynamics also matter in the making of prosperous and inclusive cities, but are not covered here. And the report has deliberately operated at a whole system level. There are many specific issues and challenges in specific policy areas, which have not been tackled here. Finally, I have made no attempt at an review of system resources and their distribution: this would need a comprehensive analysis.

Despite these limitations, I hope I have done enough to provide some focus for a debate about what could be done, and that the challenges laid out here, as well as the proposed solutions, help move GM forward in its inclusive growth ambitions.