The alternative should not be inferior

What now for 'pushed out' learners?

Loic Menzies and Sam Baars

February 2015

Inclusion Trust

Maggie Kalnins is Chief Executive of Inclusion Trust. Throughout her 25 year career in secondary teaching and headship, Maggie worked within urban multi-racial communities serving the most deprived and disadvantaged. She has a strong understanding of the distinctive challenges that many young people face.

Maggie remains a member of the Mossbourne Federation Governing Board in Hackney, where she worked closely with Sir Michael Wilshaw prior to his appointment as HMCI at Ofsted. She currently serves as the Chair of Governors of two Hackney schools: Brook Community Primary and Mossbourne Victoria Park.

Drawing on her experience, Maggie has a clear view of the impact that a bespoke education provision can have on young people, helping them to succeed well beyond the highest of expectations.

Maggie is a member of the DfE Alternative Provision Reference Group that contributes to alternative provision policy development and implementation.

Maggie is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.

Loic Menzies Loic Menzies is Director of LKMco, a Tutor for Canterbury Christ Church University's Faculty of Education and a trustee of the charity UnLtd. He specialises in education policy, youth development and social enterprise and has authored reports for organisations such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Centre for London and Teach First.

Before founding LKMco Loic was Associate Senior Manager and Head of History and Social Sciences at St. George's R.C. School in North West London. Prior to that he was a youth worker involved in youth participation and young person-led community projects.

Sam Baars is a Research Associate at LKMco. He has particular interests in youth research, area-based inequalities and social science impact, and has experience using a range of quantitative and qualitative methods, from film-based work in schools to rapid research reviews and large-scale survey analysis. Sam believes that robust, innovative social research is the key to tackling the barriers that prevent some young people from making fulfilling transitions to adulthood, and he channels this belief into a range of research projects at LKMco. Sam holds a PhD in Social Change from the University of Manchester.

This report is the outcome of a roundtable debate involving fourteen sector experts as well as three additional interviews. It draws together participants' perspectives and sets out a series of tensions as well as areas of common agreement.

List of roundtable attendees and interviewees

Chair: **Loic Menzies,** LKMco

Roundtable attendees:

Rosie Ferguson, London Youth

Louise Thomas, Innovation Unit

Peter Hughes, Mossbourne Academy

Fiona McFarlane, Great Ormond Street Hospital

Keith Griffiths, Catch22

Dominy Roe, City Gateway

Val Gillies, London South Bank University

Peter Twining, The Open University

Sherine Mahmoud, Impetus

Jamal Campbell, Youth representative

Anna Smee, UK Youth

Cedric Whilby, Waltham Forest Alternative Provision

Stephen Carrick-Davies, Communications and Technology Consultant

Anna Hassan, Consultant Head

Kirstie Donnelly, City and Guilds

Jonny Dyer, Inclusion Trust

Maggie Kalnins, Inclusion Trust

Phone interviews:

Alan Wood, Association of Directors of Children's Services

Duza Stosic, Kids Company

Seamus Oates, Tri–Borough Alternative Provision Multi-Academy Trust

Acknowledgements

Part 1:
Introduction

Part 2:
Who are these 'pushed out' learners?

Part 3:
Supporting 'pushed out' learners

Part 4:
What now for 'pushed out' learners?

Part 1   Introduction

1.1 Foreword from Maggie Kalnins,

The quality of education in England's mainstream schools continues to improve. Nevertheless, many thousands of young people resist universal educational opportunities and find themselves marginalised from conventional schools. They are unintentionally and intentionally becoming 'pushed out' learners [1].

Inclusion Trust is a charity that exists to develop models of learning that help 'pushed out' learners to grow, learn and achieve. The trust has adopted the term 'pushed out' learners to provoke a debate amongst practitioners that will focus on the weaknesses in our education systems rather than the 'abnormality' of the individual child. There is compelling evidence that exclusion patterns are disproportionately high for particular groups of young people such as those who experience poverty, have Special Educational Needs and attend poor schools [2]. Rather than accepting that almost half of young people fail to achieve a core set of good GCSEs [3], we must acknowledge that many do not have the access and opportunities they need. By focusing on young people who have been pushed out of school, we have identified the root causes that lead them to enter the world of Alternative Education and how we might work in partnership with other practitioners to make the world of Alternative learning better.

Through the delivery of Notschool and the development of our careers pilot project Facework, we have heard the views of 'pushed out' learners, their families and the professionals who work most closely with them. We have also reviewed a range of both academic and practitioner literature [4]. During the summer we hosted a round table debate and interviews to collect the views of a group of practitioners from across mainstream state education and the third sector [5]: practitioners that represent commissioning, education provision alongside pastoral care. We all shared one common mission: that of helping marginalised young people to succeed in life.

The term 'pushed out' has been adopted from the work of Professor Eve Tuck (Associate Professor of Educational Foundations at the State University of New York).

We use the fuller term 'pushed out' learner to emphasise that whilst these students may have been pushed out (or have pushed themselves out) of education, they are still active learners and have a right to educational opportunities.

Can mainstream schools really deliver on high expectations for all young people, including those who are at risk of unintentionally or intentionally becoming 'pushed out' learners?

Do they have the expertise, capacity and flexibility to provide for all the 'missing pieces'?

'Pushed out' learners appear to be characterised by a common set of key 'missing pieces' such as feeling hungry and unsafe; lacking social strategies to navigate their way through large schools or struggling with low literacy and numeracy. Many young people possess a combination of these factors which leaves them lacking in the foundations needed to access the opportunities to learn. Yet, from our research and discussions, it has become evident that the skills and talents mastered by the 'pushed out' learners who learn to cope in chaotic and troubled circumstances are extraordinary. For society not to tap into this extraordinary talent represents a tragic waste of lives and opportunity.

Many mainstream schools are great places that provide rich learning experiences. But can they really deliver on high expectations for all young people, including those who are at risk of unintentionally and intentionally becoming 'pushed out' learners? Do they have the expertise, capacity and flexibility to provide for all the 'missing pieces'?

This report argues that practices already exist which can harness and nurture the skills and talents of 'pushed out' learners. It shows that by collaborating more closely, the worlds of mainstream schools and Alternative Provision can go a long way towards giving more 'pushed out' learners a chance to succeed. However it also raises fundamental questions about how our education system can live up to the promise of inclusivity and equity.

Inclusion Trust believes that learners will struggle to fully develop their personal gifts and talents if they continue to be funneled through a narrow curriculum and assessment system that is based on standardised timetables and classrooms. We therefore call upon those working in both mainstream and alternative provision to explore 'wilder ideas' and to confront five crucial questions:

1. How can we create genuinely differentiated and personalised curricula that are co-designed with learners and which link the acquisition of competencies and skills to their existing world, interests and dreams?

2. How can the expertise and specialised resources that exist in local community enterprises, in colleges of higher education, in large industries and even through online communities penetrate the school walls and enrich learning?

07 / Part 1: Introduction

By collaborating more closely, the worlds of mainstream schools and Alternative Provision can go a long way towards giving more 'pushed out' learners a chance to succeed.

3. How can learning transcend the constraints of the standardised school day and academic terms?

4. How could industry and trade awards be used to recognise and reward high level competencies and skills in a more authentic way?

5. How might precious finances be preserved to fund specialised therapeutic services?

In the US, Big Picture Learning has started to answer many of these questions and has transformed the shape of education. Their evangelical culture of learning single-mindedly takes on the mission of educating the nation one student at a time. They have achieved incredible success by bringing rigour alive through deep and relevant projects in which students create real products whilst developing five learning competencies: empirical reasoning, quantitative reasoning, communication, social reasoning and personal qualities.

Inclusion Trust has now embarked on a new project with the support of the Innovation Unit. It will combine the best of Big Picture Learning and online learning and will test ideas in a range of alternative educational settings. Our objective is to create a new model for learning that can be scaled across the system.

We have a moral imperative to design systems that will tap into the extraordinary gifts and talents of every 'pushed out learner' so they all have the chance to grow, learn and achieve. This report calls for professionals from all sectors, whether mainstream education, charity and social enterprise, or therapeutic and youth service, to join the debate. We call to action all those entrepreneurs from the alternative provision world who share our belief that a genuinely inclusive and personalised educational model is possible.
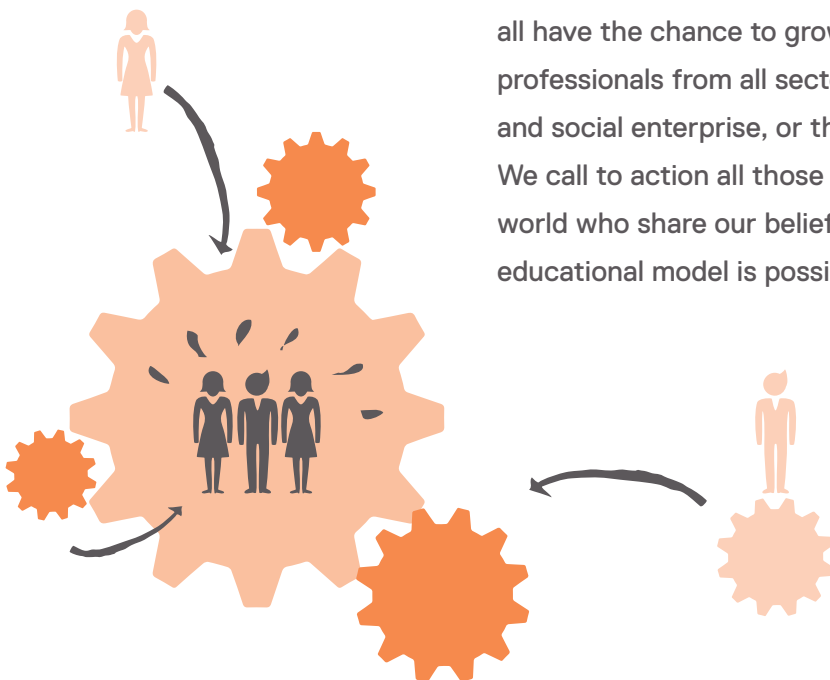
1.2 Historical context:

The notion of the 'disruptive child' first became widespread in the educational establishment during the 1970s, alongside forms of alternative provision consisting largely of off-site units such as 'support centres' and 'disruptive units'. But within two decades, this system of alternative provision was widely criticised. A series of 1994 government circulars, 'Pupils with Problems', acknowledged that the system of 'special units' was haphazard: provision was piecemeal, referral was largely informal, and processes varied widely between local authorities[6]. Concern mounted around the number of young people permanently excluded from school. This had increased fourfold between 1991/2 and 1995/6[7]. In an effort to formalise and standardise alternative forms of provision, Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) were introduced in England and Wales in 1994. This was followed two years later by the introduction of a statutory duty on local authorities to provide alternative forms of education for young people who could not be educated in mainstream schools. The new Labour government also set targets to significantly reduce the number of school exclusions, and raised the threshold for exclusion decisions. While the rate of permanent exclusions has declined in recent years – falling by half between 1998/9 and 2011/12 – this has been accompanied by more widespread use of alternatives to permanent exclusion, such as managed moves, referrals, and the establishment of on-site 'internal exclusion units'[8].

With tens of thousands of young people remaining in some form of alternative provision, the agenda has now shifted to ensuring young people in alternative provision receive a high quality education backed up by high expectations of what they can achieve[9,10]. Powers and budgets to commission alternative provision are now starting to be devolved from local authorities to schools, alongside new responsibilities which hold schools accountable for their pupils' attainment and attendance, even when they are receiving their education from an alternative provider[11].

The debate surrounding alternative provision can therefore be seen to have passed through three main phases:

Formalising the system of alternative provision

Focusing on the number of young people

Attempting to raise the quality and accountability

Developments in alternative provision have not occured everywhere at the same pace, nor have the debates which underpin them been entirely resolved. Discussions continue as to whether mainstream schools can meet the specific needs of each individual young person and, if not, whether 'alternative' forms of provision are the answer. What should these forms of provision look like? What goals should they set themselves, and what standards should we hold them accountable to? This report explores these questions and draws out key recommendation for policy and best practice.

1.3 This report:

As we approach the end of the current Parliament, it is time to consider what happens to the minority of pupils who struggle to find their place in the mainstream system and who are consciously or unconsciously pushed out by schools, social-circumstances and their own choices. Some end up formally excluded or subject to alternatives such as managed moves and internal exclusion; others remain in mainstream classrooms but find themselves marginalised. We begin by identifying the types of young people who become 'pushed out' learners and then go on to explore how their needs might be catered for using three broad but overlapping categories:

Bringing 'pushed out' learners into the mainstream structure

Innovating within the mainstream structure

Working outside of the mainstream structure

Part 2

Who are these 'pushed out' learners?

2.1 Characteristics of 'pushed out' learners

In 2012-2013 there were more than 4500 permanent and almost 40,000 fixed term exclusions [12]. These exclusions affect particular groups of young people disproportionately.

Key statistics

VS

Free School Meals
pupils receiving Free School Meals are **four times** more than peers to be excluded [13]

VS

Special Educational Needs
pupils with a statement of Special Educational Needs are around **6 times more likely** to be permanently excluded from school than their peers [14]

Persistent disruptive behaviour
is **the most common reason** for exclusions, making up 30.8% of permanent exclusions and 24.2% of fixed period exclusions [15]

VS

Mental health problems
children with diagnosed mental health problems are **17 times more** likely to be excluded from school than their peers [16]

40%

Children in the most deprived secondary schools
are excluded more than **40% more** than those in the least disadvantaged [17]

Some ethnic groups
are up to three times more likely to be excluded than others [18]

Keith Griffiths,
Catch22

These figures highlight the scale of the challenge we face, but we do not use the term 'pushed out' learners purely to refer to formally excluded young people. For example, these figures do not take into account young people who Griffiths describes as 'wallpaper young people':

"The other young people we're currently working with… are what we've called "wallpaper young people." So they're the young people that turn up but then just sit at the background… and disengage."

'Pushed out' learners may fall into any number of categories, whether in-care, with special needs or in poverty, but these, and any other label attached to them, matter less than the common factors that act as a barrier to their inclusion. The experts we spoke to emphasised that certain key pieces are missing for some young people and that these stopped them accessing the educational norm.

As the experts we spoke to (who were in some cases uncomfortable with the term 'pushed out') argued, learners are rarely 'pushed out' because schools do not want to help them; more often it is because these young people's needs are so far outside the norm that schools in their current form are not equipped to support them.

2.2 A gap in basic needs

If young people or their families are hungry and endangered these immediate needs act as barriers to access. We cannot expect learners with gaps at the bottom of Maslow's hierarchy of needs[19] to be ready to access education.

"If they don't have anywhere to sleep, if they don't have beds at home, if they don't have food… how can you expect them to achieve academically?"

Duza Stosic,
Education Director,
Kids Company

Recent reports have shown that schools are increasingly having to cater for these needs before their pupils can even begin to access learning[20]. Schools therefore need to work closely with social services to ensure that the basic needs of pupils at risk of becoming 'pushed out' learners are being met.

2.3 A gap in socialisation

Functioning in a school requires the ability to negotiate basic interactions - for example "to walk...from one room to another through a thousand other people" or "to be able to sit in a room quietly with other people". There is nothing wrong with this being the expectation, but young people who arrive at school unable to do so will inevitably find adjusting to school harder.

Family and the home environment can play a profound role in this area, as Dyer argues:

"If you live in a family who failed at school what you're being asked to do is go somewhere you will probably fail as well."

However, Val Gillies urged that a lack of cultural capital amongst parents should not be conflated with a lack of support for their children. Indeed she pointed out that these parents are often "desperately anxious, they are trying their best, bending over backwards".

Jonny Dyer,
Technical Director,
Inclusion Trust

2.4 A gap in basic skills

Low levels of literacy and numeracy, whether as a result of earlier poor education or special needs, limit pupils' ability to access the mainstream curriculum. McFarlane emphasises that such needs are frequently undiagnosed:

"A situation that I've just come across again and again is the child who's had massive behaviour problems from primary school, all the way through and the focus has always been on the behaviour and they're not learning because of their behaviour and then actually, come 16, for some reason we manage to get a cognitive assessment...and we discover they had severe dyslexia or they had a working memory of a tiny size."

Fiona McFarlane,
Clinical Psychologist,
Great Ormond Street Children's
Hospital

Anna Smee,
Chief Executive, UK Youth

2.5 Institutional practices

Organising large schools involves certain institutional practices that some young people struggle to cope with:

"State schools in particular are relatively large organisations, with large classes and they have to cater for the majority. If you have complex needs and/or you're of a personality that is typically thinking differently to the norm, or doesn't want to conform... then where do you go?"

Overall, it is inevitable (and positive) that there is huge diversity amongst the pupil population but there is a limit to how much variation from the norm mainstream schools in their current form can manage. We therefore explore three approaches to supporting 'pushed out' learners:

1. **Bringing 'pushed out' learners into the mainstream structure**
2. **Innovating within the mainstream structure**
3. **Working outside of the mainstream structure**

Part 3

Supporting 'pushed out' learners

3.1 Bringing 'pushed out' learners into the mainstream structure

With the right support and the right school environment, many 'pushed out' learners can be welcomed within the mainstream.

3.1.1 Additional support: If the factors that lead a young person to struggle are identified early, additional support can often ensure they succeed. For example, a 'catch up premium' has recently been introduced to fund additional support in literacy and numeracy for year seven pupils who did not achieve at least a level 4 in reading and/or maths at the end of key stage 2. Effective intervention at this stage could ensure more young people are able to flourish within the mainstream.

Ofsted argues that 'nurture groups' "can make a considerable difference to the behaviour and social skills of children who might otherwise be at risk of exclusion [21]". These 'small structured teaching groups' can provide more intensive support within the mainstream environment for pupils who might otherwise find it too challenging. Ofsted emphasise that effective nurture groups combine academic and social interventions.

3.1.2 A structured environment: Creating a safe and secure environment is key if young people are to flourish:

"The schools are in chaos and you just ... all you're focusing on is the chaos in the school... What you've got to do is remove all of that. Once you remove the chaos then you can start to dig down as to why the behaviour is happening."

Peter Hughes,
Head teacher, Mossbourne Academy

Jonny Dyer,
Technical Director,
Inclusion Trust

Rosie Ferguson,
Chief Executive,
London Youth

Anna Smee,
Chief Executive,
UK Youth

Given the chaos that many 'pushed out' learners experience out of school, creating a safe and secure environment within school is crucial.

3.1.3 Using the hook of success: As several experts emphasised, the experience of success in one arena can help precipitate further successes:

"You know when you talk to children if they have had some small success it leads to more success and confidence."

Even if they are struggling in school young people are often excelling elsewhere, for example in sports or in their community. Schools should tap into this by building strong links with youth clubs and community groups in order to 'bring young people in'. Rosie Ferguson argued that this was frequently not the case:

"Young people... can actually be thriving in a non-formal setting where they've managed to build a trusted one to one relationship with a youth worker who can support them... Our members tell us that actually to get into the meetings where that child's success, failure and opportunities are being discussed is really hard. ...The avenue for relationships for those people who are working positively but aren't part of the statutory system is a real challenge."

Schools can also offer pupils who might otherwise equate school with a place of failure a chance to 'shine' through out of classroom activities such as outdoor learning and trips that might build confidence, self-efficacy and motivation[22]. Importantly, such hooks should be a way in to excellence across the board rather than an 'instead of' or 'opt-out'.

3.1.4 Challenges: The biggest challenge for schools in drawing pupils 'back in' is capacity as Smee emphasised:

"Most teachers just don't have the bandwidth. You know they all have ... almost without exception, exactly the right aspirations and intentions but how can we expect them to do

a nine 'til four in class, go home to prepare all of the lessons and around this provide social care and wraparound support for these kids. But the kids don't have it at home so they look for it somewhere else and then when they don't get it, and no-one understands how they see them as an individual, they just tune out and go."

There is therefore a limit to how much can be expected from the mainstream system, but views on this conundrum differed. Several experts emphasised the importance of ensuring the majority does not suffer:

"I wouldn't allow and I would never allow one child to upset 29 others in a classroom and I would say for too long education has done that or has allowed that to go on. We're seeing many failing schools around the country where everyone talks about the child; no-one's talking about the other 29 children in the room. 'We need to adapt and do this', 'we need to do this for this and this' - and by the time you look at the list of that child's stuff, the rest of the children have spent half the lesson not learning. For me, fundamentally, the mainstream school is to address the vast majority of students as best you possibly can."

Peter Hughes,
Head Teacher,
Mossbourne Academy

Twining argued for a non-individualistic system along Finnish lines, where the group moves together:

"They want all the kids to go together… all the kids are maintained at a fairly consistent level. If you fall back if you're away for a few weeks they put a lot of resource into catching you up with the rest of the class."

Peter Twining,
Professor of Education
(Futures)
The Open University

Another challenge to the 'bring them in' approach is that schools may not always be best placed to provide the support some young people need. This is particularly the case for those requiring skilled therapeutic interventions but it may apply to other young people where different forms of engagement, a different set of activities or more intensive forms of support may be needed to address the challenges a young person faces. For this reason some feel that trying to keep all young people in the mainstream is counterproductive because exclusion brings access to

additional interventions and funding. On the other hand, this raises the question of why it takes exclusion to trigger extra support.

More radically, some experts question whether trying to force all young-people into the mainstream is the right starting point. Some believe it is the school system as a whole that needs to change.

3.2 Innovating within the mainstream structure

"There is a definition of what a school is that will push people out, because it is 8.45 'til 3.15, because it is about having groups of people in an area... the thought was that if someone is not engaging maybe your job is to change them so that they can conform: that's the process of being pushed out... we will push them out by expecting them to conform."

According to some, a better way to support 'pushed out' learners is to radically re-shape school structures.

Jonny Dyer,
Technical Director,
Inclusion Trust

3.2.1 Pathways and employability: Closer links to employers and alternative pathways are one way of reshaping what schools look like. Donnelly points to the new TechBac and the development of the new Career Colleges as one way of doing this:

"It's about the whole progression route. So at 14... young people can make a choice about their professional, technical, vocational or (whatever word you want to use to describe vocational) choices - it does not exclude you from doing other more formal education, but embedded into that you will get work experience, you will get real world of work projects. You'll be attached to a mentor. So you're really starting to merge the boundaries between real working life - where you might be going aspirationally, whilst still being in the structure of the school/college curriculum."

Kirstie Donnelly,
Managing Director,
City and Guilds

The charity City Gateway illustrates how this might be done. They work in close partnership with employers and have developed a successful alternative education model that combines training, support and work experience built around a 'skills profile' which allows progress to be tracked and measured.

3.2.2 Breaking the mainstream structure - radical rethinks:
According to some, a changing world and a changing economy means that a more radical rethink is needed. Twining looks to the future and argues that:

"Things will have been automated. ... So I think there's a real issue... it may be fine today, preparing people for work, and we value work and work is what makes our lives worthwhile, but in 20 years will that be true?"

His view is that "the whole story about getting a good education and getting a good job is a lie." It is certainly the case that employers are looking for something beyond academic qualifications[23, 24], and if learners do not believe that education will lead to meaningful employment, it is perhaps unsurprising that they disengage.

Thomas outlined a tension in what schools are trying to achieve. She describes a contrast between 'schooling' - which she sees as "inculcating somebody as part of a community," compared to educating - which she sees as "enabling pupils to fulfil their own personal, individual potential." She questions the 'schooling' model and asks:

"Is that still the society we are trying to create, a kind of employee society in a sense, or are we, as we keep being told, looking more at trying to create a more entrepreneurial society?"

For these experts, if we want to stop learners from being pushed out we need to radically re-imagine schools and Thomas points to programmes like 'Big Picture Schools' in the US as one tried and tested model. Meanwhile Professor Twining suggests an overhaul of the accountability system so that it focuses on 'subjective wellbeing' as well as attainment.

Peter Twining,
Professor of Education (Futures)
The Open University

Louise Thomas,
Education Programme Lead, Innovation Unit

3.2.3 Challenges:
Like several of the experts we spoke to, Fullan and Longworthy define conventional education systems in relation to forms of classroom direction modelled around "the teacher at the front transmitting knowledge and the children listening quietly"[25] and see this as problematic. Other commentators such as Bennett[26] and Peal[27] have argued that many mainstream schools are defined by precisely the absence of this kind of authority and control. Hirsch[28] and Christodoulou[29] have also questioned whether conventional education systems are sufficiently defined by a tightly-structured, knowledge-based curriculum. According to Christodoulou and Hirsch it is precisely the lack of access to structure and knowledge that leaves some students marginalised because unlike their more privileged peers, some young people do not have access to this at home and schools are not adequately compensating.

Baars argues young people of secondary school age tend to aspire to highly skilled professional and managerial occupations[30] and, at least for the time being, academic outcomes are still the most reliable ways of achieving these goals. Indeed, three-quarters of 16-34 year olds in these roles currently hold qualifications at level 3 or above (equivalent to A/AS level[31]), and better qualified people generally earn more[32]. It is therefore questionable in whose interests it would be for a school to move away from a focus on academic outcomes without a corresponding, wholesale societal shift.

A radical move away from accountability for academic outcomes and the current model of education also currently seems unlikely since the costs and risks would be enormous and policy appears to be moving in the opposite direction.

3.2.4 Breaking v. innovating:
Given the above, we would argue that 'innovating within the mainstream structure' i.e. learning from new and radical models of education is a better approach to supporting 'pushed out' learners compared to wholesale 'breaking' of the system.

3.3 Working outside the mainstream structure

A small minority of young people may have such complex needs that providing the level of support they need within the mainstream, even if that mainstream has been reconfigured in the ways outlined in section 3.2, proves impossible.

3.3.1 Accepting and valuing the alternative:
Alternative provision can intensively focus on the reasons behind a young person's behaviour and on finding solutions. As a result, most (though not all) of the experts we spoke to saw a need for provision outside of the mainstream but some were uncomfortable with the term 'alternative provision'.

Rather than being treated as a necessary evil, alternative provision should therefore be welcomed, valued and celebrated. As Roe argued:

"There's a need for both... I very passionately believe in excellent alternative education and creative approaches to engaging and educating young people."

Dominy Roe,
City Gateway

3.3.2 Improving quality:
If the alternative is to be valued and celebrated, quality is crucial. As Dominy puts it, it is important to "upskill alternative provision to be just as powerful as mainstream school." However, at the moment, as Carrick-Davies, points out:

"I talk to PRU staff and they say 'we are judged by what schools couldn't do and we're supposed to do it with less resources and less qualified staff...' Alternative provision should be much more creative, there should be such high expectations, we should have the best staff coming into these places."

Stephen Carrick-Davies,
Consultant and former CEO of Childnet International

Carrick-Davies' point about expectations is crucial since, faced with

Dominy Roe,
City Gateway

Keith Griffiths,
Catch22

profound social needs, the temptation can be to focus on engagement at the expense of expectations, a point also emphasised by Seamus Oates, Executive Head of Tri-Borough AP Trust and Dominy Roe of City Gateway who states:

"What we don't do in alternative education always is emphasise the educational value and it becomes far too much about the engagement."

3.3.3 Improving partnerships:
At the moment schools, colleges, PRUs and alternative provision frequently work in isolation and this was criticised by many experts. Keith Griffiths explained that:

"I think there's a disconnect when you talk about education systems but all we have is pockets of isolated silos and I think if we could create a better connection between teacher training, primary schools and the secondary schools, the secondary schools and the AP and then secondary schools and universities I think we could create a more holistic and enriching experience for young people."

A range of stakeholders have a legal 'duty to co-operate' to support children and young people's well-being and Local Authorities must have a Health and Well-being board. However, requirements on 'Children's Trust Boards' have been relaxed and the obligation to have a local Children and Young People's Plan abolished[33]. Partnership approaches should involve sharing rather than shifting responsibility[34]. There are different approaches to doing this: Anna Hassan advocated clusters of colleges, alternative providers and schools working as a family. This could involve multi-academy trusts made up of different types of providers but should also include strong links to additional services such as mental health, social workers and substance misuse teams. Alan Wood advocated a model in which schools commission and are held accountable for provision. The National Foundation for Educational Research has recently published an evaluation of this type of approach[35]. The experts we spoke to expressed an appetite for this type of model:

"It would be wonderful from an Alternative Provider perspective to not be the outsider from education but to be part of the solution from not just the local authorities'

23 / Part 3: Supporting 'pushed out' learners

perspective but from the schools'. It would be wonderful to be commissioned to be part of a group of academies or a cluster of schools where we would be their preferred provider to enhance those young people that are not quite fitting within the jigsaw."

Keith Griffiths,
Catch22

Part 4

What now for 'pushed out' learners?

1. *Bringing 'pushed out' learners into the mainstream structure*

2. *Innovating within the mainstream structure*

3. *Working outside of the mainstream structure*

Conclusion

Young people have a right to education but schools in their current form do not provide this for everyone. The young people we describe as 'pushed out' learners are characterised by their struggles in adjusting to school, their vulnerability due to personal or family circumstances and the gaps they have in their basic needs and skills.

The experts we spoke to had different views on whether these young people needed more support to adjust to school, whether school should adjust to their needs or whether they should be supported elsewhere. Positions often depended on beliefs about whether schools' priority should be a vulnerable minority or the broader majority.

The three models presented in this report are not mutually exclusive and are right for different pupils depending on their needs. For example, where pupils face a specific barrier to access such as poor literacy or a lack of social skills, they might be supported to learn these and brought into the mainstream. Meanwhile adjustments to the way a school works (perhaps by offering a broader range of pathways) may suit other pupils. On the other hand, for some young people who are unwilling, unable or unsuited to the norm, provision outside of the mainstream may result in the best outcomes. Such provision might be temporary or permanent; full time or part time. Ultimately it is only by engaging with the pupils' needs that the right approach can be found.

We believe that the best approach to supporting 'pushed out' learners brings together these three different approaches, showing flexibility by deploying the approach that best meets the needs of each young person.

Recommendations
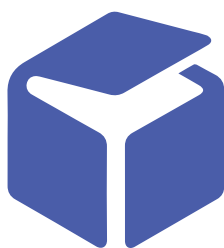
Bring 'pushed out' learners into the mainstream structure

1. Schools should ensure that pupils' basic needs are met by working more closely with social and mental health services.

2. Rather than focusing solely on those eligible for the pupil premium or with identified special needs, schools should be sensitive to the full range of factors that might lead to a pupil becoming a 'pushed out' learner.

3. Too often it takes the drastic step of exclusion to secure the resources and support that a 'pushed out learner' needs. Local authorities should be proactive rather than reactive in brokering support and funding.

4. It is easier to focus on pupil needs in a safe, secure environment. Establishing this should be a top priority in all schools and be seen as a route to inclusion.

Innovate within the mainstream structure

5. Pupils who are likely to find it difficult to adjust to the school environment should be carefully supported for example through nurture groups with lower pupil-teacher ratios. These groups should be staffed by the schools' best teachers and should combine a focus on basic literacy and numeracy skills, core academic subjects and social, emotional and behaviour development. They should be highly responsive to pupils' needs and prepare them to transition into the mainstream.

6. Schools should embrace opportunities to 'hook in' 'pushed out' learners through innovative outside-school and extra-curricula activities that appeal to the passions and interests of the learners. These should be 'ways in' rather than alternatives and the emphasis should be on excellence – whether in debating, sport, art or 'real-world' learning.
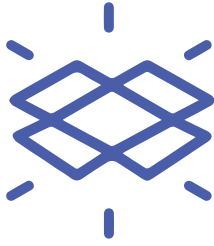
Work outside of the mainstream structure

7. All schools should develop strong relationships with alternative providers and share, rather than shift responsibility for the pupils they are unable to support. This could happen either through commissioning and accountability arrangements or by building school clusters, for example through federations and multi-academy trusts.

8. Alternative providers should not overlook achievement in their pursuit of engagement. High expectations should be the norm.

9. Alternative providers should be recognised as partners in delivery and valuable sources of expertise rather than a necessary evil.

Appendix

Literature Review

1) The features of conventional education systems

"How should (alternative) education systems develop models of learning that cater for the needs of young people who become 'pushed out' learners when mainstream education is unable to provide for their needs?"

Sam Baars, Research Associate, LKMco

Breaking the question into its component parts, this review sets out the background to the workshop questions considering:

1. The features of conventional education systems
2. The ways in which particular young people are marginalised by these systems
3. How better models of learning can be devised to meet the needs of these young people

The existing literature defines conventional education systems in relation to a range of factors, from the ways in which teachers manage classrooms and overarching learning cultures, to the aims and objectives of the system, including the nature and goals of the curriculum.

In relation to classroom management and culture, Fullan and Longworthy define conventional education systems in relation to forms of classroom direction modelled around "the teacher at the front transmitting knowledge and the children listening quietly" (Fullan and Longworthy 2014), while others such as Bennett (2013) and Peal (2014) argue that many mainstream schools are defined by precisely the absence of this kind of authority and control.

Others define conventional systems according to their aims and objectives. Some argue that these revolve around graded testing and universal, clearly defined notions of 'success' and 'failure' (Francis 2006: 196; Lucey and Reay 2002: 264). Likewise, Gallant argues that mainstream education systems are defined by a fragmented, rationalised approach to teaching and learning which tends to close down connections between subjects, discourages complex, holistic thinking, and prevents students from linking knowledge back to their own experiences (Gallant 2011: 352). However, Bennett points out that the UK's strongest PISA performance was in relation to pupils' problem solving, suggesting that despite complaints that our education system does not support young people to be creative, problem-solving, lateral thinkers, young people within the UK system appear to fare well here (Bennett 2014). Meanwhile, authors such as Hirsch and Christodoulou question whether conventional

education systems are sufficiently defined by a tightly-structured, knowledge-based curriculum.

2) The ways in which particular young people are marginalised by conventional systems

Who is being marginalised?
Three broad types of young people are identified in the literature as being marginalised by conventional education systems:

- Firstly, marginalised young people can be defined in terms of their ethnicity, class and gender: generally, these are White British and Black Caribbean boys from low socioeconomic status families (Francis 2006; Strand 2014), although a recent Ofsted report into re-engaging disaffected students identified more acute absenteeism among girls (Ofsted 2008: 6)
- Secondly, marginalised young people can be defined in terms of their educational outcomes: young people with poor attendance; low attainment; at risk of exclusion; at risk of becoming NEET (Inclusion Trust 2014; Ofsted 2008; Kettlewell et al. 2012)
- Thirdly, the literature identifies young people who are marginalised by specific learning or behavioural difficulties (Fletcher-Campbell and Wilkin 2003).

How are these young people being marginalised?
Gallant (2011) provides a useful framework for considering the various ways in which certain groups of young people can become marginalised from mainstream education. According to Gallant, the literature presents three main approaches to explaining disengagement in mainstream education. These approaches become successively broader: the first focuses on teacher practice; the second focuses on the curricula being taught, while the third approach focuses on the structure and culture of schooling.

Teacher practice
Schussler argues that the ways in which teachers manage classrooms has a significant impact on young people's opportunity to engage with their learning (Schussler 2009). Where teachers manage classrooms in a way that is not flexible, which does not create opportunities for success, and which does not communicate respect for students, young people are likely to become marginalised. Fullan and Longworthy argue that young people are 'turned off' by old-fashioned, authoritarian styles of teaching with little dialogue and flexibility (Fullan and Longworthy 2014). Meanwhile, Bennett argues that young people are marginalised by conventional systems in which behaviour is poor and standards are not robustly established and maintained (Bennett 2013), and Peal argues that approaches to teacher practice such as whole-class, teacher-led lessons are the

most effective way of including all students (Peal 2014: 4).

Curricula

Researchers such as Kress (2000) and Yazzie-Mintz (2006) highlight the importance of making the content of learning relevant to young people's own life experiences. Studies demonstrate that the most disengaged young people can be hard working and creative when applied to tasks whose content is meaningful to them (Stahl and Dale 2012). However, others argue that more fluid 'skills-based' curricula such as these pose particular problems for marginalised young people, who arrive at school without the core knowledge they need to develop these skills (Hirsch 1988). This point is mirrored in the UK by authors such as Christodoulou, who argues that it is not possible to teach skills without facts, and that schooling should place more emphasis on the memorising of core knowledge in order to ensure that particular students are not marginalised or 'left behind' because they do not bring this knowledge with them from their home environments (Christodoulou 2013).

The structure and culture of schooling

Gallant argues that the persistent problem of young people's marginalisation from the mainstream education system is due to the fundamental logic, culture and systems which underpin that system. For instance, graded testing can close down opportunities for success for young people who do not 'make the grade', while the teaching of discrete subjects can foreclose the opportunity to 'make connections' and see the relevance of different knowledge (Gallant 2011). However, there are compelling examples of the outcomes that can be produced by adopting 'traditional', bounded approaches to schooling in communities with high numbers of marginalised students. Commenting in The Guardian on the culture and ethos he introduced at Mossbourne Community Academy, Sir Michael Wilshaw argued "we are traditional here and make no apologies for it. A lot of our children come from unstructured, chaotic backgrounds; we need to build more structure into their lives, not less" (Wilby 2010). An Ofsted review of best practice also highlights a clearly-defined, consistent approach to using rewards and sanctions as key to engaging disengaged students (Ofsted 2008: 7). However, the same report also acknowledges the value of a personalised curriculum, including flexible approaches to timetabling and teaching, in ensuring that disaffected students enjoy their work (2008: 16).

3) How better models of learning can be devised to meet the needs

Taking Gallant's framework, better models of learning can be defined in turn by their teaching, content, and culture.

Teaching

Schussler argues that engaging marginalised students is primarily a matter of how teachers manage classrooms, rather than the type of content being delivered. Teachers must manage classroom in a way which communicates three vital messages to students: that all students can succeed; that there are different ways to learn the same thing, and that they respect their students. For instance, teachers can modify the content, process or products of learning in order to demonstrate flexibility, while they can spend time getting to know individual students' learning styles in order to demonstrate respect (2009: 118). Using teaching support staff within lessons can be an effective way of allowing some students more flexible, tailored approaches to learning within the classroom, and there is evidence that when these support staff are sourced from the local community they can help to bridge cultural gaps between school and home (Ofsted 2008: 9).

Content

Kress argues that 'design', rather than 'reproduction', should be the metaphor around which institutional education, and its curricula, are modelled. 'Reproductive' curricula expect learners to be conduits of authoritative knowledge, and the expectation of such a system is for students to reproduce that knowledge. Under the design model, the agency of the learner becomes more fully realised (Kress 2000) – learners are given space to explore how the materials and knowledge they are exposed to at school can be applied to their own experiences and interests, thus the emphasis is placed on design of the new rather than replication of the old (Stahl and Dale 2012: 511). Making topics more 'relevant' in this way need not in any way make them 'easier' (McInerney 2013). As Gallant argues, "experience and knowledge are not separate; they are unified. Students expect their learning to be relevant, alive" (2011: 351). For example, Ofsted identify the effectiveness of literacy sessions in which disengaged young people take part in reading and writing on topics they find particularly interesting (2008: 14). In a survey of over 80,000 US high school students, researchers found that when they asked students why they were bored in class 39% replied that the material was not relevant to them (Yazzie-Mintz 2006: 5). Fullan and Longworthy argue that digital technologies may have an important role to play here: "digital access makes it possible for students to apply their solutions to real-world problems with authentic audiences well beyond the boundaries of their schools" (2014: 4). Linking with external organisations, such as employers, can also help disengaged young people to see the relevance of the knowledge and skills they are developing (Kettlewell et al. 2012). On the other hand, others argue that focusing on what is 'relevant' to marginalised young people fails to expand their horizons and traps them in what is familiar to them rather than providing them to access to the new and unfamiliar – thus reinforcing rather than challenging inequality.

Culture

Researchers such as Gallant and Burnard go a step further – arguing that the key to engaging marginalised students is a matter of the culture at the heart of the learning process, rather than specific teaching styles or the content of the curriculum. As Gallant argues, "the persistent problem of disengagement suggests it is time to go deeper into Western cultural assumptions about education, rather than only identifying superficial symptoms of disengagement" (2011: 344). In her study of music teachers' approaches to inclusive education practices among disaffected youth, Burnard finds that engaging disaffected learners is about more than adopting effective teaching strategies – more broadly, it involves "developing learning terrains that build democratic relationships in and out of the classroom, where disengaged students may enjoy the respect and recognition of their peers and, most importantly, reframe the roles of teachers" (Burnard 2008: 72). In their review of the features of alternative curriculum provision for young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties, the NFER identify that the approach and atmosphere "was distinctive from mainstream school, usually informal, with fewer restrictions (such as uniform) but a firm structure" (Fletcher-Campbell and Wilkin 2003: 18).

Existing models of practice

As part of an ESRC review of best practice in challenging disaffection, Bailey identifies four key factors behind successful models of learning, based on a survey of 38 schools in the UK: firstly, removing the stigma of failure by focusing on learning processes and understandings, rather than predominantly on outcomes; secondly, communicating a coherence, a connectedness, across the curriculum; thirdly, innovative provision of learning experiences, such as those that frame learning within positive and enriching 'social' activities; fourthly, providing positive learning experiences which go beyond the classroom (Bailey 2002: 18–19).

The Sutton Trust-EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit provides a summary of educational research in order to guide teachers and schools on how to use their resources to improve the attainment of disadvantaged pupils, within conventional systems. The toolkit suggests that while interventions such as homework and collaborative learning demonstrate large positive increases in pupil progress at relatively little cost, approaches such as smaller classes and after school activities produce negligible improvement in pupil progress at relatively large cost (Education Endowment Foundation 2014).

Bibliography

Bailey, R. 2002 *Challenging Disaffection: Best Practice & the Management of Disaffection*, Swindon: ESRC.

Bennett, T. 2013 'The two biggest problems in education that no one takes seriously', Available at: http://community.tes.co.uk/tom_bennett/b/weblog/archive/2013/11/16/the-two-biggest-problems-in-education-that-no-one-takes-seriously-1-behaviour.aspx [Accessed May 7, 2014].

Bennett, T. 2014 'We're good at something, but what is it? Pisa problems', Available at: http://community.tes.co.uk/tom_bennett/b/weblog/archive/2014/04/02/we-39-re-good-at-something-but-what-is-it-pisa-problems.aspx [Accessed May 7, 2014].

Burnard, P. 2008 'A phenomenological study of music teachers' approaches to inclusive education practices among disaffected youth', *Research Studies in Music Education* 30(1): p.59–75.

Christodoulou, D. 2013 *Seven Myths About Education*, London: The Curriculum Centre.

Education Endowment Foundation 2014 'Toolkit', Available at: http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/toolkit/ [Accessed May 7, 2014].

Fletcher-Campbell, F. and Wilkin, A. 2003 *Review of the research literature on educational interventions for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties,* Slough: NFER.

Francis, B. 2006 'Heroes or zeroes? The discursive positioning of "underachieving boys" in English neo-liberal education policy', *Journal of Education Policy* 21(2): p.187–200.

Fullan, M. and Longworthy, M. 2014 A *Rich Seam: How New Pedagogies Find Deep Learning*, Harlow: Pearson.

Gallant, A. 2011 'Resuscitating Students' Learning: Exploring the "Living Dead" Phenomenon', *The Educational Forum* 75(4): p.343–356.

Hirsch, E.D. 1988 *Cultural literacy: what every American needs to know*, London: Vintage Books.

Inclusion Trust 2014 'Inclusion Trust - About Us', Available at: http://www.inclusiontrust.org.uk/about/ [Accessed May 5, 2014].

Kettlewell, K., Southcott, C., Stevens, E. and McCrone, T. 2012 *Engaging the disengaged*, Slough: NFER.

Kress, G. 2000 'A Curriculum for the Future', *Cambridge Journal of Education* 30(1): p.133–145.

Lucey, H. and Reay, D. 2002 'A Market in Waste: Psychic and structural dimensions of school-choice policy in the UK and children's narratives on "demonized" schools', *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 23(3): p.253–266.

McInerney, L. 2013 'Relevance is not synonymous with "easy"', Available at: http://www.lkmco.org/article/relevance-not-synonymous-easy-13052013 [Accessed May 5, 2014].

Ofsted 2008 *Good practice in re-engaging disaffected and reluctant students in secondary schools*, London: Ofsted.

Peal, R. 2014 Progressively Worse: *The burden of bad ideas in British schools*, London: Civitas.

Schussler, D.L. 2009 'Beyond Content: How Teachers Manage Classrooms to Facilitate Intellectual Engagement for Disengaged Students', *Theory Into Practice* 48(2): p.114–121.

Stahl, G. and Dale, P. 2012 'Creating Positive Spaces of Learning: DJers and MCers Identity Work with New Literacies', *The Educational Forum* 76(4): p.510–523.

Strand, S. 2014 'Ethnicity, gender, social class and achievement gaps at age 16: intersectionality and "getting it" for the white working class', *Research Papers in Education* 29(2): p.131–171.

Wilby, P. 2010 'Is Mossbourne academy's success down to its traditionalist headteacher?', *The Guardian.*

Yazzie-Mintz, E. 2006 *Voices of students on engagement: A report on the 2006 high school survey of student engagement*, Bloomington, IN: Center for Evaluation and Education Policy.

Endnotes

1 The term 'pushed out' has been adopted from the work of Professor Eve Tuck – writer, educator, researcher and author of Urban Youth and School Push-Out. We use the fuller term 'pushed out learner' to emphasise the fact that whilst these students may have been pushed out (or have pushed themselves out) of education, nevertheless they are still active learners and have a right to learning opportunities.

2 Department for Education, 2014 "Permanent and fixed-period exclusions in England: 2012 to 2013" https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england-2012-to-2013.

3 Department for Education, 2014, "Provisional GCSE and equivalent results in England, 2013 to 2014" https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/366556/SFR41_2014_provisional_GCSE_and_equivalents.pdf.

4 See Literature Review.

5 See List of roundtable attendees and interviewees.

6 Garner, P. 2000 *Pupil Referral Units: A Policy and Practice Paradox.* Paper presented at International Special Education Congress, University of Manchester, 24th-28th July 2000.

7 Donovan, N. 1998 *Second Chances: Exclusion from School and Equality of Opportunity*, London: New Policy Institute.

8 Ogg, T. and Kaill, E. 2010 *A New Secret Garden? Alternative Provision, Exclusion and Children's Rights*, London: Civitas.

9 DCSF 2008 *Back on Track: A strategy for modernizing alternative provision for young people*, London: The Stationery Office.

10 Taylor, C. 2012 *Improving Alternative Provision*, London: Department for Education.

11 Davies, M. 2012 *Local authority approaches to Exclusion and Alternative Provision*, Nottingham: Nottinghamshire County Council.

12 Department for Education, 2014 "Permanent and fixed-period exclusions in England: 2012 to 2013" https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england-2012-to-2013.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 NHS 2008 Children and Young People Positive Practice Guide http://www.iapt.nhs.uk/silo/files/children-and-young-people--positive-practice-guide.pdf.

17 Department for Education, 2014 "Permanent and fixed-period exclusions in England: 2012 to 2013" https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england-2012-to-2013.

18 Clarke, A. 2013 *Permanent and fixed period exclusions from schools and exclusion appeals in England*, 2011/12, London: Department for Education.

19 Maslow, A. H. (1943). *A theory of human motivation. Psychological review*,50(4), 370.

20 The Guardian http://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/oct/14/schools-providing-basic-necessities-to-disadvantaged-pupils.

21 Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills http://www.mynewsdesk.com/uk/pressreleases/children-at-risk-of-exclusion-helped-by-nurture-groups-660954.

22 The Education Endowment Foundation: http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/toolkit/outdoor-adventure-learning/ [accessed 09/10/14].

23 Impetus: www.impetus-pef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/2014_09-Ready-for-Work.pdf.

24 CBI: http://www.cbi.org.uk/media/2807987/gateway-to-growth.pdf.

25 Fullan, M. and Longworthy, M. 2014 *A Rich Seam: How New Pedagogies Find Deep Learning*, Harlow: Pearson.

26 Bennett, T. 2014 'We're good at something, but what is it? Pisa problems', Available at: https://community.tes.co.uk/tom_bennett/b/weblog/archive/2014/04/02/we-39-re-good-at-something-but-what-is-it-pisa-problems.aspx [Accessed May 7, 2014].

27 Peal, R. 2014 *Progressively Worse: The burden of bad ideas in British schools*, London: Civitas.

28 Hirsch, E.D. 1988 *Cultural literacy: what every American needs to know*, London: Vintage Books.

29 Christodoulou, D. 2013 *Seven Myths About Education*, London: The Curriculum Centre.

30 Baars, S. 2014 *Place, space and imagined futures: how young people's occupational aspirations are shaped by the areas they live in*, PhD Thesis, The University of Manchester: UK.

31 Office for National Statistics http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/qualifications-and-labour-market-participation-in-england-and-wales/rft-table-3.xls.

32 Office for National Statistics http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lmac/earnings-by-qualification-in-the-uk/2011/earnings-by-qualification-in-the-uk.html.

33 National Foundation for Education Research https://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LGCH01/LGCH01.pdf.

34 National Foundation for Education Research http://thenferblog.org/2014/08/08/working-together-on-a-way-out-of-the-exclusion-zone/.

About Inclusion Trust

Inclusion Trust is a charity that exists to develop alternative models of learning, which help 'pushed out' young people to grow, learn and achieve. The trust has adopted the term 'pushed out' to provoke a debate amongst practitioners that will focus on the weaknesses in our education systems rather than the 'abnormality' of the individual child.

Inclusion Trust projects include Notschool, an online Alternative Provision service which has reached over 10,000 marginalised young people since 2000 and was recognised in 2007 by the OECD as a new model of learning. Facework, is the most recent pilot research and development project, supported by the Nominet Trust, which seeks to transform Work Related Learning and Careers Education for 'pushed out' learners.

🌐 www.inclusiontrust.org.uk   🐦 @InclusionTrust   ✉ info@inclusiontrust.org

About LKMco

LKMco is an education and youth-development 'think and action tank'. We are a social enterprise and believe society has a duty to ensure children and young people receive the support they need in order to make a fulfilling transition to adulthood. We work towards this belief by articulating a vision for a society which does so, inspiring a desire to pursue it and enabling organisations to achieve it.

🌐 www.lkmco.org   🐦 @LKMco   ✉ info@lkmco.org

About Facework

FACING WORK ONE STEP AT A TIME

As part of a radical new model of learning Inclusion Trust has worked with Stephen Carrick-Davies in pioneering Facework – a unique online resource for staff who work with 'pushed out' learners. See www.facework.today.