

EVALUATION OF THE  
LLOYDS BANKING GROUP (LBG)  
FLAGSHIP SCHOOL GOVERNANCE  
STANDINGOUT PROGRAMME:  
Executive Summary

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**STANDINGOUT**

## Introduction

This report presents the findings of an evaluation carried out into the Lloyds Banking Group's (LBG) StandingOut pilot programme. The 18-month evaluation, which ran from September 2016 until the end of January 2018, was conducted by the Carnegie School of Education at Leeds Beckett University and focused on the Yorkshire and Humber region.

The programme, which aims to improve school performance through good governance, is part of LBG's wider '*Helping Britain Prosper*' initiative and sits under its education and employability strategy. It recruits (with the help of organisations such as SGOSS<sup>1</sup> and Academy Ambassadors) and supports LBG colleagues who wish to volunteer as either a school governor or a Non-Executive Director (NED) to a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT).

LBG designed the programme around the following two broad assumptions:

- That better governance and stronger financial management and business practices in schools can lead to better educational outcomes; and
- That professional people – e.g. LBG colleagues – can offer much-needed skills to strengthen school Governing Bodies (especially given the government's drive for academisation), more so than the traditional parent or community governors.

LBG set out the following four research questions to be addressed during the evaluation:

1. How does the StandingOut programme contribute to improved school performance and educational outcomes?
2. What evidence is there that the interventions increase the confidence, knowledge and skills of school Governing Bodies and leadership teams?
3. What evidence is there that the interventions strengthen school governance and business practices?
4. How do these interventions contribute to colleagues' career professional development?

## School governance: an overview

Over the last ten years, schools in England have faced a number of changes, most notably the Academisation of school and the withdrawal of local authority support. This has fundamentally altered not only how schools are funded but also how they operate. Arguably, some of the biggest changes and challenges have concerned the role of, and responsibilities placed upon, the Governing Body.

Since 2013, Ofsted has had in place a robust and demanding framework for inspecting the performance of Governing Boards. To meet Ofsted's criteria, school Governing Bodies require individuals with legal knowledge and expertise in finance, management and leadership. Good governance is no longer seen as sufficient, rather the skills of those on Governing Bodies need to be on par with professional organisations; running a school should now be viewed in the same way as running a business.

However, for some schools, especially those in areas of socio-economic disadvantage, recruiting governors with professional skills can be challenging. Yorkshire and Humber is one such region, which also includes Bradford, one of the government's 12 opportunity areas<sup>2</sup>, and is one of the many reasons LBG chose to focus their StandingOut programme pilot in this region.

The StandingOut programme had several strands but the main part of the programme involved placing different types of governors in schools: Full Governors; Non-Executive Directors; and E-governors. E-governors are a new type of governor being trialled. They are intended to work remotely

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<sup>1</sup> School Governors' One-Stop Shop: <https://www.sgooss.org.uk/> Renamed 'Governors of Schools' January 2018

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/education-secretary-announces-6-new-opportunity-areas>

with schools and help resolve the issue of recruiting professional governors in disadvantaged and remote areas of the county.

## Project design

The evaluation took a mixed methods approach, gathering both qualitative and quantitative data via interviews, case studies, surveys and workshops. The data was collected between October 2016 and December 2017. In total, 109 (mainly phone) interviews were carried out with a range of stakeholders including: LBG participant volunteers; School Executives; School Business Managers (or equivalent); participants' line managers and key stakeholders. The evaluation tracked 18 volunteer LBG participants from the start of their journey on the StandingOut programme to approximately one year into their governance role.

## Key findings and recommendations

### Key findings

#### *Process:*

- Both SO participants and schools found the recruitment process straightforward and on the whole satisfactory.
- After one year in post, most participants have settled in well. In the initial stages of their appointment, participants struggled to understand the processes and terminology of the education sector. However, most participants now feel competent in both of these areas.
- Schools reported that most participants began to make contributions to meetings from the outset.
- Skilled governors appointed from the private/business sector have the potential to act as mentors for those in schools, specifically Headteachers, Chairs and School Business Managers.
- All training received by the participants during the pilot was deemed as useful. The local authority governor induction training was seen as the most beneficial, especially when attended early on in the role.
- The Key was the most beneficial on-going resource available to participants, with many using it on a regular basis.
- Participants valued the support they had received from other LBG colleagues and the support and flexibility of line managers. They particularly appreciated being part of the SO programme and all the benefits that came with it, especially the status of the initiative and the commitment shown to it from within the organisation.
- The main challenge participants encountered was that of time. One year on, this continues to be their biggest obstacle to negotiate.

#### *Process e-governors:*

- E-governance works best for colleagues who have a degree of flexibility and autonomy over their working patterns.
- Some schools are not equipped, technologically, to support e-governance.
- Overall, it was clear that schools prefer (and are more equipped to take) a more conventional governor who can physically attend meetings at least some of the time - what SGOSS are now calling a flexi-governor.

#### *Outcomes and impact:*

- SO participants have made a range of indirect contributions that have improved school performance and educational outcomes.

- There is evidence that SO participants have increased the confidence of school Governing Bodies and leadership teams in their decision-making processes, where these are not already working highly effectively.
- The appointment of SO participants has complemented the pre-existing skills of their Governing Bodies and in so doing they have provided expertise in a range of areas such as HR, finance and risk.
- There is evidence that SO participants have strengthened school governance and business practices; especially the latter.
- During the pilot, many participants have taken on additional specific roles and responsibilities and one has even been elected as Chair of Governors.
- Overall, SO participants were highly valued by their schools, especially for their impartiality, professionalism and commitment. All Chairs and Headteachers felt that the SO governors had either met or exceeded expectations, and that they would recommend appointing a LBG SO governor or NED to others.
- Schools also appreciated having governors that not only came from the private sector but who were also supported in their governance role by their organisation.
- Most participants reported that their involvement with the SO programme had a positive impact on their career professional development and how they carried out their professional role. Their line managers agreed.

### Recommendations

- LBG continues to run the StandingOut programme in Yorkshire and Humber and other priority areas. It is clear that their staff volunteering as FGs and NEDs gives Boards and Trusts a wider skill-set that facilitate them having confidence in their decision-making processes.
- Continue to offer a wide range of training courses and access to The Key to both newly appointed and established governors. This will ensure governors are kept up to date with emerging education policy and practice in a constantly changing sector.
- Continue to work in close partnership with other organisations, such as SGOSS, Academy Ambassadors and The Key to deliver effective governance placement and ongoing support.
- Continue to promote the StandingOut programme within the organisation and the wider benefit it can bring to both employees and the organisation alike.
- Continue to be an 'agile' employer who allows employees to undertake important volunteering opportunities which have tangible benefits both for the local communities in which the organisation operates and LBG themselves.
- Replicate the success of the Yorkshire and Humber region elsewhere by focusing on what has worked well and by learning the lessons from what has been less effective whilst taking into account specific regional need and drawing on local knowledge.
- Re-frame e-governors as flexi-governors and offer technical support and initial training on Webex to schools who appoint flexi-governors. In addition, schools should be assessed for their suitability - in terms of technical capabilities and infrastructure - prior to being offered a flexi-governor as an option. This should be undertaken in conjunction with SGOSS (now Governors of Schools).
- Undertake a further impact evaluation in one year's time to establish the sustainability and longer-term benefits of the programme to the schools, the participants and the organisation.