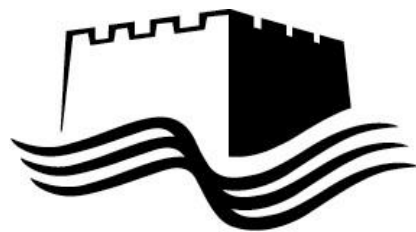


APPENDIX ONE

Literacy across Early Years, Primary, Secondary and Adult Learning

Scrutiny Review Report



TOWER HAMLETS

**London Borough of Tower Hamlets
May 2015**

Chair's Foreword

Councillor Denise Jones

This Scrutiny Review set out to assess the success and quality of the Borough's existing approach to improving literacy at all levels of learning experience. The panel was concerned that despite excellent teaching from early years through to adults there are children leaving primary schools and students at GCSE level who are not reading at the expected level for their age.

Access to literacy is recognised as a basic right and 'is fundamental to informed decision-making, personal empowerment, active and passive participation in local and global social community.' Investment in developing literacy skills has shown to have supported statistically significant increases in life satisfaction, mental well-being, locus of control and self-esteem' and provides a greater return to the taxpayer.

Over the course of the last decade, Tower Hamlets Council has invested to develop its provisions to secure improved outcomes across primary and secondary learning. Despite the progress made, up to 13% of pupils continue to secure less than a Level 4 in Reading and Writing at the end of Key Stage 2, and up to 40% of pupils struggle to achieve 5 GCSE's at A*-C including English and Maths by the end of Key Stage 4. In the area of adult learning the borough reports the second highest rate of functional illiteracy with 21.5% of adults reporting literacy levels below level 1.

Responding to the scale of the challenge, pressures of continued reductions in resources and the impact of welfare reform, often affecting the most vulnerable in society, requires continued investment in effective and high quality provisions and is at the heart of developing a more resilient and empowered community. With this in mind the panel have undertaken this review to explore how the Local Authority can continue to improve outcomes.

Throughout the course of this review the panel broadly explored wider issues, including the availability of sufficient educational psychology services to schools and its impact on unlocking funding for learners with special educational needs, as well as the effect of interventions (academic and non-academic) on learners currently in Pupil Referral Units. Recognising the importance of these areas as connected to the objectives of this review but ultimately independent issues, the panel hopes that these will be incorporated in future work programmes adopted by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

Continue to fund the operation of Local Authority nurseries.

Recommendation 2:

Improve the quality of online information available on the council's website including making available information and videos on the impact of early years learning.

Recommendation 3:

Support the development of early years hubs to promote good practice through clusters of providers.

Recommendation 4:

Support the identification of grant streams and corporate sponsors to ensure the continued availability of the Reading Recovery programme in Tower Hamlets.

Recommendation 5:

Explore opportunities in conjunction with the Idea Store Learning Service to support the development of higher literacy skills amongst Support Staff in Early Years, Primary and Secondary settings in the borough.

Recommendation 6:

Develop and implement a pilot Academic English programme at Key Stage 3 and assess the impact on learning outcomes.

Recommendation 7:

Make available to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee findings of the commissioned research and relevant action plans to address underachievement amongst White British students.

Recommendation 8:

Undertake a review of the successes of the Triage tool at the end of Year 1 and report findings to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendation 9:

Undertake a review of health literature developed to support those with poor literacy and assess the impact on the patient experience and the success in affecting the management of health conditions. The findings of this review are to be reported to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendation 10:

That Healthwatch Tower Hamlets undertake a research project to scope existing work on health literacy in the borough and its impact on the health of local residents and identify areas for improvements. The findings of this research are to be reported to the Council's Health Scrutiny Panel and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendation 11:

Include improving Health Literacy as a strategic issue in the development of the new of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy in 2016/17.

Recommendation 12:

Explore the use of the triage tool developed by the Idea Store service within health settings across the borough.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Recognising the importance of literacy to effect change, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) upholds literacy as a human right and as 'a tool of personal empowerment and a means for social and human development'.
- 1.2 In 2008, the National Literacy Trust published a report entitled 'Literacy Changes Lives'. The report provided a comprehensive analysis on the impact of literacy on health and wellbeing, economic prosperity, family life and aspirations and civic and cultural engagement. The report concluded that although the relationship between literacy and other variables may not always reflect a direct casual connection, poor literacy was prominent in the profile of a disadvantaged adult.
- 1.3 Aside from the ability of literacy to significantly impair or enhance the quality of life, the impact of literacy also affects society as a whole. The KPMG foundation published in 2006 a report entitled 'The long term costs of literacy difficulties' which highlighted that the cost to the taxpayer of addressing poor literacy up to the age of 37 was between £44,797 and £53,098, or £1.73bn to £2.05bn per annum.
- 1.4 The London Borough of Tower Hamlets, is one of the most deprived authorities in England and London. With a rich migrant history, the borough suffers from high levels of child poverty, unemployment and poor health amongst its local population.
- 1.5 Although the borough has made significant strides in improving learning outcomes at Key Stages 1 through to 5, there continues to be room for improvement. The 2011 Skills for Life Survey suggests 21.5% of the borough's adult population remains functionally illiterate.
- 1.6 The aim of the review was to explore the support and interventions in place to assist learners throughout their educational journey to develop functional levels of literacy to operate independent and fulfilling lives.
- 1.7 The review was underpinned by three core questions:
 - a) What are the key causes of underachievement and how can attainment be sustained?
 - b) What are the interventions available to all teachers to identify and tackle poor literacy in children?
 - c) How effective are the adult learning provisions in identifying and reaching out to learners with poor literacy?
- 1.8 The review was chaired by Cllr Denise Jones, Scrutiny Lead for Children's Services over the course of 4 sessions in February and March 2015. The sessions held at the Town Hall, Mulberry Place and were supplemented by a visit to the Osmani Primary School.

1.9 Other members of the panel included;

Cllr Danny Hassell	Councillor, Bromley South
Nozul Mustafa	Co-opted members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Victoria Ekubia	
Rev. James Olanipekun	

1.10 The review was supported by;

Gulam Hussain	Strategy, Policy and Performance Officer
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1.11 The panel received evidence from a range of officers and experts including;

Brenda Taggart	Principal Investigator, UCL Institute of Education
Tara Furlong	Advocate, Research & Practice in Adult Literacy (RaPAL)
Remi Atoyebi	Head, Osmani Primary School
Georgie Hughes	Reading Recovery Teacher, Osmani School
Brenda Landers	Head. Swanlea School
Anne Canning	Service Head, Learning & Achievement
Sue Crane	Ethnic Minority Achievement Officer
Di Warne	Head of Secondary Learning & Achievement
Monica Forty	Head of Learning & Achievement – Birth to Eleven
Juanita Haynes	Senior Research Officer
Jo Green	Childcare Sufficiency Manager
Sharon Gentry	Childcare Quality Manager
Pauline Hoare	Early Years Lead Officer
Gillian Harris	Head of Schools Library Service
Nicola Blatchly-Lewis	Strategic Manager, Early Years & Childcare, London Borough of Newham
Judith St John	Head of Idea Store
Simon Leveaux	Deputy Head, Idea Store Learning
Niki Chatha	Assistant Programme Manager - Skills for Life
Leanne Chandler	Assistant Programme Manager - ESOL
Somen Bannerjee	Director of Public Health

2. The Learning and Achievement Service

- 2.1 The Learning and Achievement Service in Tower Hamlets supports the delivery of learning across early years, primary, secondary and further education for residents of the borough. In 2013, a report commissioned by Tower Hamlets Council with support from experts from the UCL Institute of Education argued that that the borough hosted 'some of the best urban schools in the world'.¹
- 2.2 The work of the service is focused on supporting improvement across 85 nursery, primary and secondary schools in addition to the growing number of sixth form provisions as well as working closely with the growing body of academies and free schools in the borough.

A detailed structure chart is included in **Appendix 1**.

The Early Years Service

- 2.3 Early Years learning in Tower Hamlets is facilitated through a range of providers. The borough's needs are met through 61 primary schools with attached early years units, 5 Local Authority nurseries and 6 maintained nursery schools. These are further complemented by 75 private nurseries and playgroups located around the borough and 118 Ofsted registered childminders who are subject to grading and inspection.
- 2.4 The Early Years Service manages the delivery of early learning through the Local Authority nurseries and supports private and maintained providers to deliver high quality learning. The service is responsible for securing sufficient early years provision which offers support and guidance, in line with the statutory duties placed on the Local Authority.
- 2.5 The work of the Early Years team is further supported by the Family Information Service which makes available a list of Ofsted registered childcare and nursery providers for families as well as offering advice and guidance to parents.

Primary Learning and Achievement

- 2.6 The Primary Learning and Achievement service works with the 70 Local Authority maintained schools in the borough. Funded through the traded services model, the service offers professional development opportunities for teachers and senior leaders within primary schools, training around literacy, numeracy and subject specialisms and support for schools during Ofsted inspections.

Secondary Learning and Achievement

- 2.7 The Secondary Learning and Achievement team supports learning across secondary schools and ensures the availability of high quality post-16 provision across the borough. In addition to supporting learning within the school environment, the service employs Home Educational consultants to support families educating children at home. The service relies on funding retained by the Local Authority from the Dedicated Schools Grant and generates income through traded services to support a libraries service and the Gorsfield Rural Studies Centre in Essex

¹ 'Transforming Education for All: the Tower Hamlets Story' London Borough of Tower Hamlets, 2013

3. Early Years Learning

Early Years Foundation Stage Framework

- 3.1 Introduced as part of the Childcare Act 2006 (effective as of 2008) the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets standards for the learning, development and care of children from birth to 5 years old for pupils in England. The framework measures the development of pre-school children across 7 areas of learning including communication and language, personal, social and emotional development and literacy amongst others. All schools and Ofsted-registered early years' providers must follow the EYFS framework, including child-minders, preschools, nurseries and school reception classes.
- 3.2 The Childcare Act 2006 places on Local Authorities the duty to secure sufficient childcare for working parents, assist private providers in the delivery of 570 hours of state funded childcare annually per child and make available information and advice for prospective parents. In addition, Local Authorities are required to support providers in meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, offer advice and training in meeting the needs of children deemed vulnerable, with special educational needs or disabilities and ensure the presence of effective safeguarding and child protection arrangements. Despite the broad range of responsibilities held by Local Authorities, they have no powers to undertake an assessment of the provider and are required to rely on Ofsted as the benchmark for quality.
- 3.3 In 2010 the Government made available 15 hours a week of state funded early education for all 3 and 4 year olds for 38 weeks of the year. In 2013 this was extended to 2 year olds who were looked after or from families meeting the eligibility criteria for free school meals and subsequently extended in 2014 to accommodate 40% of all 2 year olds from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. This change was also accompanied by a revised framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

4. The Impact of Early Years Learning

Effective Pre-School, Primary & Secondary Education Project (EPPSE)

- 4.1 To explore the impact of effective early years learning on long term educational gains, the review panel heard evidence from Brenda Taggart, Visiting Research Associate at the UCL Institute of Education.
- 4.2 The panel were introduced to the Effective Pre-School, Primary and Secondary Education Project (EPPSE), a longitudinal study funded by the Department for Education. Commissioned in the 1990's the objective of the research programme was to address the lack of research evidence setting out the long term impact of learning between the ages of 3-4.
- 4.3 The findings of the EPPSE project on the impact of pre-schooling at ages 7, 11, 14 and 16 suggested that not only did effective pre-schooling continue to impact learning outcomes at each stage, but in many instances its measured effect was equivalent to or greater than the impact of the socio-economic background of a learner. Access to effective pre-schooling had the potential to minimise the impact of socio-economic disadvantages, with learners with pre-schooling exceeding the age-related reading expectations even when coming from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- 4.4 Emphasising the importance of high quality early years settings, the review panel were directed to findings from the EPPSE project which highlighted that maintained provisions delivered the best quality, consistency and learning outcomes, whilst the private and independent sector could deliver high quality learning this was often less consistent. The panel was therefore keen to ensure that such settings were available to Tower Hamlets children.
- 4.5 The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS), developed at the University of North Carolina and expanded upon at the UCL Institute of Education, was as introduced as a supporting tool for measuring quality. Indicators of high quality learning settings as determined by the tool were set out as having a balance between activities initiated by adults and children and the use of shared sustained thinking.²

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Continue to fund the operation of Local Authority nurseries.

Supporting Early Years Learning in Tower Hamlets

- 4.6 Explaining the work of the Local Authority in supporting the development of the early years provisions, the Early Years Lead Officer emphasised that many of the initiatives highlighted above, and in other boroughs, were already in place.
- 4.7 The Local Authority supported a range of programmes such as Every Tower Hamlets Child a Talker (ETHCAT) and Every Tower Hamlets Child a Reader (ETHCAR) aimed at supporting effective language development and Helicopter

² Working together with students in an intellectual way to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate activities or extend a narrative. Both parties must do the thinking and it must develop and extend.

Stories to encourage early writing. The Authority also used the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) and the Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS) as quality benchmarks.

- 4.8 In addition to delivering a comprehensive range of training to providers the service was at present exploring proposals to develop a Forest School within the Borough. Based on the Scandinavian model aimed at promoting awareness of nature and environmental responsibility, a programme based on the Forest Schools principles was being used to stimulate creative thinking to support the development of early writing. The Local Authority had already delivered part funded Level 3 training for 84 early years practitioners and teachers with continued strong demand and had also provided a subsidised trip to Scandinavia with possibilities for further expansion of this offering.
- 4.9 Although statistical near neighbours³ such as Newham outperformed Tower Hamlets by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, comparing the two boroughs showed that planned spend in Tower Hamlets per child per hour was 25% less. Only 36% of early years practitioners in private settings possessed Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) or Early Years Professional Status (EYSP) in Tower Hamlets, as opposed to 41% in Newham. In addition 36% of our early years learners were eligible for free school meals, as opposed to 25% in Newham. Coupled with the larger proportion of children entering the early years phase with little or no English, learners in Tower Hamlets were on average at a greater disadvantage.

Accommodating 2 year olds in Early Years Settings

- 4.10 Exploring the widening of early years learning to a greater proportion of 2 year olds, the Childcare Sufficiency Manager set out the current position of the Local Authority in meeting the requirements of this expansion. Whilst there had been a steady uptake of this offer the Authority had failed to meet the target set out by the Department for Education, with the lowest rates in the country.
- 4.11 To understand the reasons why some parents were not taking advantage of the early years offer for 2 year olds, the service commissioned research to identify the common barriers for families. The report identified that parents felt that formal education at age 2 would either conflict with the parental role for providing early care and education or was too early an age for children to be in a formal setting.
- 4.12 The lack of integrated settings allowing the enrolment of 2 year olds at the primary schools of choice also acted a barrier for many families. Restrictions of space and the cost implications meant availability was limited, although Nursery Schools were slowly responding. Whilst the Department for Education (DfE) made available approximately £3,000 per child the actual cost of delivering a high quality provision was approximately £8,000 requiring schools to subsidise the shortfall.
- 4.13 Acknowledging the findings of the research the Early Years Service has adopted a comprehensive marketing and communications strategy. Initiatives identified included writing to eligible parents, operating a 'Golden Ticket' system and introducing changes to the admissions system to encourage enrolment, as well

³ Areas with similar characteristics e.g. demographics, deprivation

as the development of an information DVD. Widespread marketing using the East End Life, the local authority free-sheet and publicity across bus stops and children's centres were also in place. The service also expected to engage ethnic media partners and to commission roadshows to engage the community. However, there are additional measures that could be undertaken to improve take-up of childcare and education for 2 year-olds.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Improve the quality of online information available on the council's website including making available information and videos on the impact of early years learning.

Ensuring Quality in Early Years Settings

- 4.14 Recognising the growth in early years places in the borough was being driven by the private and voluntary sector, and noting the findings of the EPPSE project, the review panel sought assurance on the quality of provision currently in the borough.
- 4.15 Responding to the panel's concerns, the Childcare Quality Manager highlighted that quality was an issue amongst some providers but the use of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) framework had helped in addressing some of these issues. There were at present a limited number of settings which had been rated poorly by Ofsted but were on the way to improving. Under rules set out by the Department for Education (DfE), Local Authorities were permitted to work with providers graded 'Satisfactory' where sufficient spaces could not be secured through 'Good' and 'Outstanding' providers alone.
- 4.16 Although Local Authorities could not use independent quality assessments to determine funding of early years spaces, such assessments had enabled support to be targeted more effectively based on the needs of providers. Providers benefitted from support for the development of policies and procedures, advice and support in preparation for Ofsted inspections and dedicated project workers and linked advisory and inclusion teachers. The service was also working with the council's planning service to introduce requirements for appropriate play spaces to be included for all future planning applications.
- 4.17 Referring to the EPPSE project, Brenda Taggart from the UCL Institute of Education reinforced the importance of quality in early years settings. Poor quality provision was highlighted as being counterproductive and long term exposure to poor settings was more likely to contribute to hyperactivity.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

Support the development of early years hubs to promote good practice through clusters of providers.

5. Primary, Secondary and Post 16 Learning

- 5.1 The education system in England is defined by the National Curriculum which sets standards of learning and assessment. The National Curriculum organises the learning journey into Key Stages. In line with plans laid out by the Department of Education (DfE) in 2007, the school leaving age is set rise to 18 as of September 2015.

Figure 1.1: National Curriculum Key Stages

KEY STAGE	AGE	EDUCATION PHASE
Early Years	2-5 years	Early Years/Reception
Key Stage 1	5-7 years	Primary Education
Key Stage 2	7-11 years	
Key Stage 3	11-14 years	Secondary Education
Key Stage 4	14-16 years	
Key Stage 5	16-19	Further Education

The Education Landscape in England

- 5.2 The Academies Act 2010 facilitated the exponential growth of the academies programme in England. Inspired by the free school system in Sweden, the Act built upon the City Academies programme initiated by the Labour government in 2000 allowing the conversion of existing schools to academy status whilst removing the ability of the Local Authority to create new maintained schools. Between 2010 and March 2015, 4580 primary and secondary schools had converted with a further 871 applications approved or under consideration.⁴
- 5.3 Benefits to schools of conversion to academy status include the direct receipt of funding from the DfE without Local Authority deductions, flexibilities over pay and conditions for staff, the ability to determine the length of school terms and the school day and the ability to opt out of delivering the national curriculum. In March 2015, the Prime Minister, David Cameron committed a future Conservative government to the creation of an additional 500 free schools in England (**Appendix 2**).
- 5.4 The acceleration of the academies programme has resulted in the significant erosion of powers held by Local Authorities in the area of education. Whilst Local Authorities continue to be responsible for securing sufficient diversity and provision for education within their localities their ability to intervene in school affairs has been curtailed significantly.

⁴ DfE Transparency Data: *Open academies and academy projects in development*

Curriculum Reform

- 5.5 Following the election of the coalition government in 2010, the Government published the 'The Importance Teaching' white paper setting out its vision for the 'whole-system' reform of education in England.
- 5.6 Focusing on the development of basic skills across literacy and numeracy, the reforms have resulted in the introduction of a range of changes to testing at Key Stage 2, GCSE and A-Levels. Breaking apart the composite English test at Key Stage 2 to separately assess reading and writing, students are now also tested on Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (SPaG). Continuing this theme at GCSE and A-Level, as of 2011 students are awarded a maximum of 5% for the correct application of spelling, punctuation and grammar across English Literature, Geography, History and Religious Studies qualifications.
- 5.7 Driving the reform of the National Curriculum and qualifications at Key Stages 4 and 5, students are now required to learn more Shakespeare, develop stronger competencies in spelling and grammar whilst also developing presentation and debating skills. Moving away from creative writing, the revised programmes emphasise formal types of writing with students expected to provide developed answers and employ more frequently extended writing in responses to questions.

6. Primary, Secondary and Post 16 Learning in Tower Hamlets

- 6.1 Introducing the panel to the service, the Service Head for Learning and Achievement highlighted the developments in the education landscape redefining the relationship between schools and local authorities. The function of the Learning and Achievement Service was set out as one of identifying broad themes across schools which can be addressed to lift attainment.
- 6.2 The work of the Learning and Achievement Service in recent years had increasingly shifted towards more academic work around developing the independent learning and research skills of students. Improving attainment in literacy was at the heart of the service and had been for many years.
- 6.3 Setting out the impact of education reform and savings exercises undertaken by the Local Authority, the Head of Learning and Achievement – Birth to Eleven highlighted the challenges faced by the Learning and Achievement Service. Following the removal of the statutory duty on Local Authorities to have in place a School Improvement Partner for each maintained school, the Primary Learning and Achievement Service had seen a reduction in the core workforce from 20 to just 5 members of staff. Changes to the funding of the service, requiring it to generate its own income through traded services to schools, placed additional pressures and restrictions on the range of work the service could undertake.
- 6.4 Although the Secondary Learning and Achievement Service continued to benefit from core funding through the Dedicated Schools Grant, the service was still subject to pressures from changes to education funding, the growth in non-maintained provisions which receive direct funding from the Department for Education (DfE) and the widening of its remit in line with the increase to the school leaving age.

Reading Recovery at Key Stage 1 and 2

- 6.5 Exploring the range of literacy interventions in place at Key Stage 1 and 2, the panel observed and received evidence on the benefits of the Reading Recovery programme from the Headteacher and Reading Recovery teacher at Osmani Primary School.
- 6.6 The programme, originally developed in New Zealand, supported the lowest achieving children at Key Stage 1 to reach expected levels of reading by the end of the programme. Delivered over a 20 week period, students were supported through daily one to one teaching for up to 30 minutes led by a specialist Reading Recovery teacher. Schools delivering the intervention also benefitted from the Reading Recovery teacher contributing to the whole school by sharing good practice with teaching and support staff as well as their specialist expertise in literacy development effective pedagogy.
- 6.7 In 2006 a report published by the KPMG Foundation highlighted the long term cost to the tax payer of addressing poor literacy⁵ as ranging between £44,797 and £53,098 per person, or £1.73bn to £2.05bn per annum. A cost benefit analysis of the Reading Recovery programme by Investing in Children suggested that an investment of £2,668 per child for the delivery of the Reading Recovery

⁵ The report entitled '*The long term costs of literacy difficulties*' monitored the cost of intervention up to the age of 37.

programme generated a total return of £11,004 of which £3,620 was for the taxpayer.

- 6.8 Within Tower Hamlets the programme had demonstrated an average 21 month gain in reading age after 40 hours of individual teaching. Children starting the programme with a reading age of 4 years and 10 months and left with a reading age of 6 years and 7 months on average. In 2013-14, 88% of children going through the programme returned to age-related expectations with the remaining 12% making significant progress.
- 6.9 Although originally funded by the Local Authority, resource constraints had forced it to divest itself from the programme and transfer responsibility to willing partners. In September 2013 the Osmani Primary School assumed responsibility for the programme. In addition to meeting the costs of providing adequate facilities, the school also employs the Reading Recovery teacher responsible for delivering the programme.
- 6.10 Although schools in the Local Authority recognised the long term benefits of the programme, costs associated with recruiting a sufficiently experienced Reading Recovery teacher and the ongoing impact on time, resources and space meant that the number of schools within the borough delivering the programme had declined in recent years. This had forced the school to seek partners outside of the borough to sustain the programme.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

Support the identification of grant streams and corporate sponsors to ensure the continued availability of the Reading Recovery programme in Tower Hamlets.

Embedding Literacy across the Key Stage 3 and 4 Curriculum

- 6.11 Changes to the national curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 and the introduction of revised course content for GCSE qualifications had increased the demands on learners to demonstrate an effective grasp of language and literacy across a range of subjects. Assessments increasingly focused on the use of extended writing and there was now greater recognition of using grammar correctly.
- 6.12 The range of subjects on offer as part of the secondary curriculum meant that the teaching of English typically only accounted for 15% of the school timetable. Combined with the lack of ownership for the development of basic skills such as literacy across all subjects, and in many cases the absence of appropriate skills or required confidence amongst subject leaders, this presented a key challenge for schools.
- 6.13 The Headteacher of Swanlea School, Business and Enterprise College set out the need to upskill teachers to support the development of reading, writing and oracy skills across all subjects as a core priority for schools. As part of its staff development initiative, the school has invested to reduce the teaching commitment of staff to facilitate time for professional development and had invested in developing the literacy skills of teaching assistants through formal learning.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Explore opportunities in conjunction with the Idea Store Learning Service to support the development of higher literacy skills amongst Support Staff in Early Years, Primary and Secondary settings in the borough.

Transitioning from Primary to Secondary Schools

- 6.14 The review panel sought to explore the potential role of transition from primary to secondary schools in affecting the sustainability of progress in literacy, particularly for more delicate learners.
- 6.15 Whilst there had been a huge body of work undertaken by governments to address the issues around transition from primary to secondary schools, there was no single approach to the issue. Within Tower Hamlets however there had been positive work in setting up close partnerships between secondary schools and feeder primaries to enable closer working and support the transition process more effectively for parents and learners.
- 6.16 Responding to the increased national focus on learning outcomes for those aged 16-19 and the impact in facilitating access to higher opportunities, the Local Authority with funding from the Mayor of London had developed a programme to support the development of Academic English amongst learners. The programme, aimed at encouraging learners to speak formally and improve the quality of written communication, had been successful in supporting the transition from Key Stage 4 to 5 and improving outcomes. A similar programme of work was identified as being potentially beneficial to bridging the gap between Key Stage 2 and 3.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

Develop and implement a pilot Academic English programme at Key Stage 3 and assess the impact on learning outcomes.

White British Attainment

- 6.17 Whilst exploring the attainment figures for pupils at the end of Key Stage 4, the panel explored the issue of underachievement amongst White British pupils in the borough. Setting out the disparity in attainment, the Ethnic Minority Officer presented statistical evidence which suggested ethnic minorities such as the borough's Bangladeshi population were meeting national expectations whilst the White British population were typically amongst the lowest 20%.
- 6.18 Attainment in reading and writing at Key Stages 1 and 2 was notably lower amongst this group and by the end of Key Stage 4 the number of pupils leaving with 5 GCSE's including English and Maths was considerably lower. White British students were over-represented on Special Educational Needs (SEN) registers and in Pupil Referral Units across the borough. This over

representation was often more likely to be as a result of behavioural challenges as opposed to learning needs.

- 6.19 The ability to effectively target underachievement amongst White British pupils was restricted due to the lack of funding available, however this had since changed. Effective communication skills was also an issue which typically affected this group of learners and interventions which had been successfully applied amongst other low attaining groups had failed to reverse the trend. Effective use of the pupil premium would prove to be an important resource in addressing the attainment disparity and wider issues which affected learner engagement.
- 6.20 The Head of Primary Learning and Achievement underlined the cyclical nature of underachievement amongst White British pupils with poor aspirations often being passed through generations. Underachievement amongst this group was a long term issue.
- 6.21 In setting out the current initiatives of the Local Authority to address the attainment disparity, the Senior Research Officer explained plans adopted by the Learning and Achievement Service with the support of the council's Corporate Research Unit to undertake a piece of research to better understand themes and trends relating to underachievement amongst White British Students.
- 6.22 Recognising the significant body of work undertaken by the London Borough of Lambeth, the research programme would engage learners in Year 6 and above alongside parents and schools, in addition to analysing attainment data. It is hoped the outcomes of this research will enable the Local Authority to develop approaches to address the attainment gap.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

Make available to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee findings of the commissioned research and relevant action plans to address underachievement amongst White British students.

7. Adult Learning, Policy and Context

Adult Learning in England

- 7.1 The European Commission defines adult learning as, 'all forms of learning undertaken by adults after having left initial education and training, however far this process may have gone'⁶.
- 7.2 Adult learning in the UK typically refers to the acquisition of skills at or below a Level 3 for learners aged 19 and over. Levels of learning in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are measured according to the Qualifications and Credit Framework.

Figure 1.2: QCF Framework

QUALIFICATION LEVELS	ACADEMIC EQUIVALENTS
Pre Entry	N/A
Entry Level 1	5-7 years
Entry Level 2	7-9 years
Entry Level 3	9-11 years
Level 1	GCSE grades D-G
Level 2	GCSE grades A*-C
Level 3	A-Levels
Level 4	HNC/NVQ Level 4

- 7.3 The responsibility for the funding of adult learning in England is managed by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA), an executive agency of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).

Skills for Sustainable Growth

- 7.4 In 2010 the newly formed coalition government announced the launch of a revised strategy setting out the government's skills policy for England. Introduced as the 'Skills for Sustainable Growth', the new strategy reflected the broad objectives of the new government 'to return the economy to sustainable growth, extend social inclusion and social mobility and build the Big Society'⁷, all of which were underpinned by the need to improve skills.
- 7.5 In addition to providing a stronger economic case underpinning the government's skills policy, the revised strategy introduced phased changes to the funding of adult learning programmes.

⁶ *Study on European Terminology in Adult Learning: for a common language and common understanding and monitoring of the sector*, UCL Institute of Education, 2010

⁷ *Skills for Sustainable Growth*, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2010

Figure 1.3: Adult Learning Funding (Post 2010)

LEARNING LEVEL	AGE 19-24	AGE 24+	UNEMPLOYED AND ON BENEFITS
Basic Skills	Fully funded	Fully Funded	Fully Funded
Level 2 (First)*	Fully funded	Co-funded	Fully funded provision for learners with skills barriers to employment aged 23 and under and below Level 3. Loans for those aged 24+ on courses at Level 3 and above.
Level 2 (Retraining)*	Co-funded	Co-funded	
Level 3 (First)*	Fully Funded	Loans	
Level 3 (Retraining)*	Co-funded	Loans	
Level 4*	Co-funded	Loans	

***Excludes literacy, numeracy and ESOL programmes**

- 7.6 Under current funding arrangements learners are entitled to a range of concessions including full or partial funding whilst pursuing their first qualification. Continuing policy established under the 'Skills for Life' Strategy in 2001, provision for free literacy and numeracy qualifications up to and including Level 2 and entry level ICT programmes continues to be available to those with skills below the set thresholds regardless of age or income status.
- 7.7 The Skills for Sustainable Growth strategy also introduced further reform to funding of ESOL programmes. Building on the 2006 reform of ESOL funding which introduced eligibility criteria for fee remissions the new policy adopted a number of changes to ESOL funding. These included;
- Further limiting full fee remission to people claiming Job Seekers' Allowance (JSA) or Employment Support Allowance (ESA)
 - Removing full fee remission from people on a range of other benefits, including Working Tax Credits, Housing Benefit, Income Support, Council Tax and Pension Credits
 - Reducing the programme weighting factor affecting funding
 - Ending funding for ESOL in the workplace.
- 7.8 As of the 2013/14 academic year, funding rules set out by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) moved to a single rate funding model as opposed to payment by the number of learning hours delivered. This shift from enabling institutions to claim for up to 450 learning hours to attracting a single rate regardless of the duration of the programme has impacted on the delivery models adopted by course providers.

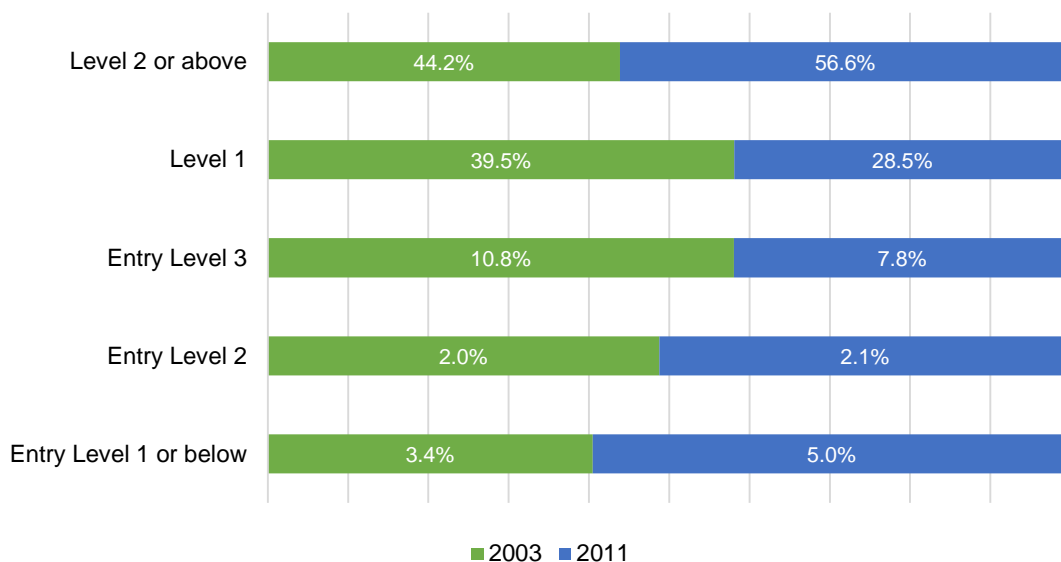
Adult Literacy in England

- 7.9 The National Literacy Trust suggests that those with a reading age at or below that of an 11 year old would be deemed functionally illiterate.
- 7.10 In 1998, responding to growing concerns over the decline of functional skills amongst adults in England, the government commissioned Baron Moser to

report on the scale of the issue. The resulting report entitled ‘A Fresh Start – improving literacy and numeracy’⁸ identified that approximately 20% of the adult population in England lacked basic functional skills.

- 7.11 Responding to the findings and recommendations of the Moser report, the Government in 2001 launched the Skills for Life Strategy aimed at addressing the skills deficit. The strategy aimed to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of 2.25 million adults by 2010 and reach a milestone of 1.5 million learners by 2007.
- 7.12 The 2011 Skills for Life Survey highlighted that the number of individuals possessing a Level 2 qualification in literacy had increased since the 2003 survey. Despite the notable increase in the number of adults possessing a Level 2 qualification in literacy, the growth in high performers largely reflected improvements to progression for learners at Level 1.

Figure 1.4: Adult Literacy Levels in England, 2003 and 2011



- 7.13 The number of people reporting their first language as being other than English however had increased from 7% to 11% contributing to the increase in the number of people identified as being at or below Entry Level 1. Overall, 15% of the adult population in England continue to be functionally illiterate.

Delivering Adult Learning in Tower Hamlets

- 7.14 In 1999, Tower Hamlets Council introduced the concept of the Idea Stores, setting out a vision to invest in library services during a time of declining investment in the sector.
- 7.15 Since the launch of the concept and the first Idea Store in Bow in 2002, 4 other stores have opened across the borough with the most recent addition to the portfolio in May 2013. The spaces which offer users access to library, learning

⁸ *Improving Literacy and Numeracy, A Fresh Start* : www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/mosergroup/index.htm

and information had attracted 2.3 million visits over the course of the last financial year with the flagship Whitechapel Idea Store currently ranked as one of the busiest libraries in Central London.

- 7.16 In 2010 the council merged its lifelong learning provision with the Idea Stores service as part of realising the vision of delivering an integrated offer. The 2015 refresh of the strategy which governs the priorities of the service will include a focus on work around digital inclusion, health and wellbeing, employability and universal services.
- 7.17 Annually the Idea Store Learning Services delivers in excess of 1000 courses and attracts £2.8 million in funding from the Skills Funding Agency each year. In 2013 the quality of teaching and learning delivered by the service was graded as 'Good' by Ofsted.

Adult Literacy in Tower Hamlets

- 7.18 The 2011 Census showed that Tower Hamlets had one of the fastest growing populations in the country. Reporting a total population of 254,096, 69% identified themselves as belonging to a Black or Minority Ethnic group (BME).
- 7.19 In responding to questions on language, 34% responded as using another language other than English as their main language and 8% reported poor or no fluency in spoken English, the second highest rate nationally.
- 7.20 The 2011 Skills for Life Survey highlighted that 21.5% of the population in the borough reported literacy skills below a Level 1. This figure, the second highest in the country places one in every five people in the borough in the category of functionally illiterate. **(Appendix 3)**
- 7.21 Comparing the 2011 Skills for Life Survey and the Census data indicates that whilst approximately 8% of the borough's population reported limited or no grasp of the English Language, a higher proportion reported literacy levels below Level 1 highlighting a wider prevalence of poor literacy levels amongst residents with a degree of fluency in the English Language. The absence of disaggregated statistics from the Skills for Life Survey makes the assessment of functional illiteracy amongst those with a previous learning experience in the UK difficult.

8. Adult Learning in Tower Hamlets

Delivering Universal Services

- 8.1 The Head of Idea Store highlighted that the service had taken a number of steps to support the delivery of universal services including hosting health outreach workers at the Idea Stores and developing strong cross council links to facilitate a smoother transition for users seeking access to other services. Staff also had access to joint training held with other areas within the council.
- 8.2 To further support the objective of delivering universal access the service had invested in the development of a triage tool aimed at capturing data and allowing for users to be directed more precisely to relevant services. The tool would undergo a pilot testing period at two of the major Idea Stores in Whitechapel and Chrisp Street Market.

RECOMMENDATION 8:

Undertake a review of the successes of the Triage tool at the end of Year 1 and report findings to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

- 8.3 The Deputy Head of Idea Store Learning reiterated that approximately 21.5% of the borough's adult population had a literacy level below Level 1 and this was not restricted to those who were unemployed. For those in work the lack of adequate levels of literacy presented a barrier to progression. The delivery of ESOL programmes had been a dominant feature of the service's offering in recent years due to the scale of need. However there was also a recognition that there was a need for a broader approach to literacy in the borough.
- 8.4 The demand for ESOL learning continues to be significant with approximately 700 learners supported through ESOL programmes each year approximately. This represents 41% of the total budget and 37% of teaching time for the Idea Store Learning Service. The service did not have the necessary resources to facilitate greater access due to the scale of the demand. The time and resource implications of delivering ESOL programmes were further magnified due to lower levels of - and in some instances no previous - education amongst many learners.
- 8.5 The service had enhanced the ESOL curriculum through a stronger focus on reading and writing in addition to speaking and listening to facilitate learner progression on to higher level programmes. The curriculum was also designed to ensure learners were able to develop health and digital literacy. This work was supplemented through competitions to encourage writing and reading for pleasure.
- 8.6 In addition to delivering learning through the Idea Stores themselves, the service had developed partnerships with Children's Centres and schools in the borough to target hard-to-reach groups.

The Chair queried how funding changes affected the delivery of programmes, in particular contributing to the facilitation of accredited learning outcomes without developing functioning operational skills.

- 8.7 In accepting the need for learners to demonstrate outcomes, the Deputy Head of Idea Store Learning emphasised the role of ensuring an appropriate range of accredited and unaccredited learning to meet learning needs. Of the £2.8 million received each year from the Skills Funding Agency (SFA), £450,000 was used to support accredited learning. There was however a need for further investment in literacy and numeracy programmes to support demand.

Addressing Stigma

- 8.8 Officers recognised the stigma learners are likely to face in acknowledging deficiencies in their levels of literacy. Highlighting the initiatives of the service, the Assistant Programme Manager for Skills for Life introduced the family literacy programme which was specifically designed to target learners not prepared to access programmes through the Idea Stores. Offering accredited and non-accredited learning, the programme helped to develop skills around practical scenarios such as visiting the GP. In addition to this programme the service had renamed a number of their courses to make them more inviting and had in place an assessment system which captured 90% of all users which allows for literacy and numeracy needs to be assessed without a declaration from the learner.
- 8.9 However, many residents still did not recognise the value added by improved literacy and numeracy skills, and instead found ways of coping without them, which made engagement far more challenging. Despite having access to a wide range of data, the full range of literacy needs in the borough remained an unmapped area.
- 8.10 There review panel recognised ongoing work to refresh the Local Authority's Community Plan setting out the priorities for the next 5 years. Developing literacy skills would be a key tool to support the council achieve its vision to create a resilient community in the face of declining resources.

Health and Literacy

- 8.11 Recognising the broader implications presented by poor literacy levels, the review panel sought to explore the role played by other services within the council in promoting literacy amongst Adults.
- 8.12 The Director for Public Health explained that Health Literacy was a recognised challenge. For example, a 2014 report by the Royal College of General Practitioners had highlighted that 43% of UK adults failed to fully understand information which contained text, including signs in hospitals, leaflets and health guides.⁹ Within Tower Hamlets the late detection of cancer and poor outcomes had highlighted the potential barriers presented by inadequate literacy in supporting effective primary care.

⁹ 'Half of all patients find health advice too complicated', Royal College of General Practitioners, 18th June 2014

- 8.13 In September 2014, Public Health England alongside UCL's Institute of Health Equity produced a report setting out the health benefits of adult literacy. Drawing together existing research the report concluded that 'adult learning can have indirect benefits by improving social capital and connectedness, health behaviour, skills, and employment outcomes, each of which affect health. There is also some evidence that adult learning has direct positive effects for mental health.'¹⁰
- 8.14 In Tower Hamlets, the Public Health service had taken initiatives to develop health literature on common long term health conditions such as diabetes, cancer and mental health to enable greater accessibility for learners with poor literacy. These materials had been distributed through the Idea Stores and embedded in ESOL curriculums and also through registered social landlords.
- 8.15 There was an acknowledgement that despite this investment, little work had been undertaken to assess the impact of the developed literature in improving the patient experience and their experience of health services, and that this was now necessary to help understand the current extent of health literacy.

RECOMMENDATION 9:

Undertake a review of health literature developed to support those with poor literacy and assess the impact on the patient experience and the success in affecting the management of health conditions. The findings of this review are to be reported to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RECOMMENDATION 10:

That Healthwatch Tower Hamlets undertake a research project to scope existing work on health literacy in the borough and its impact on the health of local residents and identify areas for improvements. The findings of this report are to be reported to the Council's Health Scrutiny Panel and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

- 8.16 As part of improving patient engagement to fully reflect patient needs, work had been undertaken to engage the local Clinical Commissioning Group as well as developing care packages to offer structured needs based support to service users. More work however was needed in explicitly recognising health literacy as a strategic issue across the council and in key plans such as the council's Health and Wellbeing strategy.

RECOMMENDATION 11:

Include improving Health Literacy as a strategic issue in the development of the new of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy in 2016/17.

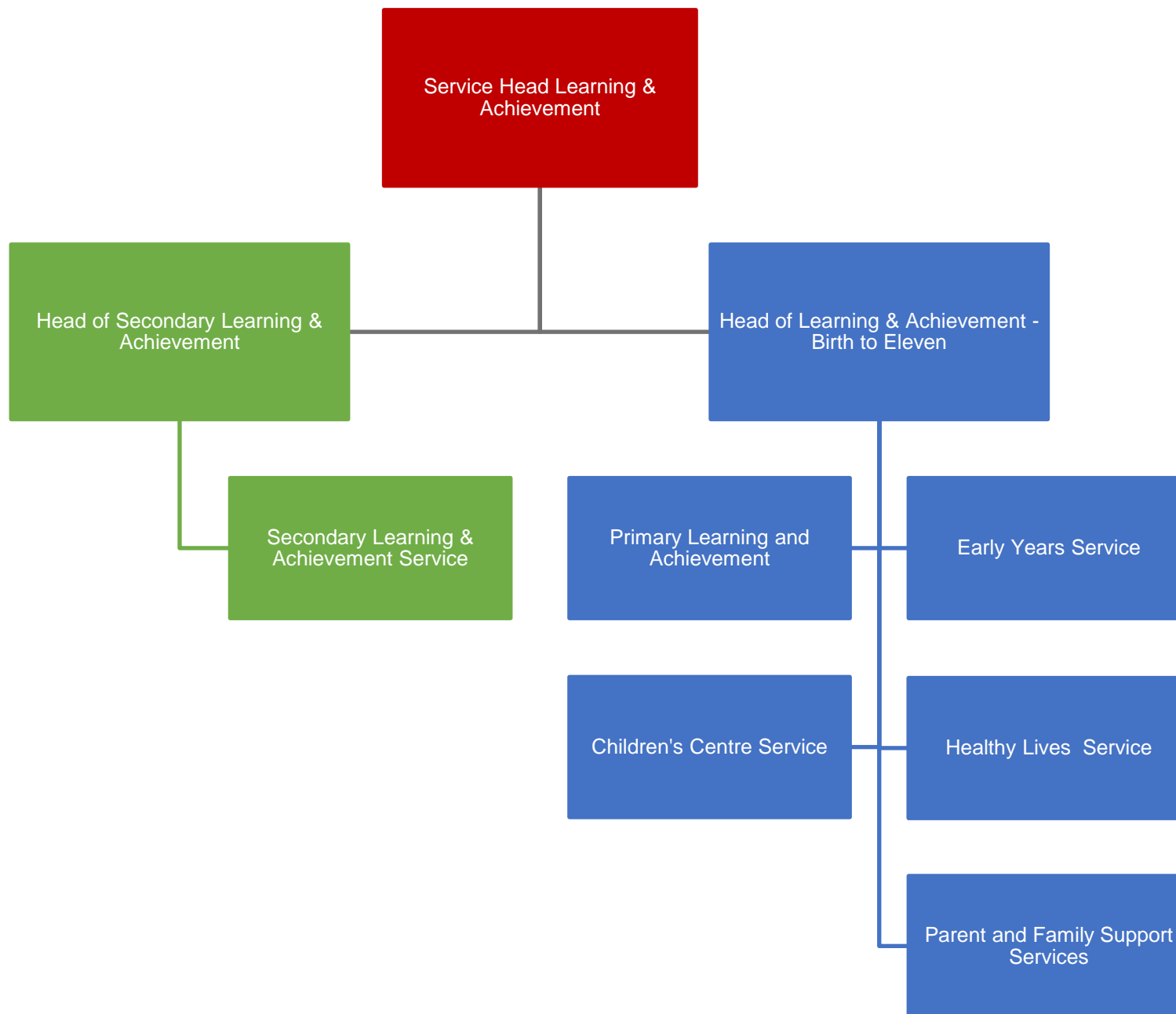
- 8.17 The review panel also discussed the possible role of health settings in identifying and supporting learners with literacy needs. The Interim Director for Public Health was asked to consider whether the triage tool developed by the Idea Stores Service could be embedded within health settings in the borough.

¹⁰ *Local action on health inequalities*: Public Health England , September 2014

RECOMMENDATION 12:

Explore the use of the triage tool developed by the Idea Store service within health settings across the borough.

Appendix 1: Structure Chart – Learning & Achievement



Appendix 2: Types of Schools in England

SCHOOL	POWERS
Local Authority Maintained	Under Local Authority Control
Academy	Receives direct funding from DfE. Free of Local Authority control with flexibilities over term dates, school day, staffing and implementation of the National Curriculum.
Free School	Established by parents, teachers or business. Has identical powers as Academies.
Voluntary Aided	Schools supported by the Church of England or Roman Catholic Church. Operates with a faith ethos and is operated under the influence of respective Churches.
Foundation Trusts	Operated by Trusts formed in partnership with outside bodies. Has more flexibilities compared to maintained schools.
University Technical Colleges (14-19)	Led by sponsor universities. Offers a technical education for students aged 14-19. Free of Local Authority control.

Appendix 3: 2011 Skills for Life Survey

WARD	BELOW LEVEL 1 LITERACY	LEVEL 1 AND ABOVE LITERACY
Bethnal Green North	22.4%	77.6%
Bethnal Green South	22.9%	77.1%
Blackwall and Cubitt Town	17.5%	82.5%
Bow East	21.2%	78.8%
Bow West	17.0%	83.0%
Bromley-by-Bow	26.6%	73.4%
East India and Lansbury	26.3%	73.7%
Limehouse	21.4%	78.6%
Mile End and Globe Town	21.9%	78.1%
Mile End East	24.3%	75.7%
Millwall	15.5%	84.5%
St Dunstan's and Stepney Green	24.4%	75.6%
St Katharine's and Wapping	15.2%	84.8%
Shadwell	22.9%	77.1%
Spitalfields and Banglatown	21.8%	78.2%
Weavers	23.3%	76.7%
Whitechapel	20.9%	79.1%
AVERAGE	21.5%	78.5%