

**Patron**

Fiona Millar

**Chair**

David Chaytor MP

**Secretary**

Margaret Tulloch

**Treasurer**

Malcolm Horne

Gen Sec SEA

## Making the case for a fair system of admissions

Without any press release the DfES on 26th July released the Draft Code of Practice on School Admissions. It is not being sent out widely and is only on the website. Consultation on the draft document ends on October 18th. This is an opportunity to make the case to end selection and bring about fair admissions. The Education and Skills select committee was highly critical of admissions procedures but this draft does not meet their concerns, indeed the Chair, Barry Sheerman MP, has said the draft is a 'very pale imitation of what is needed'.

Please send in your comments. Some of the important issues are:—

- The code should be made mandatory so that admission authorities should not merely be required to 'have regard to' guidance but 'to act in accordance with' it. This would require legislation but could be done in the forthcoming Education Bill. Allowing admission authorities merely to have regard allows them to show they have considered it but have decided to carry on as they were, for example interviewing parents.
- Secondary schools can now become foundation schools and thereby admission authorities. Unless there is a strict requirement to have fair admissions this will allow more and more schools to pick and choose their intakes.
- Rather than proposals to end selection the consultation shows the effect of strong lobbying from supporters of selection. The previous code required that in areas where there are grammar schools parents should have to express a preference as otherwise it is 'unfair to parents who only want a place at a non-selective school'. The draft Code completely reverses this saying 'it is good practice for parents to be able to know the outcome of selective tests before the closing dates for application to schools under co-ordinated schemes'. So parents who want grammar schools effectively get two preferences and, unlike parents who have to rely on the outcome of co-ordinated schemes, grammar school parents know in advance which school they are going to. In selective areas such as Kent schools taking all abilities have required parents to put them as first preference so that they can give priority to parents who want all ability schools. The draft specifically refers to this as 'not working well where there is an element of selection by ability or aptitude'. Of course if selection were ended there would be no need for these provisions and equal preference throughout co-ordinated schemes would be fairer. This seems at the moment a step too far for this government.

The *Comprehensive Future* steering group will be responding to the consultation but please send in your individual comments, however brief. To find the draft go to the website [www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations)

### • Fringe meeting at Labour Conference in Brighton

**Wednesday 28th September, 1pm**, Creation Night Club, bottom of West Street, near conference centre.

**Title:** *The Comprehensive Ideal: is there a progressive consensus?*

**Speakers:** John Dunford (General Secretary, SHA), Chris Keates (General Secretary, NASUWT), Angela Smith (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Northern Ireland) — the Government is currently phasing out the 11 plus in NI.

**Chair:** Fiona Millar (Patron, *Comprehensive Future*). **Refreshments.**

This year our fringe meeting is in collaboration with Catalyst (new, practical policies directed to the redistribution of power, wealth and opportunity) and Compass (direction for the democratic left). As the meeting is outside the conference centre you can come without a security pass — hope to see you.

**Comprehensive  
Future**

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# A new direction for Comprehensive Future?

## Come and discuss

*Comprehensive Future* arose as a result of the policy making process within the Labour party. Its aim was to encourage responses within the Labour party to press for a clear commitment to end selection by ability and aptitude.

It began with a letter from David Chaytor, Margaret Tulloch and Malcolm Horne to party members with whom they had contact asking for their support for a letter to go to all Constituency Labour Parties.

In January 2003 this letter with 150 signatories, including peers, Labour councillors, MPs and trade union leaders, was launched. It urged a response from CLPs to the policy making process to press for an end to selection. Supporters of this letter formed the start of the support for *Comprehensive Future*. Now there are 670 supporters.

As well as gathering supporters *Comprehensive Future* has organised meetings, lobbied union leaders and advisers, provided evidence to the policy making process and gathered support for parliamentary action. Regular newsletters have been sent to supporters.

The policy making process culminated in the National Policy Forum in Warwick in July 2004 when, largely as a result of efforts by *Comprehensive Future* and the SEA, selection was raised and discussed.

Resolutions to end selection were defeated but a compromise resolution was agreed which included the phrase, '*We are pursuing a non-selective system in secondary education*'. Since Warwick, *Comprehensive Future* has continued to lobby to end selection, including meeting the Secretary of State in September 2005.

Up until now planning decisions have been taken by a steering group with David Chaytor MP as Chair, Margaret Tulloch as Secretary and Malcolm Horne (General Secretary of the SEA) as Treasurer. The campaign has been funded by donations from some unions, a large donation from a campaign to end selection and individual donations.

## Now

Clearly the support for fair admissions, comprehensive schools and the need to end selection by ability and aptitude extends wider than Labour party members. At the steering group in September 2005 it was decided that *Comprehensive Future* should seek all-party and non-party support. By showing the wider support for the aims of *Comprehensive Future* the campaign will provide more evidence of the need to change. Furthermore it will be easier to seek financial support from organisations which may be concerned about political party links.

## Annual meeting for supporters

Plans are underway for our second annual meeting, to be held again in Birmingham on November 5th. It will take place at the Carrs Lane Centre, which is in the city centre.

A major focus will be the plans to seek wider support for *Comprehensive Future* (see left).

But much of the day will focus on what we want to see as a fair admissions policy. A discussion paper will be sent to all participants.

More information will come in October but please book the date now.

## Please help with a donation

*Comprehensive Future* urgently needs funds to finance its work. Please, if you can, send a donation now (cheques payable to *Comprehensive Future*).

Some supporters make regular monthly donations by bankers' order. This is *very welcome*.

Please instruct your bank to make a donation.

Bank details are: Comprehensive Future, Barclays Bank, Wimbledon SW19 7LA

Sort code 20-96-89, a/c no 40008869.

## The proposals – a draft constitution

- The name of the campaign: *Comprehensive Future*.
- The aim of *Comprehensive Future* is to campaign for a comprehensive secondary school system throughout England, with fair admissions criteria to all publicly funded schools, guaranteeing an equal chance to all children and an end to selection by ability and aptitude.
- Membership of the campaign is restricted to those individuals and organisations who support this aim.
- Existing supporters as of November 2005 will automatically become members.
- There will be an AGM.
- Members are to be given not less than 21 days' notice of the AGM.
- The organisation and planning of the campaign is the responsibility of a steering group of members comprised of four officers (Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer) and up to 15 members.
- The steering group is able to make such other appointments from within the steering group (eg spokespersons, membership secretary), invite patrons, seek donations as they think appropriate and make co-options.
- The officers and members of the steering group are elected at the AGM by a simple majority of members present.
- The steering group will normally meet at least four times a year.
- Nominations for officers and members of the steering group can be made by any member to the Secretary not later than 35 days before the AGM.
- Nominees are expected to provide a short personal description of no more than 75 words before the AGM for circulation to those attending.