

Young People's Education and Skills Board

Briefing Note

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Contact: Peter O'Brien

Telephone: 020 7934 9743

Email: peter.obrien@londoncouncils.gov.uk

Summary This paper provides a short situation report on young people's education and skills during the pandemic.

Recommendation Board members are asked to note the content of this report and submit any comments by email.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 In view of the current circumstances, the Young People's Education and Skills Board meeting scheduled for 30 April 2020 has been deferred. This briefing paper provides Board members with an update on the education and skills landscape in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and the government's lockdown measures needed to stem the spread of the virus.
- 1.2 Although this paper necessarily focuses on young people's education and skills, it is impossible to ignore the tremendous endeavours of so many people in the country – particularly in the health and care sectors – who are contributing so much to the recovery of our city and our country. Colleagues in London's local authorities and City Hall have been at the forefront of the capital's resilience and many have been redeployed to provide front-line services. The education and skills sector has put the needs of young people first (as it usually does) under extreme conditions. These efforts will be crucial in the many months ahead to ensure that a new, more resilient London begins to emerge.

2 Context

2.1 The Coronavirus Act 2020 provides the legal basis for the government's response to the global pandemic. The key decisions related to the remit of the Young People's Education and Skills Board are:

- Schools, colleges (including sixth form colleges, general further education colleges and specialist colleges) have been directed to stay open only for those students whose parents are 'key workers' or who cannot remain at home. These institutions have been told to 'make arrangements' for all other students to continue learning by other means – usually by a combination of research projects, self-directed study, extended homework exercises, on-line lessons, streaming archived material.
- A level and GCSE examinations this year have been replaced by teacher assessments that have to follow government guidelines¹.
- The government has provided additional funding to support schools, colleges and apprenticeship providers that it hopes will ensure the continued viability of the education and skills sector, especially in those areas that depend on in-year recruitment.

2.2 This paper does not seek to summarise or further explain the government's guidance² but considers some of the main effects on different aspects of the education and skills sector in London.

2.3 The March edition of London's Economy Today (published by GLA Economics)³ reported on the broader impact in London of COVID 19 and provides a useful backdrop to this paper.

2.4 The House of Commons Education Select Committee has launched an inquiry looking at how the outbreak of Covid-19 is affecting all aspects of the education

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-schools-and-other-educational-settings> (the link is to the general guidance as the separate documents tend to be updated regularly)

² The government's general guidance is at <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

³ <https://data.gov.uk/dataset/cfc3666c-4c98-4d88-9ba8-359b35e97e4e/london-s-economy-today>

sector and children's social care system. The committee is asking for submissions of evidence by 31 May.⁴

2.5 This paper is in two parts: Part One covers current issues and Part Two provides a short general policy update.

⁴ https://committees.parliament.uk/work/202/the-impact-of-covid19-on-education-and-childrens-services/?dm_i=4R3K,BSON,10I091,1B4FU,1

Part One: Current Issues

3 Participation and the risk of young people being not in education, employment or training (NEET)

- 3.1 The Department for Education (DfE) has started to publish statistics based on the daily attendance records provided by schools and colleges⁵. These show that the attendance rate during the week commencing 23 March was three per cent, and one per cent during the week commencing 13 April (when most schools were on their Easter break). The attendance rate amongst pupils in educational settings reached almost 2 per cent in the week commencing 24 April. Around 78 per cent of education settings were open on Friday 24 April, an increase from 61 per cent the week before. The number of children attending in educational settings who are classed as vulnerable increased to 49,000 on Friday 24 April, around double the number from the Friday before.
- 3.2 The government has planned for the loan of tablets to young people who need them as part of their studies and has commissioned material to support learning at each key stage to be available for downloading and streaming. The Oak National Academy⁶ has been set up, since the start of the lockdown, to provide quality assured and curriculum-mapped on-line lessons. It has said that it had delivered 750,000 lessons up to 21 April and the BBC has expanded the content of its Bitesize revision programme.
- 3.3 The Sutton Trust has reported on the disparities in the take-up of education resources⁷ based on comparisons between private education, mainstream education and family background. Inequality was the theme of an article written by the Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) that appeared in The Times recently⁸. There is concern that those 'left behind' (and who have been the focus of the

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings>

⁶ <https://www.thenational.academy/>

⁷ <https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/COVID-19-Impact-Brief-School-Shutdown.pdf?platform=hootsuite>

⁸ <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14821>

Board's attention) may fall further behind and may be less well equipped to move on in life or further studies in the future.

- 3.4 More positively, the increased use of on-line teaching and other materials has highlighted the potential for these resources to become a more prominent feature of teaching and learning. Moreover, exposure to self-directed study and the development of research skills in Years 9 and younger suggests that pupils and students may be far better placed for study at key stage 4 and beyond. The extent to which these aspects of the current situation shape the future and attainment of young people will be clearer over time.

4 Attainment/Achievement

- 4.1 In the absence of examinations, the robustness of which has been one of the cornerstones of education reform for the past 10 years, Ofqual has devised a (exceptional) method of awarding GCSEs and A levels for the current year, though these results will not feature in institutional comparisons as in previous years but will instead be provided at local authority level only.
- 4.2 Although there is an appeal procedure, it is possible that many students will opt to sit examinations when institutions re-open to all students.
- 4.3 The Young People's Education and Skills Team is working with colleagues at Mime Consulting to provide guidance to boroughs on analysis and interpretation of the results through Intelligent London⁹.

5 Apprenticeships

- 5.1 As most Apprenticeships are delivered by Independent Providers, there are some specific issues that this part of the education and skills sector is facing (the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) has published an article¹⁰ that explains the different experiences of apprentices).
- 5.2 First, because Apprentices are employed, they are affected by the general conditions of the lockdown. Anecdotal reports suggest that most Apprentices are

⁹ <http://www.intelligentlondon.org.uk/>

¹⁰ <https://www.managers.org.uk/insights/news/2020/april/what-about-apprentices-during-covid-19>

continuing in learning – though what proportion of Apprentices aged 16 to 19 are doing so is not known. Evidently, a large number of Apprentices are either in the furlough arrangements (and it is unclear how many will resume their former roles when those arrangements come to an end - see also paragraph 9), or have been made redundant and have been unable to secure alternative employment, either with or without an Apprenticeship.

- 5.3 Second, because of their independence, the provider base has not been provided with the same level of guaranteed funding as schools and colleges. While the government has put in place some level of assurance, the provider base is particularly vulnerable in the event of a prolonged lockdown. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) has published details of a new post-16 provider relief scheme¹¹ enabling providers to recoup lost income from non-levy apprenticeship and adult education budget funded activity. However, this does not include Levy funded activity which represents the majority of providers' income.
- 5.4 Third, the arrangements for end point assessment, which is integral to the quality of Apprenticeship Standards, are still the subject of discussion between the government and providers.

6 T levels

- 6.1 The government has announced that the introduction of T levels will proceed in September as planned¹² and has proceeded to publish the content and specifications for the first three T level qualifications.

7 Quality and Standards

- 7.1 Ofsted has suspended its programme of inspections and will announce when it has lifted this suspension.

8 Funding

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-post-16-provider-relief-scheme/esfa-post-16-provider-relief-scheme-covid-19-response-policy-document>

¹² <http://lsect.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/T-level-letter-09-04-20.pdf>

8.1 Although the government has provided some guarantees to the sector about funding, there remain a number of concerns, for example:

- Learning institutions that traditionally recruit significant numbers of young people during the year, often on short courses, fear that their circumstances are not adequately factored into the calculations for funding for the current and future years.
- The funding formula for colleges includes elements that need to be subject to detailed discussions between the ESFA and individual colleges (for example, the retention factor, disadvantage funding and the funding condition for English and maths).

8.2 The longer-term issue of funding is covered in Part two of this paper.

9 Progressions - the Labour Market

9.1 Primarily - with the support of the nation - management of the pandemic is centred on preserving lives and health. There are, however, inescapable and far-reaching economic consequences that cannot yet be accurately predicted (see the Office for Budget Responsibility's assessment as a guide to the economic issues¹³, and the Social Market Foundation's consideration of the impact on intergenerational fairness¹⁴). Of relevance to the Board's priorities are the short-, medium- and (possible) long-term effects on the labour market, especially the impact on young people.

9.2 It is worth noting that:

- In the last two weeks of March, nearly one million people claimed Universal Credit, around 10 times the usual rate (the position has subsequently improved but is still significantly above the seasonal average).
- The youth labour market was exhibiting causes for concern before the onset of the coronavirus crisis.

¹³ <https://obr.uk/coronavirus-lockdown-to-deliver-large-but-hopefully-temporary-shock-to-the-economy-and-public-finances/>

¹⁴ <http://www.smf.co.uk/publications/intergenerational-fairness-coronavirus/>

- 9.3 Analysis by the Youth Futures Foundation and Impetus¹⁵ reveals that youth unemployment has been steadily increasing. It suggests that there are structural issues that need to be addressed (such as: simplifying/integrating services; improving guidance; equalising connections between young people and employers; supporting employers to attract and retain staff from diverse backgrounds).
- 9.4 While many firms have retained their workforce (or a large proportion of their workforce) through the furlough arrangements, it is not certain how many of these businesses will remain viable in the absence of such support. This may prove particularly true of business that depend on seasonal boosts in trade or tourism that may not be replicated this year.
- 9.5 The Resolution Foundation reports¹⁶ that employees in the lowest-paying hospitality and retail sectors are most likely to be affected by the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.
- 9.6 Based on the government's briefings throughout the crisis and based on the experience of other countries, it is anticipated that businesses will re-open gradually over a period of time. The Institute of Employment Studies¹⁷ has combined its assessment of the impact of the lockdown with a five-point plan that it proposes the government should adopt as the economy opens up again:
- investment in new active labour programmes for those out of work
 - refocusing skills and training to support the recovery
 - an integrated and coherent offer for young people
 - an orderly withdrawal from the Job Retention Scheme
 - a new, partnership-based, 'Back to Work' campaign.

10 Progression to Further and Higher Education

¹⁵ https://youthfuturesfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/YFF_NEET_Report51.pdf

¹⁶ <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/app/uploads/2020/04/Launching-an-economic-lifeboat.pdf>

¹⁷ <https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/resource/getting-back-work-0>

- 10.1 Although learning institutions have responded to the crisis with both innovation and alacrity, it is unclear how careers advice and guidance have been provided to young people; especially to those who need most support (see also paragraph 15).
- 10.2 While the government's provision of additional funding and easing some of its conditions has been welcomed by the sector, the effectiveness of enrolments into Further and Higher Education courses due to start in September depends on both the timing of the end of the lockdown and the delivery of examination results as promised on 13 August (A level) and 20 August (GCSE).
- 10.3 The Unite Foundation has published a paper that shows differentiated outcomes for care experienced and estranged students¹⁸.
- 10.4 The IFS makes more ominous soundings in their paper *A bad time to graduate*. Here, the IFS relates the prospects for students to the recession if anticipates will follow the coronavirus crisis. They contend that experience from previous recessions shows that graduates will be less likely to find work and will start off in lower-paying occupations than they might have expected. Given the likely scale of the downturn into which the IFS believes they will be graduating, they say that it is likely to take at least five, and perhaps ten, years for these effects to wear off and this, alongside the loss of some face-to-face teaching, has led some students to request a rebate on their fees. The IFS does not believe that this is a good way of responding to a weak labour market as the nature of the income-contingent loan system is precisely to insure graduates against bad outcomes. The danger foreseen by the IFS is that if graduates earn less they will pay back less and what they need above all else is a sharp economic recovery; without which they are likely to suffer lower incomes for many years to come.

11 Special Needs

- 11.1 Although the government announced that schools and colleges should normally be closed to pupils and students from 20 March 2020, educational settings were asked to continue to provide care for a limited number of children and young

¹⁸ <https://www.unitefoundation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Positive-Impact-Report.pdf?platform=hootsuite>

people - those who are vulnerable and those whose parents/carers are critical to the coronavirus response.

- 11.2 Vulnerable children and young people included those who “have an education, health and care (EHC) plan whose needs cannot be met safely in the home environment”¹⁹.

¹⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people>

Part Two: Policy Update

This part of the Briefing Note covers policies and reports that were issued before the lockdown started on 24 March 2020.

12 Budget²⁰

12.1 The Chancellor of the Exchequer delivered the Budget to Parliament on 11 March 2020. The main points of interest are:

- £1.5 billion over five years in FE Capital funds
- £2.5 billion National Skills Fund
- Eight new Institutes of Technology and 11 maths schools
- £95 million to support the roll-out of T levels

13 Skills for Londoners – consultation on the Adult Education Budget (AEB) 2021 to 2022

13.1 City Hall conducted the consultation on the use of the AEB and its outcome is expected shortly.

14 Careers Guidance

14.1 The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), as part of its Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), posed the question “*Are students’ career expectations aligned with their skills?*” in a report published in February²¹. It says that young people are often ill informed about job opportunities and careers so that their decisions can be made on the basis of their background, not their potential. The report sees a crucial role for education systems in ensuring the continued flow of appropriately skilled and informed young people into the labour market.

²⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/budget-2020-documents>

²¹ <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/ed790c76-en.pdf?expires=1587983928&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=EE65289057396D83416484402AB4B277>

14.2 The Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) produced a plan to improve the careers advice system during National Careers Week in March²². It is centred on five points:

- incentivising schools to promote apprenticeships
- enforcement of the Baker Clause
- investment in better workforce development for teachers
- facilitating collaboration between schools and training providers
- refocusing existing careers guidance initiatives.

15 Runaway Training²³

15.1 The consultants EDSK published a report calling for renewed effort to improve the quality of Apprenticeships due to 'rebadging' training as an Apprenticeship.

16 London's Poverty Profile 2020²⁴

16.1 The Trust for London has produced the latest update of London's Poverty Profile. The report highlights that, even before Covid-19, London had the highest poverty rates in the UK. The profile's key findings are

- 28 per cent of people live in poverty in London
- 74 per cent of adults in poverty in London (1,050,000) are in working families (up from 62 per cent a decade ago)
- Housing costs for households in poverty in London, on average, amount to 56 per cent of their net income, compared to 36 per cent in the rest of England

²² <https://www.aelp.org.uk/media/3549/81-a-joined-up-approach-to-careers-information-advice-and-guidance.pdf>

²³ <https://www.edsk.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/EDSK-Runaway-training.pdf>

²⁴ https://trustforlondon.fra1.digitaloceanspaces.com/media/documents/Londons_Poverty_Profile_2020.pdf

17 Living on Different Incomes in London: Can public consensus identify a 'riches line'?²⁵

17.1 This report into wealth inequalities was commissioned by the Trust for London. Conducted by the London School of Economics with Birmingham and Loughborough Universities, the report notes the wealth inequalities that exist but there was no consensus on any remedial action.

18 Youth Select Committee

18.1 The British Youth Council has published the Youth Select Committee's report into knife crime²⁶ (the topic was selected by the Youth Parliament). The report explores and makes recommendations on: the causes of crime, the general conditions in which the perpetrators and victims of knife crime live, services that can help reduce crime, policing and sentencing.

19 What works in education for children who have a social worker?²⁷

19.1 What Works In Education (part of the government-funded What Works Network) has re—analysed data from 63 randomised controlled trials, funded by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), to look at the impacts of educational interventions on the attainment of young people who have had a social worker.

19.2 The study found that impacts on young people who have had a social worker are comparable in size to impacts on all children on average. However, different interventions are effective, suggesting that the needs of young people who have had a social worker in education may be different to their peers. Small sample sizes for the sub-group looked at (young people who have had a social worker) mean that findings cannot be conclusive at this stage. Ten projects that show 'Signs of Potential' have been identified – interventions that appear to have larger

²⁵ <https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/publications/can-public-consensus-identify-a-riches-line/>

²⁶ <https://www.byc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Youth-Select-Committee-Our-Generations-Epidemic-Knife-Crime.pdf>

²⁷ <https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/research-report/what-works-in-education-for-children-who-have-had-social-workers/>

positive impacts for young people who have had a social worker than for their peers.

20 Warnock, 40 Years On: Challenges for Special Educational Needs²⁸

20.1 Frontiers In Education published a research paper consisting of expert contributions (collated and edited by Geoff Lindsay, Klaus Wedell and Julie Elizabeth Dockwell) to mark the 40th anniversary of the landmark Warnock Report. The individual submissions take different perspectives but conclude that there remain major challenges to address if societies are to provide appropriate and effective support for our young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

21 Enhancing Productivity in UK Core Cities: Connecting Local and Regional Growth

21.1 The OECD published a review of the UK's Core Cities (Core Cities is an association of eleven cities in the UK: Belfast, Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, and Sheffield). The review proposes that the UK government should:

- Continue devolution to local authorities across the UK, allowing them to plan spending more strategically over longer periods.
- Grow and attract more high productive business sectors by raising skills levels, investing in transport, housing and other infrastructure.
- Increase the number of people in work by connecting health and employment programmes and reducing childcare costs – the UK has some of the highest in the OECD.
- Give city regions greater regulatory powers over public transport.

²⁸ <https://www.frontiersin.org/research-topics/8366/warnock-40-years-on-challenges-for-special-educational-needs>

21.2 Although London is not one of the Core Cities, London Councils works closely with Core Cities UK on shared ambitions, particularly in levelling-up and not rounding down economic growth in city regions outside the capital.

22 Left behind? Understanding communities on the edge²⁹

22.1 New research published by Local Trust and Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI) suggests that places to meet, connectivity – both physical and digital – and an active, engaged community are vital to secure better social and economic outcomes for people living in deprived neighbourhoods.

22.2 People in places which lack these features have higher rates of unemployment and child poverty, and their health is also worse than those living in other deprived areas. And the evidence is that they are falling further behind. The report argues that this adds up to these areas being some of the most left behind in the country.

22.3 The research combines multiple national data sources to create a statistically-robust ‘community needs’ index for the first time, helping policy makers target investment in social infrastructure.

22.4 It supports the case for new solutions to ‘level up’ civic infrastructure (such as community centres, libraries, green spaces) and improve connectivity and community engagement. It asks government to answer the call of the Community Wealth Fund Alliance for the next wave of dormant assets from stocks, shares, bonds, insurance and pension funds to be invested in left-behind neighbourhoods for this purpose.

22.5 The report also asks government to establish a joint cross-government/civil society task force to consider evidence and develop recommendations to improve social and economic outcomes for people in left-behind areas, and to allocate an appropriate proportion of the £3.6bn Stronger Towns Fund and the proposed UK Shared Prosperity Fund to them.

22.6 The research identifies 206 wards as left behind. They have a combined population of more than two million people, which is nearly four per cent of people

²⁹ https://localtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/local_trust_ocsi_left_behind_research_august_2019.pdf

in England. Mapping shows concentrations of left-behind areas in housing estates outlying big towns and cities, such Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Birmingham, Middlesbrough, Hull and Stoke, as well as in post-industrial areas in northern England and coastal areas in southern England.

22.7 Some 45 wards in the North East fall into the category of left behind, representing 13.3 per cent of all its wards – the highest percentage of any region. Meanwhile, 52 wards in the North West are classified as left behind – the greatest number of any region – representing 5.6 per cent of all wards there.

22.8 These left-behind areas have a different demographic profile from other deprived areas, with a lower working-age population, a higher number of people with work-limiting illnesses, higher levels of lone-parent families and caring responsibilities, and lower population growth than elsewhere in the country.

23 England's Skills Puzzle: Piecing together further education, training and employment³⁰

23.1 This report from the Skills Commission suggests that the system in England is too fragmented and centralised. It proposes that the system should piece together education, employment support and skills as 80 per cent of the workforce of 2030 are already in work and focusing on education as a series of events that occur only in childhood or early adulthood will not stand the test of time.

24 Recommendation

24.1 Board members are asked to note the content of this report and submit any comments by email.

³⁰ <https://fetl.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Englands-Skills-Puzzle-Piecing-together-further-education-training-and-employment.pdf>