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Emerging Patterns of Multi Academy Trusts and School Sponsorship

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Multi- Academy Trusts

- Academies date back to 2000s – secondary school under-performance
- Charity, removed from LA control with business and industry partners
- Academies Act 2010 – all schools can convert to academy status
- Local Authority responsibilities towards maintained schools diminish
- New configurations of schools emerge
- NCTL Single Academy; Multi-Academy; Umbrella and Collaborative partnerships-



Number of MATs in England

- *21,525 state-funded schools in England*
 - *1,618 were stand-alone academies*
 - *4,140 schools were in MATs '*
 - *1,121 active MATs in England*
 - *65% of all academies and free schools were in a MAT:*
 - *75% of primary academies*
 - *51% of secondary academies*
- (HCEC, 2017:4).

Sponsoring MATs

“An academy sponsor is an organisation or person who has received approval from the Department for Education (DfE) to support an underperforming academy or group of academies. Sponsors work with the academies they support through the academy trust” (DfE. 2016)

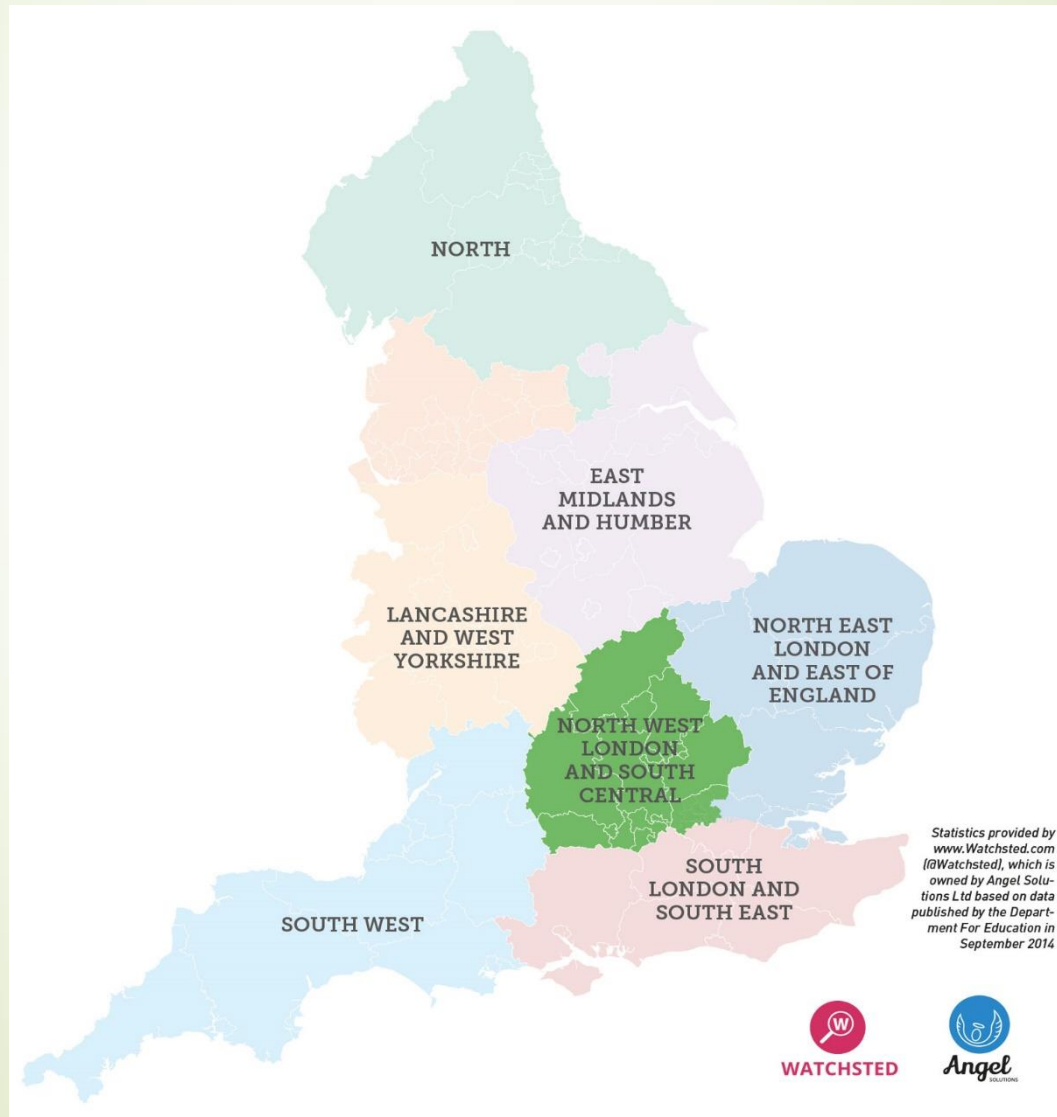
- 531 Academy Trusts registered as ‘approved sponsors’
 - 385 - multi- academy trusts
 - 100 - single academy trusts
 - 46 trusts registered but with no school allocation
- (Edubase2 figures from Oct. 2016)



Role of Regional School Commissioners (RSCs)

- Address underperformance of maintained schools
- Offer support of a 'strong' sponsor
- Intervene where MATs or academies are underperforming
- Encourage and decide on applications from sponsors to operate in a region (DfE, 2016b)

EIGHT RSC regions





Outline of Research

- Why would schools chose to become sponsoring academies?
- How is the arrangement brokered - particularly where sponsorship may cross geographical/county borders?
- What are the sponsorship arrangements ?
- Is sponsorship short-term e.g. until the sponsored school meets satisfactory standards of performance or long-term?
- What are the opportunities and risks of academy sponsorship?



Our sample

- Sponsoring MATs in the SW region of England
- 4 categories:
- School type (Primary, secondary, mixed)
- Geographical spread across LA boundaries
- Geographical spread across RSC boundaries
- Size of MAT

Randomly selected three representative MATs for each category.



Findings:

Motivations for school sponsorship




'Selfish':

'protecting what we have got' (CEO Cat 2).



'Altruistic'

'If we have the expertise then we should be changing lives and for me professionally it was immoral for children to be attending schools that are failing' (CEO CAT1).




How underperforming schools are allocated

- Sponsors contacted by LA (pre- RSC)
- Sponsors contacted by RSC
- MATs approached directly by underperforming schools




Sponsorship arrangements

- Brokered school becomes 'new' school
 - 7 yrs funding arrangements
 - Setting vision
 - Changing school culture
 - Working with all staff, teaching, admin, leadership, finance.
 - Working with parents
- 



Risks

- Risk to reputation
 - Risk to resources and capacity
 - Court risk
 - Long-term commitment
 - Reinventing the past
- 



Opportunities

- Growing leaders
- Targeting resources
- Collaboration
- Creating the new

'Let's make sure that central government, the Secretary of State, the DfE - all the way down to Regional School Commissioners - have a vision of a different future for school configuration and not one predicated on something we had in the past - something exactly the same just given a different name' (CEO Cat 1).


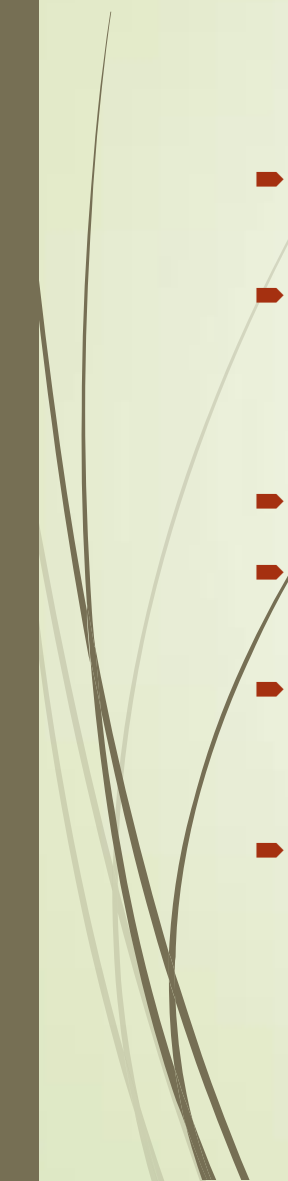
Implications

- ▶ MATs taking on responsibilities once held by LA
- ▶ Succession planning – ‘growing leaders’
- ▶ Internal market of teachers
- ▶ Targeting resources
- ▶ Sustainability of sponsorship – are successful models easily transferable to different contexts?
- ▶ Relationship between RSCs and Ofsted in identifying and ‘brokering’ underperforming schools
- ▶ The question of persistent underperformance and rebrokering of certain schools:

‘changes to funding agreements means that trusts can no longer pull out of sponsoring schools which risk dragging the entire chain into insolvency. This is leading to a growth in ‘untouchable’ schools and trusts taking due diligence a lot more seriously’ (HCEC, para 102).

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