

Background briefing

This is a long document providing evidence in support of Comprehensive Future's aim of ending selection and a stronger more coherent local role in deciding admissions. For a definition of the terms used in this section eg admission authorities, adjudicators and a description of current arrangements please see the FAQs section. There is other information in our various publications on the website

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Introduction

1. We are convinced on the basis of the consistent evidence from research over many years, both in the United Kingdom and in other OECD countries, that inclusive admissions systems, balanced intakes and flexible curriculum arrangements, which put the individual child at the centre of the learning process, are necessary. They are needed to secure high national standards of education, by enabling all children, whatever their ability, to explore their talents to the full.
2. We are further convinced that a school system with high levels of segregation of children by family income, social class, ethnic group or religious affiliation is more likely to create a society with high levels of inequality, insecurity and intolerance and low levels of mutual respect, social cohesion and national identity.
3. We welcome the Government's oft stated commitment to 'fair admissions'. However it is clear that current legislation and guidance although improved cannot bring about fair admissions. Some bold decisions by Government will be required if fair admissions are to become a reality. Comprehensive Future believes that unless there is a clear division of responsibilities for admissions between schools, local bodies and central government, backed up by legislative changes, fair admissions will never be achieved. Admissions legislation must operate in the interests of all children and their education, not in the interests of institutions keeping their place in a pecking order of schools.
4. Comprehensive Future wants what the vast majority of parents want - all parents having access to a good local school. A survey of parents carried out by Which (2005) found that 95% of parents want access to a 'high quality local school'.
5. The maintained English secondary system has a plethora of different school governance arrangements – community, foundation, voluntary aided or controlled. These schools can also be specialist schools and/or faith schools There are also the publicly funded but legally independent schools – academies and CTCs. The idea that this diverse system means that all parents and children might have a 'choice' of these different types of schools, as patients might choose hospitals to treat them, is nonsense if schools are allowed to choose their intakes.
6. Politicians across the main parties advocate parental choice. But choice cannot exist side by side with selection. Where there is selection the institution makes the choice not the parent. Coldron (2008) found that in the most highly selective local authorities there were more appeals and fewer parents gaining their first preference.

7. The use of carefully constructed catchment areas and carefully chosen feeder primary schools can be effective in achieving balanced intakes. Similarly, banding and the random allocation of places might in some cases help to distribute pupils more equally between schools, although this could work against parents wishes to be able to forecast the probability of their child getting a place in a particular school and the aim of encouraging schools to be at the centre of their community.
8. Legislative change should be accompanied by other changes. Given the natural inertia in any large and complex system, it will be necessary for Government to use its powers over the national funding formula for school budgets to incentivise individual schools to work towards fair admissions. Soon in many areas there will be a reduction in secondary pupil numbers. Along with that there are opportunities under Building Schools for the Future. There are changes to the 14 – 19 curriculum. These changes offer an excellent opportunity to end selection at 11 and change to a non- selective system across the country.
9. These changes we recommend are needed to bring about a gradual transformation in the effectiveness of our secondary school system, a significant extension of equality of opportunity, an overall improvement in educational standards and a less fragmented and divided society. Whilst politically controversial in some quarters, these changes are essentially modest and, we believe, would secure wide support. Implementing them would gradually bring forward the day on which young people are valued, not according to the families they are born into, or the schools they attend, but by the talents they develop and the contribution that they make.

Why selection should end

Labelling children as failures at eleven is wrong.

10. The majority of children who sit 11-plus examinations are rejected. This can have profound, long-term effects on their self-confidence and aspirations. Able and talented youngsters are given the message that they should lower their sights and expect less of themselves. For them, transfer to secondary school does not start with excitement and optimism but with demoralisation. This should not happen in a society which values its children and wants all to achieve their best.
11. There is no good reason for English children, already some of the most tested in the world, should face these divisive entry tests for secondary school entry. When schools select, both on aptitude and ability, parental choice is reduced and the burden of testing on children is increased. Ending selection by ability and aptitude would help build a national network of high quality schools with a better balanced distribution of pupils. It would significantly reduce the numbers of children who are, explicitly or implicitly, labeled as failures at the age of 11. Government policy rightly is to encourage high educational aspirations, a wish to end barriers to learning and to promote well being of children. Retaining selection runs completely counter to this ideal of an education system with high aspirations for all children, keeping doors open to provide opportunities for lifelong learning. Selective systems are based on setting up most children to fail.
12. In the debate on selection for secondary education in England far too little attention has been paid to the effect of selection on children. It subjects children already facing more tests than in most other countries to another set of hurdles to jump. When selection is part of the education system far more pupils are affected than just those who pass the test, as many more are rejected. Inevitably these children will label themselves failures when only half way through their education. 4.9% of English children were in grammar schools. Assuming 3 children are rejected for each grammar place this means 15% of children have been de-motivated by rejection in England (PQ 24.6.2009). Anecdotal evidence indicates that many children sit tests, often for several schools. Selecting 10% of places on aptitude may seem minimal, but far more than 10% will be rejected.
13. The 11 plus adds another stress to children already facing SATs. As the review body looking at the effect of the 11 plus in Northern Ireland (2001) said – *We were particularly*

impressed by the views of young people about their experiences of the Tests and their effects on themselves and others. We have been left in no doubt that the Tests are socially divisive, damage self-esteem, place unreasonable pressures on pupils, primary teachers and parents, disrupt teaching and learning at an important stage in the primary curriculum and reinforce inequality of opportunity. The report went on to say - the selection (and separation) of pupils on a narrow academic basis, at such an early stage in their education career, is both inappropriate and unsustainable. In reaching this view, we have had regard also to the implications of the European Convention on Human Rights.

14. The long - term effects on pupils failed by the system are never quantified. Selection passes on message of failure from generation to generation as parents who failed the 11plus as children pass on the message to their children that education is not for them

Prejudging children's potential at eleven makes no sense.

15. None of the main political parties now support selection. Apart from the Centre for Policy Studies there is little support in think tanks too. The right leaning Policy Exchange (2008) recently advocated ending partial selection on ability and aptitude.
16. Neither parents nor teachers nor tests can predict with certainty how a child will develop between eleven and sixteen, what they will enjoy learning or what they will excel at. Children differ in their abilities and achievements at eleven but do not divide neatly into two groups, the 'clever' and the 'not clever'. Some are good at one thing but not at another. Some have yet to encounter the subject which will become their strength at secondary school. Every child should have the chance to develop their potential to the full without prejudgement of what that might be.
17. The case for dividing children at 11 was shown to be flawed when selection ended for most communities in England, this remains the case now. Why should children be divided by a test on or before 11 years of age and furthermore because of the outcome of the test have to be educated in different institutions? Where is the evidence that this intelligence is fixed - not to be acquired through subsequent experience or teaching and thirdly that that innate quality can be accurately measured by the IQ tests?
18. IQ testing is recognised to be unreliable and related to past experience rather than future potential. Research on the transfer test in Northern Ireland found it to be neither reliable nor fair (Gardner and Cowan, 2000). There is no reliable test of potential. Selection takes no account of the fact that children develop at different rates. It assumes that ability is fixed at 10+. Much brain research shows that development occurs in spurts and is subject to many influences. The basis of testing is inevitably unfair. Children whose parents can afford coaching are more likely to pass the test. Research at the time when selection ended in parts of England showed that coaching could result in higher scores while supporters maintained it was a test of innate intelligence (Ford 1969) Research by Coe for the Sutton Trust (2008) backed previous research which showed that 22% of those taking the test are wrongly allocated
19. Even children not taking the test can be affected. Selection forces primary schools to concentrate on getting some of their children through the 11 plus rather than aiming for the best for all the children. As Tim Brighouse said (1997) *Secondary grammar schools / realize beget primary crammer schools.*
20. Entry tests at 11 inevitably result in the lowering of motivation for the majority of children in selective areas who 'fail' the selective tests. Demotivating children at this age should not happen if we want all children to aim to do well. Motivation is increasingly seen as being as important as so-called ability but we do not quantify motivation. Evidence given to Comprehensive Future from headteachers of all ability schools in selective areas, drawing on their dealings with young people who were not 'selected' indicates the damaging effect of selection. As one head said to us about selection and what we put children through *-in any other area we would be guilty of child abuse.* Another head described the research done on the intake into her school, which illustrated the damaging

effect of failing the 11plus. Although in fact the cohort was above average ability it scored lower than expected on perceived learning capacity, attitude to teachers, work ethic and confidence in learning.

21. Atkinson, Gregg and McConnell (2006) compared selective and non selective local authorities. They found that the net effect of selection 'is not substantive' but they did find it resulted in gains for (the few) selected and slight disadvantage for those not selected (the majority). They found able children eligible for free school meals were unlikely to get into selective schools.

Selection damages schools which don't select

22. Comprehensive schools which take in children of all abilities and admit significant numbers of high achievers are well-placed to encourage high standards and aspirations for all. Selection distorts the intake of non-selective schools and makes their educational task much more difficult, particularly where children have lost confidence after failing the 11-plus. Excellent all-ability schools with balanced intakes are the best way of ensuring that every child receives a first-rate education.
23. Changes in admissions to encourage a more balanced intake in all schools would help to level up standards across the board. Admission policies with a local emphasis make it easier for schools, parents and local communities to develop a strong relationship.
24. A DSCF statistical bulletin (2008) showed that all selective local authorities have inflows of pupils from primary schools in other local authorities with the highest 4 local authorities having inflows of over 60% of their year 7 grammar school intake and that on average selective local authorities gain above average attaining pupils in year 7 and lose low attaining pupils.
25. Coe's research for the Sutton Trust (2008) showed that only 28% of English secondary schools are not creamed by grammars.

Selection at eleven makes social mobility less likely

26. Grammar schools are sometimes perceived as ladders of opportunity for poor children. In reality, grammar schools admit few pupils from low-income families. Statistics show that their intake is skewed towards the better-off, some of whom receive expensive private coaching to help them pass the 11-plus. Poor children are more likely to attend schools which are struggling with an unbalanced intake because of selection and with pupils who feel the system has rejected them.
27. Grammar schools admit significantly fewer children from poorer backgrounds. A parliamentary question in 2004 in the Lords showed the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals in grammar schools to be 2.2% compared to 14.1% in comprehensive schools. (PQ Lords 19.7.2005)
28. The Centre for Market and Public Organisation looked at selective education in 2007. (CMPO 2007). It reported on work by Professor David Jesson which found that grammar schools are '*rarely attended by poor children and do not represent a ladder of opportunity*'.
29. In June 2007 the Joseph Rowntree Foundation reported on factors leading to low achievement. The researchers concluded that admissions are one factor influencing the outcome for disadvantaged pupils. The report said - *Anything that gives schools greater opportunities to select their pupils works to the detriment of the disadvantaged; the current ways in which school places are allocated is part of the process by which the disadvantaged end up in disproportionately worse-performing schools.*
30. Selective schools also take differentially from ethnic minorities. A report from Slough local authority to the Commons Education and Skills committee (2004) is an illustration of this.

In 1999 17% of white children in Slough, 1% of Pakistani pupils and 29% of Indian pupils transferred to grammar schools.

31. Work by West and Hind (2006) looking at the composition of students from different ethnic groups in London grammar schools found a statistically significant differences between grammars and local 'comprehensives' in their ethnic composition. There was a lower proportion of Black students and a higher proportion of Indian and Chinese/other Asian students in grammar schools.
32. A DCSF Statistical Bulletin published in June 2008 had a great deal of data on the effects of selection. It showed that grammar school year 7 FSM intakes are lower than average and are not representative of their local areas; grammar schools have a lower than average incidence of pupils classified as SEN and grammar schools have a higher than average incidence of ethnic minority pupils (largely due to a higher than average incidence of Indian pupils). Black African, Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean and Pakistani pupils are underrepresented in grammar schools compared to their local areas.
33. Selection widens the gap between the achievement of the poor and the better off. The significance of segregation in terms of differing social intakes between schools is highlighted in the reports of the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). This large-scale study of the knowledge and skills of 15-year-olds was conducted in 2000 and again in 2003, on the latter occasion involving 41 countries. On each occasion it was shown that countries with more divided school systems perform distinctly less well, in terms both of overall standards and the spread of attainment, than those which are based on a more integrated and comprehensive approach. For example, "*In countries with a larger number of distinct programme types, socio-economic background tends to have a significantly larger impact on student performance such that equity is much harder to realise*" and "*The analyses reveal that countries with greater socio-economic inclusion tend to have higher overall performance*" In other words integration, equity and excellence tend to go together. The PISA study three years later (2007) involved 57 countries. Its conclusion was clear. *A clear cut finding from PISA is that early differentiation of students by school is associated with wider than average socio-economic disparities and not with better results overall.*
34. Social mobility refers to the relationship between a person's social class or income origins and their social class or income destinations. Changes in mobility are more likely to be due to initial rapid but now slower growth in room at the top because of massive expansion of white collar jobs and reduction in manual jobs in the 1950s.
35. Some claim that grammar schools were a route for social mobility. A paper by the London School of Economics (2005) for the Sutton Trust is often quoted in support but this paper did not attribute the slow down in social mobility to ending selective education. The paper also showed that the most socially mobile countries are the comprehensive Scandinavian countries.
36. A pamphlet from the Centre for Policy Studies (2006) claim that those going from the bottom 25% to the top 50% has fallen from 40% to 37% at a time coinciding with the move from grammars to comprehensives. But for this argument to stand up, the majority of those 40% would have to have gone to grammar schools. In 1962 only 20% of children went to grammar schools so it is highly unlikely that any more than 10% of the bottom quartile, if that, would have gone to grammars. Grammar schools were not therefore responsible for the 40% mobility.
37. Contrary to many claims there was no golden age when grammar schools admitted significant numbers of working class pupils to enable them to go on to higher education. As Adrian Elliott makes clear (2007) the Crowther report in 1959 showed that fewer than 10% of the poorest quarter of the population went to grammar school. Furthermore a government study commissioned before the Crowther report found that 40% of working class children from unskilled families left grammar schools with no O levels.

38. Claims are made by some supporters of selection that there were more state school pupils in Oxbridge when there was selection. Comparisons with the percentage of state school pupils entering Oxbridge several years ago must be viewed carefully to take into account the fact that most direct grant schools whose pupils in the past contributed to the state school numbers as they were fee paying schools but with a quarter of their places funded for pupils from state primaries. These schools mostly became independent when comprehensive education was introduced. A report for MPs by the House of Commons Library in June 2009 shows that contrary to what is claimed the proportion of state school pupils in Oxbridge increased from 1970 onwards. It quotes the Robbins report 1961 which showed that the 34% of Oxford students and 27% of Cambridge students had attended a state secondary school. Now the proportions at both are around 50%.
39. In 1999 the Oxford Vice Chancellors reported on the entry of state schools pupils into Oxford. It found a two fold problem. First a large number of able candidates from the maintained sector were not applying to Oxford and second when they did apply their success rate was generally below that of candidates from the independent sector. Research carried out by NFER quoted in the report among high achieving state school pupils on decisions to apply to Oxbridge found that "students attending grammar schools are most likely to apply and those attending comprehensives the least likely". Research quoted by the Sutton Trust (2008) also found that pupils with the qualifications to apply to top universities are not doing so.
40. There has been an overall increase into HE since comprehensive education was introduced. Indeed more poor students are going to university. Comprehensive schooling allowed for the expansion in numbers of pupils prepared for HE entry. (Comprehensive Future briefing, 2004) However the increase has not been as fast in poorer social class groups compared to the better off. A House of Commons Library paper on higher education and social class (2009) quotes the Dearing report which showed that while participation rates from the professional and skilled classes increased from 8.4% in 1940 to 45% in 1995, those from manual and unskilled increased from 1.5% to 15.1% over the same period.
41. Researchers have said that the principal cause is the lower attainment of poorer pupils at school. A report for the Sutton Trust (Vignoles 2008) showed the attrition of high attaining poorer pupils through secondary means that many do not reach the A level standard to enable them to go to university. If they do attain the same level their chances of getting into higher education are the same as students from more privileged backgrounds if they apply. Poorer students are less likely to apply to HE even if they have the right qualifications.
42. In a report on social mobility the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR 2008) recommended changes to admission policies so that they are more likely to create socially balanced schools as this benefits children from lower social classes. In its report on changes needed to the English education system the think tank Policy Exchange (2008) recommended an end to selection on ability and aptitude because of the social segregation which lowers overall attainment.
43. Researchers looking at social mobility (Iannelli and Paterson 2005) in Scotland found that the expansion of professional jobs and the contraction of manual jobs, together with educational expansion and comprehensive reforms have enabled a large number of working class children to enter professional and managerial occupations. Education has facilitated upward mobility. However education had not increased social fluidity. That is, it has not reduced the gap between social classes in the chances of entering top level occupations because there is still a strong effect on parental class on their children's achieved class which is not mediated by education.
44. The Children's Society (2008) undertook a large survey of opinion on what constituted a good childhood. Writing on 'learning' its chief executive Bob Reitemeier concluded that '*Social mobility cannot simply be delivered by a fair and equitable education system. Learning needs to address poverty and parenting as well as academic achievement*'.

45. A panel chaired by Alan Milburn MP on fair access to the professions reported in July 2009. Although it had many recommendations about improving schools it did not advocate a return to selection. It referred again to the fact that in the 1950s more room at the top opened up by increasing numbers of professional jobs.

Selection divides children, parents and communities

46. Primary schools tend to be at the heart of local communities. Children make friends from the local area, parents meet at the school gates and some may help to organise activities which support the school. Where children move on together to the same secondary school, this web of informal relationships remains intact even if parental involvement is less. The school benefits and so does the community. Selection disrupts relationships, lengthens travel and makes it difficult, if not impossible, to develop a pattern of strong local schools.
47. Where schools select social segregation increases (Coldron 2008) Drawing on research from several sources Coldron said '*The evidence concerning selection and overall attainment is complex but it is clear that it contributes substantially to social segregation without any significant balancing educational benefit*'. Work by Allen and Vignoles from LSE (2006) found an association between local authorities with higher proportions of pupils in schools that controlled their own admissions or have explicit selection by ability and the level of FSM segregation.
48. This is particularly important in light of the role in fostering community cohesion which schools are encouraged to take following the Cattle report. Schools will always have different pupil populations, if only because of residential geography, but selection exaggerates these differences and makes it hard for some schools to flourish.
49. A comparison of the social segregation in England's secondary schools with other OECD countries by the Statistical Sciences Research Institute in Southampton (Jenkins 2006) showed that England is middle ranking in terms of social segregation. High ranking countries such as Austria, Holland, Germany and Hungary have selective school systems. Countries such as the Nordic countries and Scotland have less segregation than England and the researchers conclude this is because of their non-selective school systems.
50. Selective local authorities have lower levels of socio-economic disadvantage, for example in 2003 wholly selective authorities had 11% of pupils eligible for free school meals compared to 17% in wholly comprehensive areas. (PQ 20. 5.2006)
51. Ending selection would release more money to be spent in classrooms as the costs of tests, school transport and admission appeals would fall. Researchers for the Sutton Trust (2008) found on average 20% of grammar school pupils were from another local authority. This represents an enormous amount of travelling by students. The costs of administering the selection tests themselves and the appeals resulting will deplete funds which might otherwise be spent in the classroom. A report to Kent County Council on the 10th February 2000 estimated the cost of operating the selection process at £521,000. Most fully selective local authorities spend more on school transport than their statistical neighbours (PQ 29.6.2004). North Yorkshire is largely comprehensive but has three grammar schools, the costs of administering the test in 2007/8 was £191,365.89 (personal communication).
52. There have been reports that when schools select on catchment areas parents move house to get to the schools they want and this is more unfair than selection by ability. One study (Leech and Campos 2003) indicated that there might be a 20% difference in house price, a premium parents were willing to pay. But wealth affects selection by ability too. Parents in selective areas pay sometimes £60 a week for two years to have their children coached for the 11plus. At least if parents do not buy in a particular area, children do not feel they have failed.

Selection and achievement

53. Since comprehensive education was introduced, barriers to achievement for many young people have been removed. The annual government statistics of school attainment, examination results, and participation in further and higher education offer clear evidence of a 'levelling-up' over the last 25 years.
54. There are many complications in relation to comparisons of systems. Jesson (2006) has looked at selective and non-selective local authorities and found that where schools in an area are organised on selective lines (as in 15 of the 152 local authorities) the overall impact is to depress the educational performance of these communities as a whole. He wrote *A government committed to raising standards for all must not exclude from its agenda those currently educated in 'secondary modern' schools – these pupils are currently seriously disadvantaged in GCSE performance by the way that their schooling system operates. Maintaining that disadvantage should not be an option.*
55. However in comparing selective local authorities and 'comprehensive ones' it must be remembered that many 'comprehensive' local authorities will be creamed of their more able pupils by selective schools in neighbouring local authorities. The non-selective schools in these authorities will therefore have pupils which, if only local children were admitted, would have been in the selective schools, so the resulting pupil mix in these schools may be similar to the 'creamed' comprehensives in the neighbouring local authority. This will be reflected in the results for two authorities.
56. Coe (2008) for the Sutton Trust found that nationally 20% of those attending grammars do not live in the local authority in which the grammar is situated this can rise to 75% in some areas. Across England as a whole 33% of wards house at least one pupil who attends a grammar school. He considered that as there was such a lot of movement across local authority boundaries comparisons of local authorities are not meaningful.
57. Using national pupil data the Coe (2008) found that pupils in grammars do little better than similar pupils in other schools; a difference somewhere between zero and $\frac{3}{4}$ of a GCSE grade. He also examined the comparative studies of performance of students in selective and non-selective schools carried out over many years. Most suffer from limitations of methodology but those which do not, found that students of equal ability do better in grammars. However Coe's research supported previous research which showed that selective schools seem to select pupils already making faster progress at primary schools.
58. Between KS2 to 3 selective schools do better than comprehensives on value added comparisons but it has been suggested that this is related to basing the KS2 score on levels. That is although there will be a similar mix of pupils with level 4 and 5 entering grammars the selective entry test will have selected the more able children.
59. In comparing selective schools and non selective schools at A level it should be noted that another level of selection seems to operate for entry into the sixth form. A parliamentary question in 2004 showed that the percentage of pupils aged 16-18 known to be eligible for free school meals was only 1.5% compared to 2.3% of pupils aged 11-15.(PQ 31 March 2004).
60. Any comparisons of achievements of 'secondary moderns' and 'comprehensives' have to take into account that many schools in selective local authorities are not officially designated as secondary modern schools. The 164 grammar schools across England are officially designated as such, as a result of regulations arising from the School Standards and Framework Act which define grammar schools as selective. This was necessary in order to produce regulations about balloting etc. However other schools are not defined in this way and so their official status may not reflect their intake. This is illustrated by Table 1.1 of the Education and Training Statistics for the UK 2007 which lists 3,343 schools as secondary schools of which 164 are grammars; 113 are modern; 248 are middle deemed secondary; 2 are technical; 23 are other and 2,793 are 'comprehensive'.

61. In wholly selective areas the effect of selection is strongly felt in the primary schools. As well as preparing children for SATS schools also have to cope with the effect of the 11plus. An OFSTED report on Kent (a wholly selective LEA) in January 2003 found that both at KS1 and KS2 results at primary schools were lower than similar local authorities.
62. Some supporters of selection call Northern Ireland in evidence, but it shows the stark divisiveness of selective systems. Northern Irish grammar schools have only 7% of children eligible for free school meals compared to non-selective average of 28%. Over recent years only 5% of children from the Shankill have achieved grammar school places. (Guardian 2006)
63. Comparisons of comprehensive Scotland with NI show illustrate the wide gap in achievement as a result of selection. A DfES comparison (2006) showed that of all people of working age the percentage of people with no qualifications in NI is 22.6% in Scotland it is 12.9% similarly the percentage of people with qualifications levels 4 -6 ie degree level in NI is 18.1% in Scotland is 25.4%. An ESRC study in 2006 comparing England with Scotland showed higher participation in higher education in Scotland and that working class Scots 'outperformed their English peers'.
64. Crozier, James and colleagues (2008) looked at the reasons middle class parents chose what appeared to be local underperforming comprehensives. One outcome of the research was that their pupils had gone on to perform very well at GCSE and beyond.

Fairer admissions

A stronger coherent role for local determination of admissions

65. Changes brought about in the School Admissions Code 2009 are more strongly focused on local determination and monitoring, giving powers to local authorities and admission forums and more opportunities for parents to be consulted. A survey of the changes in admission legislation since 1997 can be found in the report by Anne West for the Research and Information on State Education trust 2009.
66. However Comprehensive Future believes that there should be openness and transparency over admission arrangements so all publicly funded schools are involved in local admission arrangements operating the same system as all other schools. The situation should end where some schools are able to set their criteria independently and others cannot. Furthermore the situation remains complex for parents. The responsibility for setting admissions criteria independently should be taken out of all schools, whether academy, trust, foundation, voluntary or community. The setting of individual schools admission criteria should be the responsibility of the local admissions forum, agreeing with each local school, following the guidance and regulations set nationally.
67. These are the changes which we wish to see-
 - Academies and CTCs as legally independent schools are not tied in to the Code in the same way as maintained schools. Although required by their funding agreements to meet the Code the levers to ensure that happens currently rest entirely with the Secretary of State. We want to see these schools brought in line with other schools in the area so all local publicly funded schools operate under the same arrangements
 - The School Admissions Code requires all admission authorities to set admission (oversubscription) criteria which are fair. Regulations allow for the administration of all admissions (ie determining whether an applicant meets these admission criteria) to be carried out by the local authority even if the criteria are set by the school. Comprehensive Future wishes to see this as a requirement on all publicly funded local schools, including those that are currently their own admission authority. This would relieve all schools of this administrative burden and bring more openness to the procedure.

- No school should set its own admission criteria in isolation. All admission criteria for all local publicly funded schools should be agreed by the admission forum. If there is to be banding, for example, it should be across the ability range for the local authority intake, not apply only to applicants to an individual school. All publicly funded schools in the area should have the same system of banding agreed by the admission forum.
68. Roughly a third of English secondary schools (voluntary aided, foundation and academies) are admission authorities able to decide their admission criteria. Academies and City Technology Colleges have been set up as legally independent but publicly funded schools. Therefore legislation which covers 'maintained' schools does not apply to them. They arrange their admission criteria in agreement with the Secretary of State.
 69. Before 2003 parents had to make separate applications to schools which were admission authorities. The 2003 Code of Practice for School Admissions gave a coordinating role to local authorities so parents had only one form to complete (unless schools had supplementary information forms.) Co-ordination has made it easier for parents to exercise the choice already available to them by cutting down on the number of forms they have to complete and by introducing a common timetable for each area. Co-ordination has also made it easier for local authorities to ensure that all children have a school place.
 70. However schools which are admission authorities make the decision about whether or not applications meet their admission criteria if the school is over subscribed. Comprehensive Future wants to see local authorities doing this work ie administering admissions for all local schools, including the publicly funded 'independent' schools ie academies and CTCs. The Local Authority should assess how applicants for places meet the admission criteria for all schools in the area and administer the admission process. If admission criteria set by the school are objective, fair and clear it is difficult to see why any school should object to the local authority making the decision as to which applicants meet the criteria
 71. There is encouragement from Government for all community schools to become either foundation or trust schools and thereby admission authorities. Although it is not clear how many schools might take this option, evidence suggests that if more schools are to become admission authorities there will be more overt and covert selection. This is an unsatisfactory situation unlikely to lead to fair admissions, as some schools are able to pick and choose their intakes, while others are not. Chamberlain et al (2006) found that voluntary schools admitted a lower proportion of pupils eligible for free schools meals than the local area even when the wider geographical spread of the intake was taken into account.
 72. Speaking to Comprehensive Future seminar Professor Anne West from LSE, who has researched school admissions, said *'the admissions criteria of a significant minority of autonomous schools are not designed to ensure that they take their 'fair share' of children with difficulties. These schools appear to be more likely to act in their own self-interest and less likely to act altruistically. Indeed, one can hardly blame the schools, they are responding to a market oriented system and the incentives it creates – the system encourages schools to compete and to seek to maximise their league table position, reputation and funding. So the problem with admissions to autonomous secondary schools is that a significant proportion do not have what might be considered to be fair criteria'*.
 73. In 2005 the Times Educational Supplement reported its survey of almost a third of local authorities in England. It found that 'children living in areas with fragmented education systems, with large numbers of faith, foundation and academically selective schools, faced admissions problems'.

74. In January 2006 the Sutton Trust reported the low rate of fsm eligibility in the highest scoring comprehensives. Of the 200 with the highest scores 70% operated their own admissions.
75. Schools that are admission authorities as well as setting their own criteria are able to ask for information on supplementary information forms. West (2009) found that some of these were asking for information not allowed by the then Code. She also found that despite changes parents still considered the process of admissions to be too complex. There was a similar finding from a DCSF commissioned parental survey (2009) in four locations. Parents found it 'complicated, time consuming and stressful.

Monitoring fairness

76. Monitoring the fairness of local admission arrangements relies largely on the role of admission forums, local authorities and the adjudicator.

Admission Forums

77. Comprehensive Future considers that the admission forum is well placed to agree suitable admission criteria for all local schools. Working with schools and Local Authorities it is at the right level to decide local flexibilities within the School Admissions Code. However since they were set up there have been changes in the membership and role and it still remains to be seen how their role works out in practice.
78. Admission Forums made up of local representatives were introduced with the School Admissions Code 2003. Setting up admission forums was voluntary. Their role was to include examining how well local admission arrangements serve the interests of local parents and children collectively, reviewing guidance and protocols for admission of vulnerable children or children with challenging behaviour.
79. The Audit Commission (2006) in responding to the White Paper before the Education and Inspections Bill and then Act said that some admission forums had proved effective in challenging poor practice but not all of them.
80. Following this the School Admission Code 2007 extended the role and membership of the Admissions Forum to include all local schools and made them mandatory. Their role was to ensure a fair admissions system which promotes social equity, monitoring local admissions. The Code also gave forums the power (but not the duty) to produce an Annual report on the effectiveness of local admission arrangements. Admission authorities are required by the Code to 'have regard' to the advice of the admission forums. Admission forums were to report to the Adjudicator any unfair practices or oversubscription criteria or where their advice has been disregarded by any admission authority.
81. The consultation which gave rise to the School Admissions Code 2009 raised the possibility of making voluntary the setting up of admission forums, however this was rejected by those responding. The latest Code however amended the membership yet again to reduce it to no more than 20 members appointed by the authority. There has to be one representative from community, voluntary aided, voluntary controlled, foundation and academies, and CTCs if found in the relevant area. All these representatives must be headteachers or governors. In practice this will mean that own admission authorities form the majority representation from schools. Faith groups with schools also have to be represented. There has to be one parent, who does not need to be a parent governor. The local authority provides the secretary to the forum. The forum's main role is to consider the fairness of the admission arrangements in the area. The production of a report to the adjudicator remains voluntary.

Local authorities and the Schools Adjudicator

82. The 2005 Annual Report of the Adjudicator showed that few local authorities had complained to the Adjudicator. The report made the point that it seemed unlikely that in all other areas everything was operating fairly.
83. The Audit Commission (2006) in responding to the White Paper , Better Schools for All said that 'failure by a council to refer continuing poor practice to the Adjudicator disenfranchises individual parents who do not have the right themselves to challenge existing criteria through this route'.
84. During the debate on the White Paper the Education and Skills Committee (2006) before the introduction of the Education and Inspection Bill (later Act) the Government claimed that the Adjudicator provided all the legal enforcement needed. However this was to change.
85. In the 2006 Annual Report the Adjudicator reported an increase in complaints from local authorities.
86. An IPPR report in June 2007 recommended that administration of admissions should be done by the local authority, in the medium term the local authority would set admission criteria for all schools and eventually that all schools should have a banded intake.
87. The School Admissions Code 2007 strengthened the duty to complain to the adjudicator by requiring local authorities to complain over unfair practices they find and consider carefully any representations made by parents about admission arrangements and if necessary complain to the Adjudicator. Admission Forums were required to complain about unfairness, but needed a vote in favour of sending a complaint from the whole forum.
88. The 2007 Code extended the rights of parents to complain to the adjudicator. Individual parents can complain to the adjudicator if admission arrangements do not comply with the law or mandatory requirements of the Code. MPs are encouraged to facilitate parents' complaints. To object to selection parents have to have a child of primary school age and live in the relevant area. Parents of a child over 2 but not above compulsory school age can object to failure to comply with the mandatory (ie 'must') provisions of the Code. However an inconsistency remains in that if local schools introduce 10% selection on aptitude parents cannot object to the Adjudicator as it is allowed by the Code. However they may do so if schools propose taking fewer pupils than their published admissions limit. This is despite the fact that both actions could result in local children securing fewer places in the schools.
89. So until recently bringing the adjudicator into action relied heavily on those able to make objections doing so. This was a major weakness. Most parents only realise that their children are being kept out of a local school by unfair admission arrangements when they go through the admission process. It is far too late then to make a complaint as this should be made after the local consultation in advance of admissions in the following year. Fair admissions must be required from the outset.
90. But in Spring 2008 following a DCSF investigation of three local authorities on their compliance with the School Admissions Code 2007, when officials found evidence of non compliance, amendments to the Education and Skills Bill (now Act) were introduced to require local authorities to prepare a report on the legality of all local admission arrangements for the adjudicator. The result of this is that the Adjudicator is empowered to take action without a complaint being made. These changes were incorporated into the Schools Admissions Code 2009.
91. An initial study of determined admission arrangements based on the fires reports from local authorities to the School Adjudicator in June 2008 found 'a large number of issues' requiring attention. Most were technical breaches of the law but in over 800 schools and 10 local authorities the Adjudicator found 'more substantial' contraventions.

92. Following this report the then Schools Adjudicator made four recommendations – that the Code should include standard definitions for example of parents; that model Supplementary Information Forms should be drawn up; that the DCSF set up an admission arrangements builder on its website including standard wording for oversubscription criteria and that all admission arrangements should be posted on their website by local authorities in April with links to a national website.
93. The Education and Inspections Act also introduced the role of the Schools Commissioner. His wide remit, largely based on encouraging schools to become trust schools and setting up academies was also to include a report on fair access based on the reports on local arrangements which admission forums can produce. The first report was due initially in January 2009 and then April 2009. This part of the role seemed to conflict with that of the Adjudicator and it seems that this part is now in the extended remit of the Schools Adjudicator.
94. Further changes are possible as the DCSF White Paper published in June 2009 indicates that local authorities will be required to survey parental views on the quality and range of provision as they apply to secondary schools for their children. If local parents are dissatisfied the authority will have to consult on changes.

Banding, random allocation and selection by faith

95. Banding is a means of trying to ensure a spread of children of all abilities by admitting children in relation to their score in tests arranged either by the school or in their primary schools. Many people support banding as a means of ensuring an academically balanced intake. What we do not know is how much it would be necessary if all other means of schools selecting their intakes were removed. Banding is a form of academic selection, requiring children to sit tests. All selection (including banding) tests children and labels them. So there has to be a good reason for banding as it can result in children unable to attend a local school.
96. The importance of a balanced intake was highlighted in a report for the Sutton Trust by the Education Research Group at the London School of Economics (2009). Researchers found significant differences in attainment for otherwise similar pupils attending schools of different levels of deprivation. The authors recommended greater use of area wide banding with random allocation as 'another option'.
97. The then Chief Adjudicator Dr Philip Hunter spoke at a national meeting of Comprehensive Future on the 5th November 2005. He said *In a few inner city areas, general banding for school admissions can work well. For most of the country, however, banding or random allocation cannot be introduced at the expense of giving priority to local parents and children. There is nothing that infuriates parents more than being denied a place in their local school because the school has decided to take children who live further away. It is reasonable to allocate spare school places to parents who want them, even if those schools are a long way from where they live. It is not reasonable to deny places to local children who want them when those children would have to travel a long way to an alternative school. There must be a general presumption in favour of giving children places in their local schools, if that is what their parents want. There would be riots in the streets of many towns and villages on the edges of cities if some of their children had to travel into the city to make way for children travelling in the opposite direction.*
98. In effect four types of banding are allowed by the School Admissions Code (paragraph 2.80) Schools which are admission authorities may band across the ability range of the applicants to the school, or may work together with other schools to band across their joint intakes, or banding can be across the ability range of the local authority or in relation to national ability range. The Government has not produced evidence of the likely effect of this provision. It needs detailed investigation. It seems likely that different methods could be adopted by different schools, if many schools become admission authorities children could face many tests in each school.

99. If individual schools band they may deny local children a place, or affect the intakes into other neighbouring schools. Children should not have to attend schools a long way from their homes. Clearly only area wide banding should be considered but only then if all schools in the area participate in the same banding scheme. Coldron (2008) found that in the (very few) local authorities with area banding segregation was much less. Even then not all schools participated. Currently the numbers of bands used by different admission authorities vary and the type of test used. The admission forum is the obvious place for area wide banding to be agreed.
100. The DCSF reported on responses to its consultation on the draft School Admissions Code in 2008. On banding respondents 'overwhelmingly' supported banding where schools within a local authority area base their intake on tests taken by all children in their primary schools. The DCSF said it had consulted on this 'with a view to making a change at the next legislative opportunity'. So far this has not emerged.
101. The School Admissions Code allows 'random allocation'. A decision in Brighton to use this where schools are oversubscribed within catchment areas has led to a lot of debate about 'lotteries' giving the impression that all names were to be put in a hat and chosen. It remains to be seen if lotteries produce balanced intakes into schools or if it results, as banding might, in some children travelling long distances to schools. Interestingly the Sutton Trust (2007) found that most parents thought nearness to school was the fairest way to allocate places when asked to decide the fairest way to decide allocation to a comprehensive school. Ballots were not unpopular however as an alternative. Selection by faith was found the most unfair. Research by CfBT Education Trust (2007) examining admissions in New Zealand, Netherlands and Sweden found similar issues about admissions. The researchers also suggested that allocation by ballot might be the fairest means of deciding.
102. Following media concern about random allocation the Secretary of State in 2009 asked the Adjudicator to do an investigation into the effect of the use of random allocation. This is expected in September this year.

Faith schools

103. Members at the AGM 2006 agreed that there was a need for Comprehensive Future to have a policy on faith schools admissions. The following was agreed at the AGM October 2007
- *Comprehensive Future is of the view that local accountability for all school admissions is essential in consultation with all relevant stakeholders. We support the co-ordinating role for the Local Authority in "ensuring fair access to educational opportunity" and the monitoring role of the Admissions Forum in "ensuring a fair admissions system that promotes social equity" as set out in the School Admissions Code.*
 - *Regulations allow for the administration of all admissions (ie determining whether an applicant meets the admission criteria) to be carried out by the local authority even if the criteria are set by the school. Comprehensive Future wishes to see this as a requirement on all publicly funded local schools, including those that are currently their own admission authority.*
 - *Comprehensive Future believes that no school should set its own admission criteria in isolation and that all admission criteria for all publicly funded local schools should be agreed by the admission forum*
 - *Comprehensive Future recognises the contribution that faith groups have made and continue to make to the education of Britain's children. It seeks the support of all faith groups in securing an equal chance for all children and in the ending of selection by both ability and aptitude. Comprehensive Future welcomes the*

adoption by some faith schools of an open admissions policy which welcomes all children regardless of faith.

- 104.** A campaign group ACCORD was set up in 2008. Among several issues concerning faith schools it campaigns for faith schools to be open to all children regardless of faith.

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August 2009

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