



Lessons for Higher Education Institutions from the Establishment of the Schools Partnership Trust in Leeds (Garforth) and its Future Development

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Executive Summary

Introduction:

This report identifies strengths and challenges for the Garforth School Partnership Trust (SPT) in Leeds of having Leeds Trinity University College as the Higher Education (HE) external partner and trustee related to governance, strategic planning, curriculum and learner support. It outlines the rationale behind the model of trust school designed by the Garforth SPT – the first Pathfinder for school trusts – and the development of the partnership relationships. The report evaluates the successes of the HE and SPT partnership to date in relation to the SPT's stated aims and objectives and explores the ongoing developments into sponsorship of academies.

This report is based on a study carried out with the involvement of Leeds Trinity, SPT trustees, school leaders and other key stakeholders.

Key Findings:

Garforth Community College, a high performing institution in an educationally mixed area of Leeds, was the first of its type in the country to engage with the new opportunities offered by the 2006 Education Act to establish a school partnership trust. The college's development and delivery of the vision of what a good SPT could achieve was carried out against a background where there was no clear understanding about the role of a trust, some hostility from some quarters, a fast changing local authority (LA) perspective, some concerns about the loss of autonomy from those schools who were to become members of the SPT and a limited understanding of how other agencies would contribute. Leeds Trinity University College became the higher education institution (HEI) partner and made a significant contribution to the establishment of the SPT.

Key findings related to the value of an HEI and school working together for the effective working of an SPT include:

Finding 1: Success comes from all partners – schools and external agencies – committing to the SPT's mission and objectives

In the Garforth model of SPT, schools and external partners are not federated but bound by legal partnership. This commitment hinges on the partners finding value in the mission and objectives of the SPT for themselves and for SPT stakeholders. The HEI, therefore, is not just contributing to the strategic planning and governance of the SPT – on a trustee management board – but also to the 'on the ground' activities. Due to the fact that Leeds Trinity and the SPT have a shared mission to make a contribution to their local communities through lifelong learning and active community involvement in learning, they are able to develop projects that benefit both parties, supporting the legally binding relationship.

Finding 2: Leeds Trinity is able to offer the SPT flexibility and a professional and intellectual dimension that is particularly valuable for the lifelong learning and governance needs of the SPT

There are two levels at which Leeds Trinity contribute to the SPT: strategic and through participation in projects. One of the ways in which an academic external partner can support the work of an SPT is through scrutiny of the policies and procedures developed to govern the SPT effectively. Another is through providing locally delivered Foundation Degrees and Continuing Professional Development, developed to suit the needs of the students – this flexibility and the speed at which the institution responds to learner needs, is one of its key attractions to Garforth SPT.

Finding 3: External partners can meet pragmatic as well as altruistic goals through an engagement with their local communities

Engagement with the SPT has the potential to grow student numbers for Leeds Trinity in a managed way, with progression preparation provided by the institution ensuring that prospective students are aware of the HE environment and curriculum. In addition, on a more altruistic level, by active engagement with the schools and academies within the SPT, Leeds Trinity contributes positively to aspiration raising in an area of the city with low further education and higher education involvement.

Finding 4: By working through the SPT, Leeds Trinity is able to support school improvement in the academy development strategically, without having to take responsibility for the operational aspects

HEIs have been encouraged to sponsor academies in response to the National Challenge for schools initiative. Through the Garforth SPT, Leeds Trinity is able to support the work of school improvement – through strategic scrutiny of quality assurance, governance and management procedures; curriculum development; progression routes and transition activities – without becoming embroiled in the day-to-day operational issues related to the running of the academy.

Conclusions:

Lessons learned from the partnership between Leeds Trinity University College and the Garforth SPT are:

- Access to the local community and the potential learners within that community is facilitated by being part of a wider SPT that has as its aim to develop lifelong learning and community cohesion
- As desired by the government, the HEI becomes involved in school improvement initiatives and in the strategic planning and governance of the schools within the SPT, without the onerous responsibility of operational management
- The opportunities for involvement in projects in partnership with schools, health care and children's services professionals help to promote the opportunities to be found at the HEI and ensures that the HEI remains abreast of the needs of future students
- This arrangement supports an HEI's social mission to help meet the needs of the local community
- The SPT itself benefits from the academic and professional rigour an HEI can apply to the development of policies and procedures and to ensuring quality assurance is well embedded. This in turn means that the individual partnership schools benefit from a well structured and well managed SPT that can better meet their needs – especially as they have committed themselves to its governance, losing some of their autonomy. As a result the HEI, too, can be reassured of the sustainability of the SPT and thus a more positive outcome for themselves
- Becoming a trustee of a model of SPT such as that established at Garforth reduces the risk to the HEI of taking on sponsorship arrangements with academies as an individual institution

Recommendations:

Recommendations to other HEIs on how to successfully engage in trust schools include:

- Be well informed: there has been a plethora of legislation and guidance since the trust school initiative was first launched; it is of importance before becoming committed as a trustee to be well informed of roles and responsibilities. In addition it is of value to know the other partners involved

- Be strategic: ensure that the values, aims and objectives of the trust school or trust school partnership are compatible with the institution's – consider long term targets as, if the trust school or partnership is in the development stage, it will take a while for outcomes to be seen
- Be engaged: as a trustee, but also as an institution. Having an operational 'arm' to the relationship within the HEI ensures that the strategic goals can be acted on – it also helps to capture some of the creativity within the institution to share with the trust school or partnership
- Be flexible: Leeds Trinity was the HEI of choice for the Garforth SPT because it was able to respond appropriately quickly and adapt 'off the shelf' provision for the particular needs of the community, which was mutually beneficial
- Be alert: the Garforth SPT developed a number of projects very quickly to respond to the stakeholder needs; the HEI needs to keep abreast of these developments to ensure that they are taking full advantage of the opportunities these offer for knowledge transfer, meeting HE agendas (ie widening participation) and promoting the institution

Section 1: Aims and Rationale

1.1 Aims:

- 1
 - To evaluate the lessons for higher education institutions (HEIs) from the establishment of the Schools Partnership Trust (SPT) in Garforth, Leeds
 - To evaluate the lessons for HEIs for the future developments of the SPT across the wider region through its involvement with sponsoring newly formed academies

1.2 Rationale for the Project:

- 2

Garforth Community College established a company called School Partnership Trust in 2004 to support their specialist status as a College of performing arts. The School Partnership Trust raised funds to establish the Garforth Arts Festival which impacted positively not just on the students in the school but also the local community. The Head of the Community College was approached in 2006 as the Education and Inspections Bill 2006 was being finalised to become a pathfinder school for the trust status introduced by the Bill. Garforth Community College led the initiative engaging with local primary schools in establishing a trust through shared governance and financing. At the same time as inviting the primary schools to join in partnership, Garforth Community College approached external partners to participate in the emerging partnership. In 2006 the formal trust partnership was established with Garforth Community College, four local primary schools, the Primary Care Trust, Learning Skills Council and Leeds Trinity University College all having trustee status and seats on the Board.

As the first of the Pathfinder schools for establishing an effective model of trust school or trust school partnership, Garforth SPT pioneered many of the strategies and processes for effective school partnerships and has been nationally recognised as a successful venture. Leeds Trinity University College, unlike some HEI trustees in partnership trusts, has taken an active role in the strategic development and direction of the Garforth SPT supported by a shared vision and mission with the SPT. As such, Leeds Trinity and Garforth SPT are uniquely placed to evaluate the lessons that can be learned by other trusts and HEIs in establishing mutually beneficial and successful relationships in this field.

- 3

The research project will analyse, from a higher education (HE) perspective, the effectiveness of the current trust model and the opportunities offered by the development of the model into a regional framework. It will consider this especially in the areas of governance and strategic planning, curriculum and learner support. The research will help other HEIs understand how

they can become involved in the development of trusts and academies in a way that fits their own strategic priorities.

4 The methodology for the project includes:

- Literature review: national documentation regarding the setting up of school trusts, subsequent reports, documents from the Garforth SPT itself about intentions and the value of partnership with them, and Leeds Trinity documentation regarding the purpose of the HEI role
- Interviews: with key personnel both within and external to the SPT and Leeds Trinity related to the key issues
- Evaluation of interviews and documentation to establish lessons that can be learned from this case study and to establish best practice
- Outlining future opportunities for the model to be extended to sponsorship of newly formed academies in the region as a result of critical analysis of the data gathered from this case

Section 2: Historical and Political Context

5 In December 2005, it became clear with the publication of an alternative White Paper by rebel MPs that the initial call for reform to current governance procedures, to allow schools to move towards trust status, was not going to be trouble free. Opposition to the development emerged from all education circles with the National Union of Teachers [14] stating that it constituted 'creeping privatisation'. Ruth Kelly, Secretary of State for Education and Skills in 2005, reiterated the desire to provide real equality of experience, with no changes to admissions policy and with the active involvement of the Local Authorities but, most importantly, with schools being able to prioritise the needs of their pupils and communities, thus being able to develop personalised learning opportunities.

On the second reading of the Education and Inspections Bill (2006), Professor Geoff Whitty, director of the Institute of Education and specialist adviser to the Education Select Committee (2006) summarised the challenges facing the initiative as he praised the freedom offered to schools in developing models of trust schools but suggesting that there had been a missed opportunity in not ensuring models that included HE partnerships.

6 Universities were being encouraged to engage more fully with the widening participation agenda [11] in response to poor growth in HE participation. Universities were supported in this through AimHigher initiatives and supportive funding, but there was no necessity for formal arrangements with schools in terms of governance and strategic planning to fulfil their widening participation targets.

7 It is not surprising that many universities will have hesitated to engage or rejected approaches to become partners with school trusts or partnerships because there has been so much controversy surrounding the development of school trusts, and universities do not have any obligation to work with schools in this way. A trustee role for an HEI would include a role in school governance, curriculum development and potential embroilment in the political and operational issues surrounding the schools within the trust. HEIs do not necessarily have the skills base to engage with schools in this way, so would need some persuading that the benefits from trustee status were more than altruistic.

2.1 The Development of Trust Schools

2.1.1 Rationale for Trust School Development

- 8 The need for 'more diversity to give choice; more autonomy to give freedom for excellence; more investment in those who work at the front line, and those who lead them; and stronger partnerships to bring people together around the needs of the individual' [8], was recognised to be best met when schools were able to manage their own direction, focused on the needs of their particular communities. With the Every Child Matters agenda and extended schools developments, this community cohesion was further encouraged to build an effective team around the child, involving families, schools, social care and other related professionals.
- 9 The Laming Report (2003) and subsequent Children Act (2004) which launched the Every Child Matters agenda was focused on the need for greater communication among children's services, including education, police, social care, and health, and the need for community responsibility. The initiative placed schools in the centre of this activity, to provide a point of shared contact based on it being the child's most regular location after home. This placed additional responsibilities on schools to respond to a child's situation and alert relevant services when a child appeared to be in difficulty. In the case of foundation or trust schools, the responsibility would be wider, to the whole community. Commitment to lifelong learning and community cohesion would also help schools meet the standards agenda.
- 10 By forming partnerships with other organisations, such as further education (FE) and HE institutions or local businesses trust status can provide a school – or partnership of schools – with the opportunity, due to economies of scale or wider expertise, to meet the needs not only of their pupils but of the wider community. The intention from such an arrangement thus being to raise standards due to investment in innovative approaches to learning and teaching and community cohesion which forms common values and goals.

2.1.2 Legislation

- 11 Trust schools are not mentioned in such terms within the Education and Inspections Act (2006); it was a phrase drawn from the White Paper and applied to the legislation's term of foundation school. The legislation states that the foundation:
 - (a) is a body corporate of a prescribed description,
 - (b) is a charity (whether by virtue of section 23(3) or otherwise),and
 - (c) has as its purpose, or one of its purposes, the advancement of the education of pupils at the school or schools in respect of which it acts as the foundation.The foundation of a school to which this section applies shall, in carrying out its functions in relation to the school, promote community cohesion' [Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO), 2006, Section 5 & 6].
- 12 According to the Trust and Foundation Schools Partnership (TFSP) the Education and Inspections Act (2006), which took effect in September 2007, provided the opportunity for schools 'to use the experience, energy, networks and expertise from other schools and professions as a lever to raise standards in schools' [19]. The role of the local authority (LA) was not eliminated from this as 'Section 1 places a duty on local authorities to promote high standards and, for the first time, the fulfilment of every child's educational potential. It also places a duty on local authorities in England to promote fair access to educational opportunity' [7]; however they were not necessarily to be part of the vision and operational aspects of trust schools.

- 13 The act was hailed in some quarters as a key milestone in educational history, fulfilling what the 1944 Education Act, through the comprehensive system and since, had failed to do – provide equality of opportunity for all, and in some models of trust not just opportunities for those of school age, but lifelong.

2.1.3 Models and Themes for Trust Schools

- 14 In their inquiry into the impact of trust schools on LAs, Leeds City Council (2007) recognised that in 2006 ‘there (was) no government blueprint which sets out an ideal model for a trust school. The DfES intends this to be a school initiative, allowing the freedom to choose a model’ [16]. Initially, the Pathfinder schools led the way, negotiating new partnerships and developing individual foci and objectives. Schools were able to find their own external partners and decide whether they federated with other schools.
- In response to the successful development of differing models of trust schools, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), published the Trust Schools Toolkit (2009), outlining several possible models of trust including: progression trust; wider entitlement trust; primary excellence trust; shared innovation trust; federation trust etc. The models focus on a range of themes: 14-19 progression; collaboration or federation; raising achievement and community regeneration. By offering a range of models, the DCSF provides opportunities for trust schools to find solutions to their community’s needs, demonstrating which organisations to develop as partners to support these.

2.1.4 The Involvement of External Agencies

- 15 Although LAs do retain funding and intervention rights and the admissions policy must be adhered to, Leeds LA had reservations about the value of trust schools and the potentially damaging impact they would have on their ability and those of other agencies to meet the needs of all organisations within their remit.
- 16 However for other partners, the opportunity to work with trusts can make their role easier. In the case of Primary Care Trusts, for example, or Children’s Centres, one of the biggest challenges is shared communication and embedding support within the community. Partnership within a trust provides shared vision, coherent service provision and appropriate resource allocation. Dependent upon the central theme of the trust, partnerships can work to not only provide educational outcomes, but also those related to wider issues of family support, lifelong learning, widening participation and community cohesion.

2.1.5 The Role of HEIs in School Trusts

- 17 ‘Becoming a trust school partner offers universities the opportunity to work with schools through a formal framework that unites schools and HE in a strategic and sustainable partnership’ [19]. Lord Adonis’ speech [2] stated ‘this is a unique opportunity for the HE sector to get in at ground level to develop and nurture the undergraduates of tomorrow and widen participation in higher education. We want the most talented people of all backgrounds to meet their potential and excel’. Therefore, in addition to AimHigher initiatives, school visits, summer schools and Gifted and Talented programmes, HEIs would involve themselves actively in the governance, curriculum planning, learning and teaching at trust and academy schools. Pragmatically this may provide universities with students prepared for the academic environment and curriculum

of HE, attract widening participation funding and engage lifelong learners in training and Foundation Degrees; altruistically it provides an opportunity to make a difference to the lives of those living in the local and possibly regional community. DCSF and Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) assert that ‘the Government would like every secondary school to have a higher education partnership, in recognition of the importance of universities’ crucial leadership role’ [2]. HEFCE, too, were clear about the importance of the widening participation and fair access agenda and the beneficial role HEIs could play in fostering talent through active engagement with school trusts.

2.2 National Challenge and the Development of Academies

- 18 The decision to create new models of working and governance was driven by the desire to move away from a “one size fits all” policy which had previously attempted to drive up standards in British education. The growth of shared trusts, academies and now National Challenge Trusts is the government’s response to the perceived need for a change in the nature of provision to enable greater educational progress to be made. The original academy development programme had an agenda of change to effect academic improvement. The new academy programme has an agenda of broader socio economic improvement through academic change of performance and aspirations.
- 19 From their inception in 2000 to present day, there has been a philosophical shift from creating a new type of school which seeks to “break the mould” by being separate from local authority and surrounding education providers; the new academies are now part of the diversity and collaboration model, so the brief for sponsors has shifted to a wider and more inclusive listing.
- 20 Government commitment to this programme is shown by the rate of growth of opening new academies. The first three academies opened in 2002 – there are now 133 open. Up to a further 80 will open in September 2009 and up to 100 in 2010. The government is committed to establishing 400 academies.
- 21 To underline the importance of the academies in overall government strategy, in May 2008, the government set out its strategy for the National Challenge, a programme of support to secure higher standards in all secondary schools by 2011. In this, the academies programme forms a key part. For those schools where less than 30 per cent of pupils are achieving five A* to C grades at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) level, local authorities are expected to have an action plan in place. It is in such schools that the growth of the academies programme has been most felt.
- 22 This broadening of the academy sponsors and the very deliberate assertion that academies are within the state system, but having the benefit of increased operational flexibility of approach has meant that opposition to academies has been calmed.

Section 3: Case Study: An HEI perspective of the effectiveness of the current trust model and the opportunities offered by the development of the model into a regional framework

3.1 Objectives for the Case Study:

- 23
- To evaluate the 'whole institution' model of the Garforth SPT and Leeds Trinity link
 - To outline the elements of the model that are different to more traditional provision with their related strengths and weaknesses
 - To evaluate this model against new opportunities for public sector organisations to sponsor academies and national challenge schools
 - To evaluate the potential to extend the SPT and Leeds Trinity partnership into involvement with the SPT sponsorship of new academies in the region
 - To focus particularly on issues related to governance, strategic planning, curriculum and learner support within the SPT
 - To evaluate the possibilities for HEI and the SPT for continued engagement

3.2 The Case Study Approach:

- 24
- Semi formal interviews were conducted with trustees, HEI representatives, SPT members and key external links including those involved in widening participation in the region, DCSF consultants and those involved in academy developments.

3.3 The Garforth SPT: Context and Development

- 25
- Garforth Community College established the SPT in 2004 initially as a vehicle for supporting the funding of their specialism – performing arts. The SPT had charity status with the objects to: 'advance the education of the pupils... (and) improve the conditions of life of the public at large' (Companies Act 1985 & 1989). The SPT was designed to attract funding not available to the college and to fund such activity as the Garforth Arts Festival – a community wide endeavour.
- 26
- The development of the wider SPT was not haphazard but clearly designed to proceed alongside new opportunities for schools.

3.3.1 The Model:

- 27
- The Garforth SPT was the first pathfinder trust school and subsequently school partnership trust for trust status thus creating its own model of partnership. Garforth Community College in conjunction with four of the Garforth primary schools, the Primary Care Trust, Learning Skills Council and Leeds Trinity University College formed a partnership with each member having trustee status and with shared governance between the schools. It was significant that the schools were not federated – this was an insufficiently firm a connection for this model.
- 28
- In the Garforth SPT model, each school has its own Governing Body, with its own Instrument of Governance. Two Foundation Governors are added to that Governing Body, sometimes replacing the Local Educational Authority Governors. These Foundation Governors come from the Board of Trustees, which in turn is made up of two members from each school or organisation who are full members, one each from associate members (schools who are unable due to their own governance policies to take up full membership) and none from the family member (a Catholic school restricted through the Church relationship from partnership status).

These Trustee appointments to the Foundation Governing Bodies are chosen by the individual schools to reflect the “best fit” for their needs. In this way therefore, each school retains its own Governing Body. This Governing Body will be responsible for the strategic planning for the individual school and relevant to the school’s individual needs. However, the addition of a relevant appropriate governor from the Trust Board enables a broader aspect to that strategic policy making process. The link back to the Trust Board also ensures accountability from each Governing Board to the overarching trust strategies. Trustees set the strategic direction, and meet 4 times a year; once each term with an additional Annual General Meeting. This direction is then the responsibility of the individual Governing Boards.

- 29 The SPT is a limited company with legal responsibilities and is also a registered charity. All these systems require a legal and formal structure to ensure each partner knows their roles and responsibilities. A Steering Group made up of all head teachers meets regularly to implement outwork SPT strategy.
- 30 Successful bids for projects generate income which in turn allows officers to be employed or allows colleagues to be seconded from the schools involved to deliver the project. There is no expectation of any initial financial contribution from the Partners in Trust, but cross funding opportunities do exist to maximise use of existing resources.

3.3.2 External Agency Involvement:

- 31 The physical and mental health of children and families was seen as a major barrier to lifelong learning, so incorporating the Primary Care Trust (PCT), which could support the rationalisation of provision within the area to effect better use of available resources, was felt to be the way to improve access to learning. One of the outcomes was school nurses being employed across schools to reflect patterns of family need rather than simply focussing on individuals and possibly duplicating efforts. Consultation across the trust involving the PCT enables the trust to meet the requirements of the Every Child Matters agenda, involving local children’s centres as well as school based health initiatives and family engagement. Future construction of a children’s centre within the Learning Community means that all parties involved in the welfare of children and families can gather more conveniently, to the benefit of the individuals and families involved.
- 32 The Learning Skills Council (LSC) was approached to provide a further enrichment via broader learning opportunities and additional funding streams. LSC was to provide expertise for identifying training needs and encouraging the development of apprenticeships. This would enable a greater range of students and older learners to access opportunities for continuing professional development and higher level training. This would up-skill the workforce raising aspirations for children in families whose parents had not benefited from this experience themselves.
- 33 Statistics show that only 13% of adults in the Garforth area have experience of HE. In conjunction with the LSC partnership, therefore, Leeds Trinity could ensure that lifelong learning opportunities extended beyond FE and training. To support community wide engagement with learning, the partnership with Leeds Trinity was opportune, as Foundation Degrees and school staff development could be delivered within the local community and designed to suit the needs of the participants.

3.3.3 The Aims and Objectives:

- 34 The aim for the SPT is to provide the highest quality learning experiences for the local community and to engender partnerships and relationships that would best serve the needs of

the community.

- 35 The key objectives are:
- To advance and enhance the development and education of people of all ages and without distinction
 - To advance the health and welfare of pupils and their families
 - To promote community cohesion
 - To provide or assist in providing facilities for recreation and leisure time activities at all times of the year
 - To work with schools in challenging circumstances with the purpose of developing long term sustainable relationships for the benefit of children and families within the local community
 - To create an environment where all learners of any age or background will have access to and support for a wide range of learning (SPT, 2008, p.1).
- 36 Key Priorities:
- Every Child Matters
 - Training
 - Management Services
 - Information & Communication Technologies (ICT)
 - Extended Services

3.3.4 Effectiveness of the Current Trust Model:

- 37 'Many schools already offer a genuinely personalised learning experience for their pupils and succeed both in improving standards and in supporting their children's development in the round. They provide great teaching in an environment of good behaviour and discipline. They inspire their young people and engage parents, carers and the local community in the life of the school. They work closely with other local children's services so that they can overcome the barriers to learning that their pupils may face, and they stretch and challenge the most able learners as well. Great schools work with other schools to ensure that all local children can benefit from high standards, good behaviour, specialist facilities and a wide curriculum offer' [3].
- 38 This statement from Ed Balls in the DCSF document 21st Century Schools: A World-Class Education for Every Child, acts as a baseline for measurement of success for the new structure of schools, including trust schools. Characteristics of a successful trust, according to Ruth Kelly (2005) in her paper outlining the government's ambitions for trust schools included the fact that 'Trusts will enable schools to build better links with the community, with business and with university and FE (Further Education) colleges. They will also be able to help raise standards.... Schools that develop a specialism consistently out-perform non-specialist schools. Trust schools will help us create a climate for success in every school. Not one where success is determined by intake, but where it is determined by the quality of leadership and the quality of teaching and learning.... A school with more flexibility and active encouragement to deliver learning differently' [14]. In short, a successful trust would have three indicators of success:
- i) the needs of its local community central to its mission and activities;
 - ii) active engagement with partners who support the mission and enable the Trust to meet its aims and raise standards; and
 - iii) an innovative approach to learning and teaching that provides opportunities to develop improved models of school governance, curriculum planning, learning and teaching.
- 39 The Garforth model has been recognised as successful against these indicators due to the fact that:

1. Admissions to the local primary schools have stabilised and increased in response to the changed admissions priorities. This is in contrast to the picture across the rest of the city where falling student numbers have led to uneconomic class sizes and threats of closure
2. Two of the SPT schools have achieved the Outstanding ranking in recent Ofsted Inspections, and the appointment of a strategic Teaching and Learning Coordinator by the SPT is seen as addressing an educational issue of primary underachievement which is itself a major city wide issue
3. Information Technology (IT) provision across the SPT has enabled a dramatic improvement in facilities and potential performance, with opportunities then for development in a range of areas which would have not been previously available. Wireless networking has facilitated changing styles of curriculum delivery. The development of the Learning Platform and the appointment of a specialist IT post to the SPT team has enabled a swift development in a range of areas, the latest of which will be the Cirrus project which proposes wireless capability for all the Garforth locality
4. Leeds Trinity has been involved in the delivery of Foundation Degrees, tailored to the needs of students and the places of delivery to suit the local needs agenda

3.4 From the Perspective of Garforth SPT:

3.4.1 The Success of the Current Model

- 40 The principal of Garforth Community College and chief executive officer (CEO) of the SPT had a vision for community cohesion, and the desire to sponsor new academies that were designed to meet the needs of pupils in failing schools through the involvement of more successful schools or private investors and to offer the best opportunities for young people in the immediate environment originally, then more widely. Through his work with the DCSF, as a government advisor on academy schools, the principal was aware that charitable trusts were going to be increasingly used as sponsors for academy schools, but at that time the requirement for £2m investment up front was not feasible for the Garforth SPT. However, the intention for the SPT, even at its inception in 2004, was to meet ongoing educational agendas around Trust Schools, community links, lifelong learning and with the longer term goal of supporting schools entering into academy status.
- 41 Garforth Community College was an ideal choice for expansion in this way as it was highly successful academically, already running programmes for the local community including the arts festival and holiday provision, and was well positioned for expansion into the support of struggling schools. Although that was a long term vision at the time of the creation of the SPT, it evidences the effectiveness of the Garforth model in having a clear, long term vision, with logical development, solid foundations and opportunity for sustainability.
- 42 The 2006 Education and Inspections Act abolished the necessity for the £2m investment by charitable trusts and through the SPT it became possible to plan for sponsorship of local and regional academies. Prior to the act receiving royal assent – at the White Paper stage – the principal of Garforth Community College met with the Schools Commissioner, as a consequence becoming the first pathfinder for developing the framework for Trust Schools, through the development of the original 2004 model of the SPT. Central to the government framework for the development of Trust Schools was the requirement for external partners.
- 43 The importance of supportive external partners who would actively engage in the work of the SPT is key to its ongoing success. Garforth Community College and the SPT had external

contacts through other commitments and projects. One of these, Leeds Trinity University College, was approached initially in early 2006 through one of its governors and the vice principal for external developments. The incentive for the college was presented as an opportunity to engage in new ways of working in the governance of schools and enabling Garforth SPT to build capacity to support the mission to put families at the centre of learning in a mutually beneficial partnership.

- 44 External partners such as an HEI, PCT and the LSC had to be prepared to actively engage and provide a breadth of experience and additional professional expertise that further develops the SPT's capacity to meet its mission. Some of those who were initially approached were rejected as potential trustees because of their desire for partnership out of self interest rather than commitment to the SPT's work. The PCT, though, were willing to work in partnership as central to the SPT mission – from its inception in 2004 – was to put families at the heart of learning. The PCT recognised the opportunity to work more effectively with the local community via the Garforth SPT because of ease of communication across schools and other organisations and because the SPT intended to root children's services within the community in future Children's Centre developments. The only external partner missing would be Children Services (Children Leeds) via the Local Authority as the Local Authority has responsibilities for all schools including trust schools and academies; however, with the particular theme of community cohesion and meeting the educational and welfare needs of children and families and Every Child Matters, a partner from Children's Services (Children Leeds) would have been an asset to the SPT.
- 45 Leeds Trinity was perceived to be able to offer, in addition to such programmes as Foundation Degrees within the local community, support for the Extended Services and Children's Services (Children Leeds) agenda through staff development etc. It brought to the SPT board an additional professional and intellectual dimension that could inform the governance and strategic planning for the trust. In addition to this, Leeds Trinity – unlike larger HEIs – had a flexibility that suited the Garforth SPT. The ability to respond swiftly to project interests, to provide local delivery of Foundation Degrees and staff development, to have regular access to senior management – all were of benefit to the SPT and to Leeds Trinity itself as it ensured more professional information sharing and decision making.
- 46 This contributed to the success of the Garforth model because the initial vision had been clear: to provide the best educational and welfare opportunities for the children and families of the community including opportunities for lifelong learning. The external partners it chose, therefore, had to buy into this vision and be prepared to contribute to its success. The leaders of the Garforth SPT were able, highly successfully, to encourage those they wanted involved through a belief that it was mutually beneficial to launch the initiative in a formal, secure and sustainable fashion. So the trustees – once the Garforth SPT board was formed in 2007 – were bound by Articles of Agreement that committed them to this. This was not a haphazard arrangement; each member had signed a formal, legally binding contract to work within the SPT long term. For the schools involved this included combined governance and other operational changes. But this commitment was seen as key to the sustainability of the SPT from all partners, a sustainability that mere federation would not provide.
- 47 Successful initiatives grow and share expertise. This was always the plan with the SPT in Garforth, that once it was firmly established within its own community, it would aim to impact positively on those less successful communities in the region. Partners were aware of this, so again were not just signing up for a short term, personal gain, but for long term engagement with challenging schools and underachieving young people. This caused some nerves initially, but the strength of the Garforth model means that not all partners need to be actively involved in every endeavour. For example, primary school and PCT partners worked together on the Children's Centre projects and sponsoring new academies was mainly adopted by Garforth Community College as the secondary partner with support from the LSC and Leeds Trinity.

- 48 Overall, success for the SPT, bearing in mind its existence in its present state only since September 2007, is described by the CEO as:
- The successful range of projects already completed including the original Garforth Arts Festival; holiday programme; extended schools provision; wireless provision to the wider Garforth community; the establishment of two academies; the local delivery of Foundation Degrees; staff development
 - The positive impact these have already had on the lives of young people and families in Garforth and, soon, the South Leeds area
 - The model that Garforth SPT has created now being viewed as the preferred model by the government for sponsorship of academies. There is recognition that for academies to be successful, they need sponsors who have more than money and capacity and an altruistic desire to improve children's lives. Academies need to be supported strategically and operationally by charitable trusts that are rooted in high quality school leadership, learning and teaching with recognised success for school and community improvement – this is what the SPT has provided for South Leeds
 - The model is sustainable, relatively low risk and will meet the agendas for whichever government will be in power after the general election
 - Deliberate development of companies and community interest groups within the SPT, so the management of finances is secure and costs are kept low
 - Shared services around human resources, payroll, admissions etc. providing coherence and rationality to the operational elements of the SPT
 - The development of individual relationships with each academy, so that they can draw on the expertise of the SPT, and the SPT has the majority of the governors, but they can equally retain some autonomy – which in the future will provide additional growth opportunities
 - All school leaders are now required to work within their own but also another school within the SPT. Through this approach expertise is shared, energy for new ideas is maintained and the leadership of the SPT can draw upon wider knowledge of activities and shared experiences, developing expertise. This is a new model of school leadership, which will be further developed to move staff around within projects because their own school is no longer in isolation, but part of a bigger entity
 - The five management groups: the information and communication technology (ICT) group through Project Cirrus; the academy management group; the trading services group; the extended services group; and the children's centres group are an asset. They work autonomously with their own business plans and report to the SPT board. The make up and focus of the management groups is flexible, so if a particular need or project arises or is completed the management groups can adapt. This flexibility works extremely well in focusing resources, personnel and finances where they are required with members from across the SPT joining where their expertise is desired, but not needing the minutiae of each decision having to go to the full board for approval
 - All children within the auspices of the SPT will receive the same offer; families know that when their child is working within the SPT the Every Child Matters agenda will be at the forefront of the planning and operations; no child will be left behind; inclusive learning and teaching approaches will enable each child to attain; school improvement will be central

3.5 From the Leeds Trinity Perspective

3.5.1 Leeds Trinity's Role within the Partnership

- 49 The CEO of the SPT approached Leeds Trinity for its commitment to growth – but in a measured way as evidenced by its Strategic Plan – and its commitment to a philosophy of community engagement, empowerment of individuals and lifelong learning, that the SPT itself shared. In addition, the attraction of its size, making it flexible and responsive, and its reputation as a teacher training organisation helped in the longer term aspirations of the SPT in engaging with academies and challenge schools.
- 50 The SPT expected Leeds Trinity to engage as a full trustee within the organisation. There are two trustees from the institution sitting on the board – both with decision making power and the 'bigger picture' of Leeds Trinity as a senior manager and governor respectively.
- 51 Lifelong learning, engagement with the community and the extended services agenda, were all reasons cited by Leeds Trinity for becoming involved in the SPT. The institution was very clear about how far its involvement would extend, for example not wanting to get embroiled in the local operational elements of school management; but happily engaging in projects such as Cirrus where expertise was available.
- 52 Leeds Trinity trustees recognise the strength of leadership in the SPT; there is a clear sense of purpose and vision with strong community and partner support. However, there is some concern that the way in which the SPT was initially established did result in some lack of order in the operation of the board that would be provided in other organisations by a company secretary. Although a small issue in terms of operational functions, this is a significant hindrance to coherent communication, clarity of message and tracking the actions arising from discussions, particularly to an external partner who may not be actively involved in the individual projects but who is expected to contribute to strategic direction.
- 53 By working with partners on the ground who have a direct involvement in helping young people to progress, utilizing imaginative and interesting school structures and governance arrangements up to and beyond 18, provided Leeds Trinity with an opportunity to engage with a regional provider who had previously had limited engagement with HE. In addition, the SPT desire to extend adult education, in an area of Leeds without significant FE competition, mirrored the institution's intentions to provide flexible, part time, learning via Foundation Degrees and other programmes within a local community. In this way the Garforth community could have an HE learning experience in their own location because for many, particularly returning learners, the 15 miles to the Leeds Trinity site would be sufficiently far to be off putting.
- 54 From Leeds Trinity's perspective there is a view that the pace at which development has taken place has been commendable, with the SPT leading the way and pioneering the models and effective structure of trust schools with benefits already apparent and potential benefits almost limitless. However, there is an argument to be made now that consolidation is wise – as an external partner, Leeds Trinity has not necessarily had the opportunity to engage as fully as it could have with the projects ongoing because it only attends meetings where these things are reported. Creative thinking from all of the stakeholders would benefit the entire SPT – not just discussing possibilities, but providing a more holistic perspective on the project proposals that may enable them to meet a wider agenda.

3.5.2 The Success of the Garforth SPT model

- 55 Leeds Trinity recognised in the planned Garforth SPT an organisation that shared an aim 'to foster learning communities which promote and provide excellence in teaching, learning and relationships through high expectations and adherence to traditional values and standards' (SPT, 2008, p.1). Strategically the relationship suited the developments occurring within the college, while previous relationships with Garforth Community College and some of the primary schools in school partnership arrangements related to teacher training suggested that this could be a mutually worthwhile commitment.
- 56 With trustees on the board of the SPT, Leeds Trinity sees its role as supporting the development of ways of operating professionally as a governing body. Initially this may be simply advising on how to ensure the roles of trustees in terms of their involvement at a strategic level is clear; the reporting of actions is transparent and consistent and the strategy meetings of the board are not overtaken by operational issues related to individual schools. As an external partner, Leeds Trinity is able to view the operation of the SPT reasonably objectively and with the combined expertise of the trustees from Leeds Trinity in the area of governance, they are ideally placed to help the SPT manage change from its first phase focused on Garforth to its wider remit.
- 57 One of the benefits of having HEI involvement is the academic approach possible from their engagement with discussion. Leeds Trinity sees one of its functions as questioning assumptions, offering alternative viewpoints, challenging project managers to view a wider potential for their plans, even offering research into the prospective outcomes and impact. An HEI is involved in a vast range of learning partnerships with schools, employers, funding councils, and international organisations; this plethora of experiences can support a trust that is focused on one community or with a regional remit. It is up to the HEI to offer its support in these areas, but it is equally important that they are then brought in when a project would benefit from this perspective.
- 58 There was, therefore, a pragmatic rationale for engaging with the SPT, but equally Leeds Trinity had altruistic reasons – the social mission to support the improvement of its local community is the right thing to do.

3.5.3 The Anticipated Benefits and Challenges of being the HE Partner in the SPT

- 59 Only 13% of adults in the Garforth area had experience of HE. As a baseline measure an improvement to that figure could justify a relationship with the SPT through an engagement with programmes of study such as Foundation Degrees etc., thus increasing student numbers for the institution, whilst addressing some of the objectives of the SPT.
- 60 In addition to this, working with the SPT had the anticipated benefits of:
- Meeting the institutional mission to positively engage with the local community
 - Providing further opportunities for widening participation, recruitment and progression
- Further, in line with the guidance from the SPT and foundation schools (2007), working with a trust school can provide: 'pathways of opportunity for pupils to gain understanding and access to university; increased opportunities to align university programmes with business and the local community; access to professional development opportunities for school staff, the community and other Trust partners' (<http://www.trustandfoundationschools.org.uk>); all of which were perceived benefits for Leeds Trinity.
- 61 Challenges:
- Sponsorship: HEIs are not equipped nor sufficiently experienced in school management

to sponsor academies independently, however as part of a trust such as Garforth, their expertise can be exploited to the benefit of a school in challenging circumstances in aspects of governance, curriculum planning, progression and aspiration raising

- Equity: HEIs have expressed concern that involvement in one project like the SPT can restrict their opportunity to engage in other partnerships. However the SPT would argue that the relationships are based on unique circumstances and aims; therefore involvement in one partnership does not preclude involvement in another
- Risk: there is a risk in becoming involved in trust schools – there will be trusts that fail to fulfil their mission, possibly having invested significant resources, time and staffing to projects that have not met their intended outcomes. However, as an external partner in the trust, the risk is reduced. There is a risk to reputation, but equally in a successful trust relationship such as the one at Garforth, it actually works to enhance the reputation and brand awareness of the HEI as the involvement of HE staff in aspiration raising, mentoring, and projects demonstrates to young people and their families that the HEI has a vested interest in their welfare and future. This in turn could lead to growth for the HEI itself
- Capacity: with no obligation to become involved, many HEIs will argue that they do not have the capacity in terms of resources, staff time or finance to engage fully in the trust. Creative institutions, though, will find ways to ensure that the investment of resources, people or money results in positive outcomes for both sides and that there are likely to be mutual benefits to involvement which outweigh the initial efforts

3.5.4 Leeds Trinity's Contribution to the Development of the SPT

- 62 In order to gain Pathfinder status, the Garforth SPT in early 2006 had to find external partners willing to support its growth into the new arrangements of trust schools opened up by the Education and Inspections Act (2006). Leeds Trinity was one of the first external partners on board. This was, in large part, due to existing relationships between Garforth Community College and Leeds Trinity, meaning that the SPT was not brokering a relationship with an institution of whom they knew little. Both were sure that the relationship would be relatively risk free and could be mutually beneficial.
- 63 It was on this basis that Leeds Trinity supported Garforth SPT through the consultation phase of the Pathfinder process where all stakeholders in a potential Trust School were approached to 'sell' the vision and secure support. As a result of the successful outcome of this process, the initial schools and other external partners met together at conferences and meetings to discuss ways forward. It is viewed as a strength of HE involvement that Leeds Trinity was represented at each of these meetings with a trustee able to contribute strongly to the development of policy for the future SPT.
- 64 'Trust Schools capture the energy, enthusiasm and fresh-thinking of their partners for long-term benefit, not just short-term impact' [19]; this was immediately perceived by the SPT in having Leeds Trinity as a partner organisation because of the engagement with the consultation and policy and practice developments, but also its willingness to immediately engage in Foundation Degree delivery within the local community. Although a small initiative at first, as Leeds Trinity continues to develop a Foundation Degree Framework around the needs of the children's workforce, building on the success of the initial programmes for school support workers, this commitment will grow – providing a long term benefit for the SPT, whilst supporting Leeds Trinity's aims to expand Foundation Degree provision. 'Foundation Degrees help strengthen links between universities and employers, as employers take an increasingly active role in the development and delivery of courses, both to meet the needs of existing employees and potential recruits' [8] in this case the employers and employees are those working for the SPT, so it should be a strong pathway for trust members in the future.

3.6 Strengths Related to Governance, Strategic Planning, Curriculum and Learner Support as a Result of HEI Involvement:

- 65 'Good governance should support good leadership and management and provide a framework of accountability' [11]. One of the major strengths Leeds Trinity could offer the SPT in its formation and now its sponsorship of new academies is its expertise on governance arrangements as an independent charitable organisation itself. The trustees from the institution contributed considerably to the development of governance policy and direction, which reflects its role as an academic partner.
- 66 Leeds Trinity, as an HEI generally but also with its expertise in teacher training, children's services and lifelong learning contributed further to the SPT in several ways:
- Informing the trust's thinking on issues surrounding progression, lifelong learning and access to HE for school leavers, but also for the wider community through its Foundation Degree offer
 - Contributing to the raising attainment agenda, through its insight into curriculum planning and development – ensuring that those aspiring to HE were adequately informed and prepared for that level of study
 - Aspiration raising, through an active involvement in school/college liaison and widening participation events
 - Making significant contributions to the governance policy for the SPT drawing on expertise in working effectively with governing bodies and drawing lines of responsibility clearly and accountably
 - Strengthening the dialogue for partnership members around governance, managing change and enabling the SPT to transform from its original remit to this wider agenda in a sustainable and managed fashion

Section 4: Lessons learned from the HE/SPT relationship

4.1 Lessons Learned by Leeds Trinity:

- 67 Leeds Trinity recognise that their involvement in the SPT is a long term commitment, therefore were not necessarily looking for quick results from the projects of the first two years. However lessons have been learned:
- Communication needs to be improved between the SPT and its external partners – if trustees are aware of projects, actions and plans, then they are better placed to offer support. The HEI may be able to offer creative ideas on how to use, for example, the wireless technology being installed to better deliver an academic programme or staff development course and expand the student body across the locality, thus enhancing lifelong learning opportunities. If communication depends on attendance at meetings that are outside the four board meetings a year, then an external partner may well miss an opportunity to help
 - To engage the whole range of stakeholders, thus utilizing the expertise across the partnership, it would be of value to develop one or two flagship projects. This serves the purpose of stakeholders learning from each other in the resulting problem solving and idea development process as well as developing a deeper understanding of the roles, responsibilities and acumen of each of the partners. In addition, it would unite the partners in the common purpose of meeting the SPT's aims and objectives in a practical and constructive exercise. If projects are going to emerge from individual stakeholder interest, then knowing who to draw in to the project management group is going to require a comprehensive awareness of the expertise and capacity of each partner – at present, this is not apparent

- The development of the SPT beyond a school focus into a community initiative takes time. Leeds Trinity is aware that the intention has always been to improve the experiences of the wider community; but this has not always been reflected in the focus of the board meetings, where operational school issues have occasionally dominated. If the SPT is going to attract support from its external partners in a cohesive offer, then its school partners need to demonstrate confidence in their ability to manage operations and actively seek to engage all partners in strategic planning, moving both the SPT and the academy agenda forwards
- HEIs can build capacity for an SPT; achieving wider penetration than the trust on its own and opening other doors for the stakeholders. One of the lessons learned by Leeds Trinity is that there needs to be wider recognition among the school partners particularly – who are the ones who generate the projects – that the external partners have a significant offer to make. In the early days of Garforth SPT, the projects undertaken in reality could have been achieved without the external partners. The message this may send is ‘Why be there, then?’ An HEI partner has to feel that the relationship is of value to its strategic aims. The Garforth SPT is now at a stage, having successfully completed the initial phase of development, to examine how the external partnerships are working and ensure that the vision, aims and objectives that drew stakeholders into the partnership are being delivered by all of the partners together
- It is possible for an HEI to achieve widening participation, access, progression agreements and lifelong learning opportunities without being involved in a partnership trust. There needs to be an incentive for the HEI to become involved and not be distracted by small projects that are of interest and within their capacity, but not necessarily of practical use to their institution. One of the lessons from this analysis is that to maintain the engagement of HEIs, a trust needs to focus the governing body on strategic planning that meets the needs of all its partners, it needs to be very clear from the beginning what the role of the HEI will be and how it sees this developing in the short, medium and maybe long term. That establishes, then, a compact between the two that an HEI can examine and buy into or reject and do its own thing
- There is a risk in the model established by Garforth, involving the Community College and the primary schools, that individual independent priorities will hinder the work of the SPT as a whole. The Garforth SPT has well signposted aims and objectives, but if the meetings and planning are dominated by the day-to-day challenges faced by schools, then these will become obscured and the SPT as a whole will be less effective. For Garforth, it is possible to overcome this now the transition period is complete and this is where Leeds Trinity would be of particular value in supporting change management and the establishment of strategic plans that involved the school and other partners fully
- Within Leeds Trinity it has been recognised that involvement with the SPT was strategic and mainly involved the trustees only. Although Foundation Degrees are delivered in Garforth for the SPT and widening participation activity occurs, these are not part of an institutional approach to SPT involvement. One consideration as a result of the project is to establish an operational group within the organisation, informed by the Leeds Trinity trustees as to the priorities of the SPT and potential opportunities, but then autonomous in its engagement in the practical project work. This would significantly strengthen the potential outcomes for the SPT from having Leeds Trinity involved.

4.2 Lessons Learned by the SPT:

- 68
- The trustees nominated to sit on the board from a partner need to be ones who can make decisions in the room. Initially the role was delegated to a more junior member of staff who had to return to the institution to gain approval before actions were taken.

Although it is understood that a board cannot always have the most senior staff members attend, by delegating responsibility the SPT perceive that some decisions were made more slowly and at times this stalled progression within a meeting or negotiation. The strategic board of the SPT has to be one that is empowered, so partners within the trust need to be appointing trustees who are empowered themselves to make strategic judgements for their organisation

- By having the right person as trustee, the SPT anticipate an acceleration of future projects, including the work with academies. It is not a case of personalities particularly, but having someone with the vision to see the value of a project for their own institution as well as for the SPT and recognising the strategic management that will be required to get there, knowing where there is capacity within their organisation and knowing which resources can be channelled towards a project. Garforth SPT expect that in their next academy bid, Leeds Trinity will be helping to lead the way
- Recognising that the SPT is not Garforth Community College's trust exclusively, it is the trust of its members; this means that if any one of the partners has an approach – as was the case with Leeds Trinity and a potential academy – the partner can respond positively if they wish to work via the SPT, not necessarily independently; providing of course that it serves the SPT agenda. This has taken some development of understanding as the initial model was focused on the needs of the Garforth community particularly, but now this is broadening and the governance and strategic management guidelines have been strengthened, it provides confidence for the external partners to respond in this way
- The development of project groups has enabled individual stakeholders to participate more actively in specific areas of interest and expertise. This has been important in expanding the SPT's remit, without stretching capacity. This also provides a framework within which the HEI can contribute where they recognise an area of their own expertise or where participation would enable it to meet its own strategic aims. It is anticipated, therefore, that Leeds Trinity will join the academy management team for the next academy project, providing its expertise in key areas, but also benefiting from an opportunity to meet its widening participation, access and lifelong learning remits

Section 5: The Next Steps for the SPT

5.1 Potential Impact of Extending the Model to Different and more Challenging Schools

5.1.1 Academies: Progress so Far

- 69 South Leeds High School has been a school in special measures since July 2007 with 5* A-C rate of 9% in August 2008. The school was created in 2005 from two low achieving schools in a very deprived area of South Leeds, with a new build which opened three years ago. The Garforth SPT agreed to become involved in the transformation of the school into an academy with the requisite investment in school improvement provided by a sponsor.
- 70 From September 2008 the SPT seconded staff from Garforth Community College to work for the trust in focusing on improving attainment at 16 and preparing the school for academy status. In particular, innovative work was done with post-16 students to enable a greater number to continue in education by using Garforth Community College teaching and resources to deliver courses to South Leeds students who would not otherwise continue in education. The development of post-16 provision was a significant part of the projected academy plan for raising student aspiration and performance, and one for which HEI involvement was integral.

- 71 Northcliffe School in Conisborough was a school facing similar low academic achievement. Following 19% 5 A*-C results in August 2008, and the departure of the head teacher, negotiations were started to relaunch the school as an academy with Garforth SPT as sponsor and Dearne Valley College as co-sponsor. Similar to South Leeds, the Northcliffe engagement with the SPT commenced with secondments to support post-16 provision and preparations for academy status.

5.1.2 The Role of Leeds Trinity

- 72 Higher Education Institutions are being encouraged to become sponsors for academies, to take an active role in the governance and running of challenging schools. Part of their involvement in school improvement will be the delivery of the Masters in Teaching and Learning (MTL) which is being offered initially to teachers in National Challenge schools, but the commitment sought goes further. Key areas where HEIs are perceived as offering expertise are: 'creation of a strong educational vision; governance and leadership; professional development for staff; support and mentoring for students; development of curriculum specialism; raising student aspirations; student ambassadors; developing knowledge and understanding of tomorrow's HE student' [6]. From the SPT perspective, HEIs have limited experience in the running of challenging schools and the strategic management of secondary schools, and it is not where their best interests may lie.

However, for Leeds Trinity as part of Garforth SPT, it would be relatively risk free to become involved in the academies programme as operational responsibilities would be managed by the academy management steering group and Leeds Trinity would be involved whenever its expertise was required. This is the best model for both partners – the highly successful secondary school i.e. Garforth Community College, with suitable partners, engages in the running of the academy and Leeds Trinity extends its widening participation and aspiration raising role – together with delivery of the Masters in Teaching and Learning and/or staff development. In addition, through general SPT meetings, the HE partner could contribute to policy making, governance and strategic planning – it can support scrutiny of the quality assurance measures of the academy; it can challenge assumptions made by secondary leaders from an academic perspective, but also as the provider of further learning opportunities; it can provide academic resources for the development of the workforce and mentoring programmes for aspiration raising; it can become part of the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) agenda – thus playing an active role in meeting the Children's Plan (DCSF, 2009) outcomes for the region.

- 73 From Leeds Trinity's perspective, the model above as outlined by the SPT is as far as it would go to support the development of academies. The areas of the region that are currently being developed in South Leeds and Doncaster are low HE participation areas, so any work it does to support school improvement and therefore student aspiration to HE, is of benefit.
- 74 Leeds Trinity supported the development of the SPT because the range of partners involved would provide the holistic approach required for community cohesion and lifelong learning in Garforth. As this spreads to other areas in the academy programme, Leeds Trinity would only want to be involved as part of this wider group, rather than an independent sponsor. The strength of having schools, PCT, HE and LSC together is the range and depth of expertise each partner can offer – the application of this to a school entering into academy status inevitably is more beneficial than just individual sponsorship by the HEI. Leeds Trinity has neither the capacity, expertise nor desire to be engaged in the day-to-day operation and management of a school, despite a strategic interest in school improvement.
- 75 Leeds Trinity can offer the Academy programme a range of opportunities:

76 For Students

- Being part of the Academy programme would offer the opportunity to work more closely with students in a more proactive way. Being a “special friend” would enable a more coherent programme of student aspiration raising activities to be produced and scheduled to both HEI and partner school advantage
- If an Academy is part of a shared trust, then an opportunity exists to work more closely across sectors and a range of providers. This would make the provision even more coherent again and more effective
- As part of the Academy’s management, Trinity would have the opportunity to be privy to aspects of curriculum development and be involved in developing aspects which would be integral to raising performance and raising aspirations. Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) as well as Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) would be areas of obvious involvement

77 For Staff

- Being part of the Academy programme would offer the opportunity for staff to participate in learning programmes run by Trinity which would benefit both the individual and the Academy. The upskilling of providers would be an important part of raising standards for all
- If an Academy is part of a shared trust, then an opportunity exists to work more closely across sectors and a range of providers. This would make the provision even more coherent again and more effective
- As part of the Academy’s management, Trinity would have the opportunity to be privy to aspects of curriculum development and be involved in staff development which would be integral to raising performance and raising aspirations
- Local delivery, perhaps even on site of the Academy and new methods of delivery to staff (part time, modular), would encourage staff involvement as economic barriers would be minimised

Section 6: Guidelines for HEIs becoming External Partners/Sponsors in Trusts and Academies

6.1 Benefits of being an HEI Partner

- 78
- Widening participation and community engagement
 - Aspiration raising, with the resulting discovery of talent from low participation groups
 - Access to groups of potential learners in the lifelong learning, training area
 - Updating on curriculum developments within secondary schools, identifying the trends and needs of the next generation of students
 - Potentially an additional funding opportunity through training programmes etc.
 - Employer engagement and the opportunity to engage other partners in knowledge transfer as well as course development opportunities

6.2 Potential Challenges

- 79
- Local authority engagement with trust schools and academies – particularly for HEIs, but also for schools – has been undergoing a period of uncertainty and change which can lead to confusion over its role in this area
 - The governance arrangements between schools and LAs once a school is struggling and the models put in place are not always understood and this lack

- of understanding can put key partners off
- The power of governance at school level sometimes does not help – schools have sometimes reached an advanced stage of difficulty before the LA intervenes – which makes the work of any potential sponsor trust organisation particularly challenging
- It is easy for the HEI to become submerged in the operational aspects of trusts and academies that hinders the institution from achieving the aims that may have attracted it in the first place i.e. widening participation and community engagement
- Success has come from being committed to engaging with the complex nature of the legislation, guidance and requirements of becoming a sponsor – this can be time consuming and off putting, but is necessary to ensure the HEI is fully aware of the commitment involved

6.3 General Guidance

- 80
- Being aware that the engagement is a long term commitment, there will not necessarily be immediate results for the HEI from the partnership as it is being established and is engaging in establishing protocols and policies for its member organisations. However, if the HEI is involved from the beginning, influencing the long term strategic planning of the trust then the opportunities for beneficial projects will emerge and the HE agenda – as a trustee – will become part of the wider trust agenda
 - It is vital for any HEI that intends engaging in a trust or academy to know the context and characteristics of the environment in which it intends to engage. This may include how the schools involved operate – do they share management structures and governance arrangements for example; it could involve the historical relationships or ‘politics’ of the situation. Challenges are going to be faced when operating within a partnership inevitably as different members have their own priorities, but ideally the HEI needs to be aware of what these are and how they will impact on the functioning of the trust before becoming involved, otherwise the reasons it initially found the concept attractive will be clouded
 - There are some questions a partner should ask a trust or partnership before fully engaging: what is the mission? What are the strategic aims and objectives? Where is the strategic plan? What are the timescales? Who is taking on responsibility for completion of tasks or actions? If the trust has a good idea, but is still searching for all the answers it maybe that HEI involvement will support the concrete development of these; but it may also indicate that the initiators of the trust are not sufficiently businesslike to engage with successfully

Section 7: Potential Next Steps for this Project

- 81 1. Toolkit for HEIs in developing constructive and mutually beneficial relationships with Trust Schools, Academies and National Challenge Projects.

As the first Pathfinder for trust schools the Garforth SPT learned many lessons along the way to becoming a successful partnership between schools and external agencies including an HEI. As a result of this evaluative project, it would be possible to develop a toolkit for HEIs considering such an involvement, which would include guidance on the logistics of becoming an active trustee through to the ways in which an HEI can support school improvement,

governance and strategic planning.

The Garforth model has gained national recognition as a model to be adopted elsewhere due to its success already in raising attainment and engagement in learning, not only in its partner schools, but also in the wider community.

- 82 The Toolkit would use practical examples from the Leeds Trinity involvement in the Garforth SPT to exemplify sections on:
- Becoming a trustee
 - Guidance for initial discussions with trust founders
 - Developing governance policy and procedures
 - The role of an HEI in strategic planning and SPT development
 - Practical projects that have successfully involved HEI and other SPT stakeholders for mutual benefit
 - Managing the role and creating an institutional operations group within the HEI
 - Academy status and the role of HEIs
 - School improvement initiatives
 - How to ensure that the HEI is benefitting from the relationship
 - Managing a conflict of interests
- 83 The Toolkit would include:
- CD (Compact Disk) Rom of training materials, proformas, exemplifiers
 - Folder of practical guidance materials. For example: guidance notes for meetings; case studies, checklists and models of governance etc.
 - Presentations that can be adapted for use at the HEI for wider dissemination of practice or information
- 84 2. Further development of the Leeds Trinity and SPT partnership through the development of the academy programme and the implementation of projects as a result of this evaluative project.
- Developments could include:
- Staff development for academy support and teaching staff
 - An active role in Children's Services by Leeds Trinity including work placements, Foundation Degree input and membership of the consultative committee
 - Progression modules for school leavers for preparation for HE
 - Developing the leadership and management action research programme for the academy and SPT staff to support further the work on school improvement

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Glossary

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfES	Department for Education & Skills
DIUS	Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HMSO	Her Majesty's Stationery Office
IAG	Information, Advice and Guidance
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IT	Information Technology
LA	Local Authority
LSC	Learning Skills Council
MTL	Masters in Teaching and Learning
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NUT	National Union of Teachers
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PSHE	Personal, Social and Health Education
SPT	School Partnership Trust
TFSP	Trust and Foundation Schools Partnership