

Education Walsall

Case Study

Gerald Cranley & Megan Mathias

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About the Serco Institute

The Serco Institute draws upon Serco's unique public sector contract base to develop evidence-based research on the private delivery of public services. This investigation of the successful turnaround of Walsall education services is the first in a planned series of case studies; our aim is to shed light on the real drivers of success for particular contracts, examining what really makes the difference when private providers deliver improved public services. Our analysis is based upon in-depth stakeholder interviews, supplemented by a thorough review of supporting papers.

About the authors

Megan Mathias is a Director at the Serco Institute. She has previously served as a consultant to governments in the UK and USA, chiefly around service delivery.

Gerald Cranley is is recently retired from Serco Plc. He was a founding member of the Serco Institute and Managing Director of Serco's Education business during the early months of the Education Walsall contract.

Education Walsall case study

April 2006

How does a private company help to achieve what the national education inspectorate Ofsted has stated to be one of the fastest ever improvements of education services¹? In 2000, 37% of Walsall students gained 5 or more GCSEs at Grades A*-C; in 2005, after three years under the management of Education Walsall, a private company charged to deliver Walsall's education services, that percentage was 46. Walsall was also rated the 17th most improved LEA in the country for GCSE Key Stage 4.

This case study provides insights into the ongoing turnaround story in Walsall education services. We look at the circumstances that led to the unusual measure of a private provider stepping in to run Local Education Authority (LEA) services², the changes made, and the roles played by the Council, headteachers, the company and other key stakeholders.

We find that the improvement to date is a direct result of a turnaround driven by the company, but achieved in partnership with the stakeholders. The process of bringing in an external provider has created a sharper customer-supplier dynamic; within that, Education Walsall has been able to draw together a strong management team to drive through change. And these changes were made possible by the government's intervention policy, and the Council's restructuring.

1. Context: political change established the right conditions

The Metropolitan Borough of Walsall, located eight miles to the north-west of Birmingham, is a mixture of urban, suburban and semi-rural communities. The borough is an area of significant contrast: there are wealthy areas alongside areas of great deprivation. Rates of unemployment, teenage pregnancy and crime are all above the national averages. The population in the borough has declined in recent ten years.

The 2001 census showed that Walsall has an ethnic minority population of nearly 14%, well above the national average of 9.1%. In 2004, one in four of the school population were from minority ethnic groups, twice the national average³. There are very low numbers of young people taking post-16 qualifications and standards of attainment in schools, at all key stages, are consistently below national averages - although against similar authorities the picture is more mixed⁴.

According to Ofsted, the national education inspectorate, the management of education in Walsall suffered 'virtual paralysis of the decision-making process'⁵ in the 1990s. Political instability, coupled with relative reductions in school funding resulted in little improvement in school performance, for an area already below average⁶. In parallel, the government passed the 1998 Education Act, giving the Secretary of State for Education the power to intervene informally and then formally in LEAs with a long-term history of underperformance. The next series of Ofsted inspections placed Walsall LEA as one of the eleven poorest performing Local Education Authorities in England and Wales⁷. It was therefore no surprise that the Education Secretary of the time, David Blunkett, directed Walsall Council to enter a public-private contract to turn around the LEA's performance⁸.

2. Private sector involvement in Walsall education services

Because LEA intervention was a new policy, a provider market did not yet exist. None of the companies initially appointed to take on LEA management functions had experience in managing the full range of LEA services. The Department for Education and Skills began market creation by developing a list of approved providers that would then compete as a remit for each intervention was decided. Providers were selected as they were seen to have strengths in areas where the target LEAs were weak. In the end, nine public-private partnerships were established of varying lengths and scope of services, depending on each situation.

The public-private partnership in Walsall started with a narrow remit. In July 2001, Serco Group Plc, trading as Education Walsall, was appointed to manage Walsall LEA's school improvement services. 130 staff were transferred across under TUPE conditions⁹ and a new management team was put in place. A further Ofsted report in 2002 acknowledged that there were signs of improvement in the school improvement services (managed by Education Walsall) - but concluded that the rate of change across the whole LEA was still too slow: "progress overall since the [1999] inspection has been poor and the performance of some LEA functions has deteriorated"¹⁰.

As a result, in December 2002, Walsall Council established a strategic partnership with Education Walsall, expanding the company's existing contract to cover all aspects of local education services, including school monitoring and evaluation, challenge, interventions, support and engagement across mainstream education, special needs and exclusion management.

The contract itself was agreed between Walsall Borough Council and Education Walsall for an initial period of five years. It established a detailed output specification for education services, as well as annual targets and an associated framework for penalties and rewards. The dedicated stakeholder board, Walsall Education Board (WEB), provides strategic oversight and, crucially, monitors the company's performance in delivering the contract.

However, as with all front-line public services, the delivery environment is more complex than a simple, bilateral relationship between buyer and supplier. Education Walsall's services are subject to performance monitoring beyond just the contract: Walsall Education Board can choose to set additional targets; as the national inspectorate, Ofsted's standards apply; and as a local authority function, the service must also meet Best Value Performance Indicators. Any local education service provider must succeed within all these performance frameworks to be perceived as successful.

Less than two years after the full contract was awarded to Education Walsall, in October 2004, Ofsted recognised Walsall as the fastest-improving LEA in the country, ever. The inspectors found “spectacular improvement” and judged Walsall, on the following key scores, from a scale of 1-7 (with 1 being highest)¹¹:

Improvement since the last inspection	Good (2)	2002: very poor (7)
Capacity to improve	Good (2)	2002: poor (6)
Current performance	Highly satisfactory (3)	2002: very poor (7)

The real achievement, however, was the impact on the borough’s schools’ results: Key Stage 1, Key Stage 3 and GCSE results were all improving faster than the national average. At Key Stage 2, Walsall was achieving the highest rate of sustained improvement from 2002 to 2005, nationally.

The rate of improvement is well illustrated by the performance of Walsall’s poorest schools: by 2004, no schools in Walsall required special measures – where, in 2002, nine schools had required special measures or were considered to have ‘serious weaknesses’¹².

Today, the Council, Education Walsall and the borough’s schools recognise that education services – and outcomes – must continue to improve at an above-average rate. Nevertheless, the turnaround in performance since 2002 is widely recognised as a success.

3. Purpose of this study

What accounts for this turnaround in performance? What are the particular drivers of the success to date in Walsall? What has changed in how the LEA, through Education Walsall, supports schools to improve? Which changes, or combination of changes, are the real enablers of the success so far?

To inform our analysis, we conducted a series of in-depth interviews with key local stakeholders, complemented by extensive desk research. Our interviews captured the views of local stakeholders from within and outside the Borough Council, Education Walsall and the headteacher population. We found a high degree of commonality across interviewees as to the causes of success¹³.

4. Walsall was ready for change

In 2002, a number of factors finally came together to create favourable conditions for change in Walsall.

Firstly, the Council underwent some significant changes. In May 2002, the role of Council Leader was created as part of a new Cabinet constitutional arrangement. The new structure enabled greater accountability, giving the Cabinet tighter control and replacing the old Education Committee.

Then, following local elections in May 2004, a new administration was formed, providing an injection of fresh political leadership. Three years after the Secretary of State's decision to intervene in the Walsall LEA, the Council had a renewed appetite for fundamental change, and was prepared to work with a private partner to do it.

Further, years of frustration at the paralysis caused by poor administration meant that many local stakeholders were open to new leadership and management, with most head teachers believing even the radical policy of intervention could be worth a go. The fact that Walsall LEA had been identified as one of the worst LEAs in the country provided a shock that helped to open local minds to change. Nonetheless, there was still a degree of scepticism and resistance, which would prove a challenge to the incoming team.

5. Fresh talent introduced in the new management team

In contracting with a private company to run LEA services, Walsall Council had the opportunity to appoint a completely new management team. In the run-up to transfer, a number of management posts had lain empty, with the Director of Education role shared by two interim appointments.

A crucial first step was therefore to create a skilled, professional leadership team – starting with the Managing Director. Education Walsall advertised and headhunted for high calibre candidates, shortlisting the top four; then a stakeholder panel, which included four headteachers, the Chair of the Walsall Education Board and two elected Councillors, conducted the second – and decisive - interview. As it turned out, the stakeholder panel tipped the selection in favour of a candidate who would be ideal for the task. With over twenty years experience in education services, Elaine Simpson was far from 'a suit' and well-equipped for the challenge presented by Walsall. From this point on, stakeholders were invited to participate in the selection of all senior posts.

By January 2003, the new team was rapidly being recruited and by the September almost all were in place. The existing Directors were replaced and a new management tier introduced, with Council staff appointed to these posts or deployed elsewhere. The new Education Walsall leadership team consisted of experienced education services professionals drawn from high performing LEAs elsewhere in England, complemented by commercial specialists to lead on managing the contract and on traded services¹⁴.

Today, the quality of the Education Walsall team, and its leadership, receives enthusiastic reviews from across the local education community; not only is the quality of senior management recognised – 'Elaine Simpson has been

fantastic. She is passionate about education... [and] 'her replacement, Helen Denton, is already well respected', said one headteacher. And the whole team is seen to be providing a better service: another headteacher commented, 'their staff are high calibre'.

Despite Education Walsall being a relatively young organisation, a strong team spirit has been created. Building an effective team for a service never previously delivered by the private sector is no easy task. A 'can-do' attitude pervades the company.

With the right people on board, Education Walsall has sought to create a culture where they can flourish. A comprehensive plan¹⁵, as well as clear personal accountabilities, means that everyone knows what they are working towards and how they can contribute. Furthermore, the management team invests in creating a fertile ground for good ideas and is supportive in resolving problems. Employees report that 'senior management is approachable, everyone is accessible', and that 'issues get attention and get resolved'.

Being a division of a large support services company also brings benefits: having a sister operation in Education Bradford has afforded the Education Walsall team close colleagues with whom to discuss new ideas; and, more unexpectedly, Serco's European operation came in useful when a Special Needs Statement needed to be translated for an Italian pupil. So, while education was a new field for Serco, specific skills as well as wider corporate experience in areas such as financial management and transitioning services have proven valuable.

6. Establishing shared intent

People involved in all aspects of education delivery in Walsall applaud the strategic partnership now in place in the borough. A reorganisation of education governance, coupled with the contracting process, has given the Council clarity on its aims for education as well as creating the right environment to enable delivery.

Strong governance:

The Walsall Education Board (WEB) advises on, supports and challenges the quality of education provision in Walsall. It has no statutory authority but the right to commission information and reports, combined with the right to refer issues to the Secretary of State for Education, makes it an advisory body with teeth. In effect, the WEB defines the strategy for local education and, through effective partnership, makes it happen.

Early in the life of the contract, the Education Walsall team submitted a proposal to revitalise WEB. The new remit and constitution of the Board has been crucial to success: elected members are joined by headteachers, qualified educators from outside the borough, and other community stakeholders, to bring professionalism and impartiality to the Board. Furthermore, the appointment of Sir Geoff Hampton, Dean of the University of Wolverhampton as an independent Chair was described by one interviewee as introducing 'an honest broker who provides credibility and has respect'.

One member of the Board commented that '*the strategic partnership with Education Walsall has allowed us to make progress in education for the first time in 20 years*'.

Clarity of purpose underpinned by a contract:

In 2002, the process of designing a contract, and then using the contract as the basis for a commercial relationship – with associated awards and sanctions – afforded all sides a sharper appreciation of the role and expectations of LEA services. The output specification and supporting performance regime crystallised what Education Walsall, as the new provider, was being asked to deliver.

In a positive supplier relationship, everyday discussions focus on delivering the best possible service through partnership, rather than working adversarially and referring back to contract. In Walsall, the joint approach went one step further: after a year of operation, both sides recognised that the contract's penalty regime was in fact disincentivising improvement, and both sides committed to some meaningful changes:

- As originally cast, the contract stated that any penalty payments would be deducted from Education Walsall's annual charge and the Council would retain that money for use in other Council services. Instead, the Council now ringfences any penalty payments for education services.
- Similarly, the contract stated that Education Walsall would accept payments for hitting performance targets as additional profit. Instead, Education Walsall now invests any credits back into education services.

By putting money on the table, Education Walsall and the Council have both openly demonstrated their commitment to improving local education, and strengthened their working relationship.

Creating the space to succeed:

Managers of public services often express frustration that politicians and departmental officials infringe on operational decision-making. The process of outsourcing, and overseeing performance through a contract, certainly helps to sharpen the line between setting strategic direction and operational delivery. However, a contract does not fully put a stop to political interference – as a separate study of contract managers shows¹⁶.

Given the politically turbulent history of the borough, the new Education Walsall team needed to be protected and given the managerial autonomy to make the changes that would deliver fundamental improvement. During the early days of the contract, they were championed by two key Councillors, the WEB Chair and a few opinion-shaping head teachers. These people were described as 'emissaries' who kept the politicians at the strategic level and removed obstacles to reform for the Education Walsall team. "We said 'give these guys a chance, it's a done deal, lets make it work'" said one of the Board members. The Education Board continues to be an important governing body ensuring fair, politically neutral decisions are made.

7. Restructuring services around need

Today, the Walsall school improvement strategy is based on the principle that schools take responsibility for their own improvement. LEA services have therefore been reorganised around schools, rather than by professional discipline. Seven school focused groups were created, each a mix of primary schools, secondary schools, exclusion centres, special schools and nursery schools. Seven multidisciplinary School Focus Teams match the schools groups, bringing together the full complement of skill sets needed – from school improvement to behavioural specialists. The teams meet with each school in their group at least once a term, enabling joint solutions to be developed there and then for pressing matters. School Focus Teams now also link into external agencies such as Youth Offending Teams and social care providers – extending beyond the principle of school focus and towards child-centric provision for those most in need.

In parallel, Education Walsall developed a transparent process for the allocation of funding, targeting extra resources on priority schools and pupils. Schools are grouped into four 'phases'; schools in phases 1 - 3 receive additional support, with those in phase 1 deemed 'most in need'. This re-allocation of effort may seem simple but it has given LEA services credibility. Crucially, headteachers are confident in the fairness of the system. One explained 'there used to be a lack of direction, no focus on what to fix. Education Walsall has stood back, decided on priorities and backed them up with allocation of resources.' The needs of special schools, for example, which were previously overlooked, are now always addressed even though they only serve a small minority.

Some headteachers had initial concerns that a private provider would be driven by contract requirements rather than educational priorities '...but that has not happened, there has been reason' said one. In fact, the headteachers we interviewed went one step further: 'Education Walsall has faced up to hard decisions that the council avoided', said another.

Overall, Education Walsall has instilled clearer management focus, backed up by prioritised and targeted funding. As one headteacher explained, they can demonstrate openly that 'everything they do is linked to the agenda of improving standards in education'.

Education is now felt to be more proactively managed by Education Walsall staff and headteachers alike: 'the Borough is looking forward, not trading in the past' was one comment, another was '[we] now have a strategic overview of education' and 'policy is not made up on the hoof'.

8. Listening to local education professionals

A Local Education Authority is charged with driving school improvement, yet is one step removed from the front-line; they support schools and teaching professionals in improvement efforts, with direct intervention possible only as a last resort. A successful LEA service provider must therefore be able to engage and lead the local education community.

Early on, progress towards a clear strategy, and restructuring of services around need signalled that Education Walsall was even-handed and focused purely on the agenda of improving borough education and the life chances of children and young people. However, the Education Walsall leadership team knew that this alone would not be sufficient; instead, they had to get out there and understand what their customers wanted.

Directors immediately made themselves available. 'Elaine went to every prize-giving going', commented one of her team. The Directors sought to be accessible, and to build one-on-one relationships with school leaders. They listened to ideas for school improvement and encouraged headteachers and their teams to take ownership of improvement plans.

Informal networking continues, and is complemented by more a formal set of forums, building on the Education Walsall executive team's experience of good practice elsewhere:

- A Headteacher Focus Group brings together 6 – 10 headteachers, nominated by their peers, as an early-stage sounding board for improvement ideas / responses to emerging issues. Once proposals have begun to be fleshed out, they are brought before the Primary and/or Secondary Headteacher Forums.
- Primary and Secondary Headteacher Forums are owned by the headteachers, and Education Walsall requests to bring proposals to those meetings for debate.
- By the time a proposal reaches the Headteachers' Breakfast Briefing, it has already been seen by half of the headteacher population. The Breakfast Briefings were launched in 2003, and take place once every half-term. Education Walsall leads two hours of focused discussion on policy developments, improvement proposals, management and staffing challenges. Around 100 of Walsall's 129 headteachers now regularly attend these sessions.

Headteachers have seen significant improvement through these developments. Not only do they feel more involved, but they also respect the subsequent decisions and outcomes: 'Education Walsall understands what is happening on the ground and what is needed. As a result they make better informed judgements that are well received.'

The extent of genuine partnership in Walsall is also illustrated by the involvement of headteachers in the appointment of senior management posts within Education Walsall itself. The company invites two headteachers to sit on interview panels for all senior Education Walsall posts. This is more than superficial consultation, as one headteacher confirmed: "our views count and our involvement gives us confidence in the appointments".

Education Walsall recognises that pupils are the ultimate customers of their services, and is involving them in management decisions too; recently, sixth-formers from St. Thomas More school sat on an interview panel for the appointment of three new Directors, and they played a full part in the shortlisting process. This was a triple win – it gave a genuine voice to the pupils as service users, provided Education Walsall with on-the-spot evidence of how well each candidate interacted with pupils, and enabled those pupils to experience and contribute to a real business decision.

The education delivery system in Walsall is now managed more inclusively than ever before. Education Walsall has driven this change: 'Education Walsall has engendered trust. Schools used to be made promises and then let down – Education Walsall delivers'. Nonetheless, successful communication demands that all parties work together positively – and that's what's now happening in Walsall.

9. Using innovation to turn around education performance

With an atmosphere of trust and openness established, people from across the Walsall education community have started to find that their improvement ideas reach open ears – and that it is easier to get approval too. Innovative ideas, whether native to Walsall or derived from good practice elsewhere, have helped to drive Walsall's performance turnaround further than good management practice could achieve alone.

Pupil referral:

The New Leaf Centre is Walsall's new pupil referral unit. In order to keep as many children as possible in mainstream education, the Centre now operates more as an outreach programme than an alternative school. Education plans are designed for each pupil according to his/her preferences and needs. For example, each week a teenager may spend one day attending his/her original school, two days on a vocational course and two days in the New Leaf Centre itself. Standard practice before had been to remove the child from the original school and attempt to get them to attend the pupil referral unit five days a week. Today, the New Leaf Centre has 70 pupils on its books but as few as ten are full-time attendees.

Attendance:

Another innovation has been the formation of a fully integrated attendance programme, including dedicated attendance support workers and support for parents and schools via an Attendance Panel. Professor Ken Reid, a UK attendance expert, was engaged to work with schools and Education Walsall staff to design the programme. In addition, to encourage parents to keep their children in school throughout the academic year, Education Walsall persuaded local travel agents to offer reduced rates for vacations during school holidays. As a result of the programme, 2004 attendance rates improved three times faster than the national average for secondary schools, and twice as fast in primary schools.

Special Education Needs:

The SEN Involvement Programme has been developed as a way for Education Walsall to consult with key stakeholders to take forward SEN developments and policies; and therefore to develop a shared understanding across all schools and services. It is set out in seven 'modules' that are key areas of SEN for Education Walsall and schools to work together to develop the future of SEN in Walsall. Each module includes headteachers, Special Education Needs (SEN) coordinators, governors and support services who together, through consultation, agree policies, developments and documents. The first module started with discussing and agreeing new SEN funding arrangements for all schools. As a result of this programme, schools are part of SEN developments and decisions are open and transparent and agreed by all.

Education Walsall has also pioneered the Inclusive Classroom Project, focusing on how classroom practitioners can improve inclusion¹⁷. Mostly, policies have concentrated on achieving inclusion within a school; this project seeks to support teachers and assistants to make it a reality in the classroom. The findings and support pack from this project have attracted the attention of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.

10. Conclusion: the conditions are right for continued improvement

“Walsall local education authority (LEA) is now highly satisfactory. There has been good progress in a short time and, in partnership with the council, Education Walsall has transformed the majority of education functions to a position where all are satisfactory or better... The progress made to date indicates that the LEA has good capacity for further improvement”.

Main findings, Walsall LEA Inspection Report, Ofsted, October 2004

So what has achieved the performance turnaround to date in Walsall? Education results are improving at a fast pace, and is continuing: for 2005, Walsall has been rated the 17th most improved LEA in the country for GCSE stage 4

The improvement is a direct result of a turnaround driven by the Education Walsall team, achieved in partnership with the council, Walsall Education Board and the local education community.

The process of bringing in an external provider created a sharper customer-supplier dynamic; within that, Education Walsall was able to draw together a first-rate management team to drive through change. And of course, all this was made possible by the government's interventions policy, and the Borough Council's restructuring.

In our assessment, three factors are crucial to maintaining Walsall's improvement trend. Firstly, the space created for the education professionals to do their job free of unnecessary intervention must continue to be protected by the Education Board. Secondly, there is no doubting the high quality of the current Education Walsall team, and this too needs to be maintained by the company. Lastly, the strong partnership with headteachers enables education improvement to be managed borough-wide; any weakening of this network could see an unwelcome return to schools working independently.

The turnaround in Walsall to date has been impressive, and all parties deserve recognition for the roles they have played. There is still much to be done in what remains a deprived area, and that is fully recognised. But the future looks promising.

Annex A: Our approach and sources

In choosing to conduct this case study, the first of a planned series of investigations, the Serco Institute is seeking to uncover the real drivers of success for one of Serco's notable contracts. We want to get beyond glib statements about 'harnessing the innovation of the private sector' and 'competition driving up performance' – to understand how it has actually happened, here.

We base our approach in part on 'Appreciative Enquiry', which emphasises understanding what works, and why - identifying the unique conditions that made success possible. Appreciative Enquiry works best where a service is clearly working well, or where a marked improvement has been achieved; it was first formulated by Cooperrider and Srivastava (1987)¹⁸ as a critique of what they termed a 'problem-centred approach' to enquiry where the focus is on problems to be solved rather than achievements to be built upon.

The process we followed was straightforward: a period of discovery, consisting of initial desk research, followed by interviews with the fourteen stakeholders; analysis and consolidation of findings; a challenge session, testing whether initial findings on drivers of success were robust; redrafting of findings; and, validation with the Education Walsall team. In the interviews in particular, we focused on accomplishments, encouraging interviewees to deliberate upon the aspects of their achievements that they most valued.

Primary research: The case study is based on interviews with fourteen people who have had close involvement with the Education Walsall and who were able to provide insight into the evolving situation prior to, and post, the involvement of the contractor, Education Walsall. The interviewees comprised:

- Two Walsall Borough councillors
- The Chair of Walsall Education Board (WEB) and Dean of the University of Wolverhampton
- Four headteachers of schools supported by Education Walsall
- Seven members of the Education Walsall team

All interviewees were provided with an early copy of the case study.

Secondary research: the following documentation was reviewed for this case study:

- 'Walsall Local Education Authority Inspection Report', Kevin Jane HMI, Ofsted, October 2004
- 'Inspection of Walsall LEA', Daryl Agnew HMI, Office of HM Inspectorate of Schools in conjunction with the Audit Commission Ofsted, April 2002
- 'Inspection of Walsall LEA', Office of HM Inspectorate of Schools in conjunction with the Audit Commission, Ofsted, December 1999
- 'The business of education improvement; raising LEA performance through competition', CBI, February 2005
- 'Ethnic Minority Employment Engagement in Walsall Metropolitan Borough', n.d., University of Wolverhampton, located at <http://www.walsall.gov.uk/European/research.pdf>
- 'Positive Ofsted report on Walsall praised by Minister', Walsall Borough Council press release, January 2005
- Excellence in Walsall Plan 2005 – 2006, Education Walsall 2005
- Appreciative Inquiry, Cooperrider, D. L. and D. Whitney, Berrett-Koehler, San Francisco, (1999)

Endnotes

1. See http://www.educationforum.org.nz/documents/e_newsletter/03_05/Mar05_Briefs.htm for a currently available reference to this quotation outside Serco.
2. English Local Education Authorities fund and manage state school services for a local area. They are usually fully integrated within the Council. LEAs are responsible for school performance, and their services are monitored separately to the schools themselves.
3. University of Wolverhampton, 'Ethnic Minority Employment Engagement in Walsall Metropolitan Borough', n.d. located at <http://www.walsall.gov.uk/European/research.pdf>
4. The Metropolitan Borough of Walsall LEA's statistical neighbours are: Bolton, Wolverhampton, Coventry, Oldham, Tameside, Kirklees, Stoke on Trent, Rochdale, City of Derby, City of Bristol.
5. Inspection of Walsall LEA, December 1999, Ofsted. p 5.
6. Inspection of Walsall LEA, December 1999, Ofsted. p 5.
7. 'The business of education improvement: raising LEA performance through competition', CBI, February 2005. p.13
8. 'The business of education improvement: raising LEA performance through competition', CBI, February 2005. p.13
9. TUPE - Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981. The regulations are designed to protect the rights of employees when a transfer occurs from one employer to another, affording them the same terms and conditions as previously held, as well as continuity of employment.
10. Inspection of Walsall LEA, April 2002, Ofsted. Pp 4.
11. Source.
12. Inspection of Walsall LEA, October 2004, Ofsted. P. 11
13. A full description of our approach and a list of our sources can be found at Appendix A..
14. Traded services: local authorities in the UK, including Education Departments, are allowed to sell additional services above and beyond the standard support provided.
15. See 'Excellence in Walsall Plan, 2005-2006', Serco/Education Walsall.
16. In a Serco Institute survey of contract managers previously employed in the public sector, less than 50% agreed with the statement that 'Having a formal contracting process encourages politicians to concentrate on policymaking and public accountability and protects the contract from inappropriate external intervention'. Good People, Good Systems – What Public Service Managers Say, The Serco Institute.
17. Inclusion is a key theme in the UK government's education policy. It is used to cover a wide range of issues, but most usually refers to (a) access to the mainstream curriculum for all pupils, and (b) ensuring pupils with special needs feel that they belong in mainstream schools.
18. See *Appreciative Inquiry*, Cooperrider, D. L. and D. Whitney, Berrett-Koehler, San Fransisco, (1999).

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This case study provides insights into the ongoing turnaround story in Walsall education services. We look at the circumstances that led to the unusual measure of a private provider stepping in to run Local Education Authority (LEA) services, the changes made, and the roles played by the Council, headteachers, the company and other key stakeholders.

This study is a first of a planned series, in which we explore the context and causes of successful delivery of Serco Group plc contracts.

The Serco Institute

The Serco Institute is Serco's policy centre of excellence. We provide thought leadership on the development of public service markets, both as a contributor to public policy debates and within the company.

The Institute draws upon Serco's unique public sector contract base, as well as publicly available comparative data, to research the role of competition and contracting in improving public services, and the conditions for success.

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The Serco Institute

22 Hand Court
London WC1V 6JF

T +44 (0)20 7421 6475

F +44 (0)20 7421 6471

E institute@serco.com