

# Young People's Education and Skills Operational Sub-Group

## Policy Update – August 2021

**Date:** 9 September 2021

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**Summary** This paper provides an update on young people's education and skills issues.

**Recommendation** Recipients are asked to note the content of this report and submit any comments to [peter.obrien@londoncouncils.gov.uk](mailto:peter.obrien@londoncouncils.gov.uk).

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## 1 Introduction

1.1 This is the latest in our series of briefings and updates on policies, research and statistics relating to education and skills of 14 to 19-year-olds as they affect London. It has been produced primarily for the Young People's Education and Skills Operational Sub-Group meeting of 9 September 2021. It is also being circulated to Young People's Education and Skills Board members, Councillors, local authority officers, partners and stakeholders. Our earlier updates can be downloaded from our dedicated webpage<sup>1</sup>.

## 2 Context

2.1 This paper does not seek to summarise or further explain the government's general guidance on Covid-19 or the specific guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) but considers some of the main effects on different aspects of the education and skills sector in London. Annex 1 provides a list of sources of official guidance.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/node/37307>

2.2 Regionally activity to support London's recovery is led by the London Recovery Board<sup>2</sup>. Its key aims are to: reverse the pattern of rising unemployment and lost economic growth caused by the economic scarring of Covid-19; support our communities, including those most impacted by the virus; help young people to flourish with access to support and opportunities; narrow social, economic and health inequalities; accelerate delivery of a cleaner, greener London. The Board has committed to taking a missions-based approach to the Recovery Programme<sup>3</sup> (you can sign up to [receive updates from the London Recovery Board](#)).

### **3 Data**

3.1 The House of Commons Library<sup>4</sup>, though primarily aimed at Members of Parliament, produces briefing papers that bring together research, data and opinions about various aspects of the country's response to Covid-19, government policies and our future emergence from the lockdown.

3.2 The Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT)<sup>5</sup> produced by the DfE, is an interactive spreadsheet comparing data about children and young people across all local authorities in England and has also been updated with the latest published data.

3.3 During the pandemic, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has published a wide variety of data and analysis across various themes and topics on a dedicated Covid-19 web page. It has introduced new surveys, developed new insight, used new data sources and published new cross-cutting analysis in response to demands for high quality, trustworthy and up-to-date statistics throughout the pandemic, while maintaining and developing existing statistics to assess the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. It has launched a

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/coronavirus/londons-recovery-coronavirus-crisis/london-recovery-board>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/coronavirus/londons-recovery-coronavirus-crisis/recovery-context>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.parliament.uk/commons-library>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait>

web page that brings together information on the pandemic by theme<sup>6</sup>, from which individual reports can be downloaded. Each theme provides an overall narrative on the subject matter based on what has been published to date and provides links to more detailed data and analysis along with the relevant contact points.

3.4 Data specific to London is published monthly by Greater London Authority (GLA) Economics<sup>7</sup> and Intelligent London<sup>8</sup> is also updated frequently with the latest available data. The GLA's City Intelligence Unit has been publishing a series of digests of external research that offer short summaries of major research reports and a deep dive into one or two topics<sup>9</sup>.

3.5 This paper is in three parts: Part One covers current issues, Part Two provides a short general policy update and Part Three includes a brief performance update. (the government uses the term "education settings" to describe any institution in which learning takes place - for consistency, we use the same term in this paper).

#### **4 Summary: the key issues for the recovery of Young People's Education and Skills in London**

4.1 August saw the publication of this year's GCSE and A level results (see paragraph 28.1) and we salute the achievements of young Londoners and their teachers, tutors and all those in the education and training system who supported them in these difficult times. At this stage, only a brief overview of the results has been published and we shall provide more detailed analyses as information becomes available. With the lifting of most of the restrictions introduced to combat the spread of Covid-19, there have been some signs of a return to pre-pandemic levels of business and social activities. However, following the easing of restrictions, there are concerns about the

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/articles/coronaviruscovid19reviewdataandanalysismarchtooctober2020/2020-10-28>

<sup>7</sup> <https://data.london.gov.uk/gla-economics/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.intelligentlondon.org.uk/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://data.gov.uk/dataset/bc4f5f36-95a2-4a02-b13d-ef8e18ab0ffb/summaries-of-external-research-on-covid-19>

transmission of Covid-19 through educational settings. Moreover, the tentative recovery in employment is still leaving young people who are trying to find work at a disadvantage.

- 4.2 Reports published this month also show that demand for places from 16 to 18 year-olds is likely to lead to pressure on educational settings' funding and there are various estimates as to the amount that is needed urgently to remedy the situation this year. As ever at this time of year, we admire the staff at our educational settings who have to process enrolments in such tight timescales and those staff in our local authorities who work to re-engage with young people who have yet to secure a place in education or training.
- 4.3 Representative organisations and special interest groups within the sector have been among those signalling how they intend to influence this year's promised Comprehensive Spending Review.
- 4.4 At the end of the last academic year, the government initiated a series of consultations. This is a reminder of those that most impact on 16 to 18 education and skills:
- Fair school funding for all: completing our reforms to the National Funding Formula – even though 16 to 18 funding is not included in this consultation, professionals working exclusively with that age group will have an interest in ensuring the stability of the pre-16 phase (closes 30 September)<sup>10</sup>
  - Reforms to Further Education Funding and Accountability - the accountability aspects of this consultation are relevant to 16 to 18 provision (closes 7 October)<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/fair-school-funding-for-all-completing-our-reforms-to-the-national-funding-formula>

<sup>11</sup> <https://consult.education.gov.uk/fe-funding/reforms-to-funding-and-accountability/>

## Part One: Current Issues

### 5 Government Announcements

- 5.1 Headteachers and school leaders have described how shifting government guidance impeded schools during the critical first months of Covid lockdown, in a new study by researchers from University College London (UCL) and the University of Cambridge<sup>12</sup>. The research compiles data gathered from almost 300 heads and other school leaders in June 2020, as schools were beginning to reopen after the first wave of closures. The researchers calculate that between 18 March and 18 June 2020, DfE released 201 policy updates for schools. This included 12 cases in which five or more documents were published in a single day for immediate interpretation and implementation. Asked about the main challenges they faced, heads repeatedly cited 'changing updates', 'clarity' and 'time'. Seventy-seven per cent of executive heads and 71 per cent of headteachers complained about "too many inputs and too much information". In follow-up interviews, participants referred to being "inundated" with government updates, which often contradicted earlier guidance.
- 5.2 The Institute for Government has published a report<sup>13</sup> criticising the government's handling of school and education policy during the pandemic, including its lack of contingency planning and "the failure to make contingency plans in the summer and autumn of 2020 when it was already obvious that fresh school closures and exam cancellations might be needed." The report also:
- credits government for its swift decision on the definition of key workers whose children could remain in school
  - approves of the distribution of a million laptops to disadvantaged children, albeit after a slow start

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2021/aug/government-guidance-held-schools-back-covid-hit>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/publications/schools-and-coronavirus>

- attributes problems in the response to disagreements between various arms of government which culminated in threats of legal action by DfE when local authorities and schools sought to respond to local Covid-19 circumstances.

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

- 6.1 The government is recruiting "attendance advisers" who will be paid up to £500 a day to work with local authorities and multi-academy trusts (MATs) on cutting school absence<sup>14</sup>. The advisers will support MATs and local authorities with absence rates that are higher than average.
- 6.2 The Association of Colleges (AoC) has predicted that there will be 90,000 extra young people in education by 2024 to 25 costing £500million<sup>15</sup>. It says that the growth will come from the combined impact of population growth, decreasing apprenticeship starts and a tough labour market. The AoC has therefore called on the Treasury to factor this anticipated increase into planned future funding as without guaranteed funding, students may find it hard to find places to continue learning (see also paragraph 15.1).

## **7 Participation: Apprenticeships**

- 7.1 The DfE has published its response to the consultation on flexi-jobs apprenticeships that concluded on 31 May 2021<sup>16</sup>. Flexi-jobs apprenticeships allow people to complete their Apprenticeships with more than one employer and are thought to be particularly helpful in sectors such as the creative, digital, care, transport, manufacturing, agriculture and construction industries - where flexible and short-term employment are the norm - and it has proved difficult for apprentices to complete 12 month programmes.

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/notice/6a45375f-3b46-46a8-b641-77b3369770e3?origin=SearchResults&p=1>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.aoc.co.uk/news/fund-colleges-%E2%80%98in-year%E2%80%99-avoid-damaging-the-prospects-growing-number-students>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/flexi-job-apprenticeships-reshaping-the-role-of-apprenticeship-training-agencies>

The DfE is inviting sector bodies, groups of employers and other interested organisations to register as Flexi-job apprenticeship agencies, giving them access to a new £7million fund to support the agencies with their start-up costs. Prospective agencies need to be able to demonstrate that they understand the skills needs of their sector or region and can work towards financial sustainability in the coming years.

- 7.2 The Mayor has made available £3million for the set up and delivery of hubs as part of his new Academies Programme. The *Mayor's Academies Programme*<sup>17</sup> aims to support Londoners hardest hit by the pandemic into good work in sectors key to London's recovery and long-term economic growth part of the London Recovery Programme. The priority sectors are: digital, creative, green, health and hospitality. Organisations can apply for up to £250,000 to establish a hub to support Londoners into good work in one or more of these priority sectors. Hubs will work to develop and coordinate London's offer of high-quality training, work experience and wider employment support reflecting the priorities and specialisms of the sectors. The deadline for applications is 24 September 2021.

## **8 Participation: T Levels**

- 8.1 The DfE has published details of the projects that have been allocated funding to refurbish buildings, upgrade classrooms and create specialist spaces for the delivery of T levels<sup>18</sup>. The total funding is £50million.

## **9 Achievement**

- 9.1 Please see Part Three of this report for an overview of this year's GCSE and A level grades.
- 9.2 Professor Alan Smithers, Director of the Centre for Education and Employment Research, University of Buckingham, has written a paper,

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/skills-and-employment-1/mayors-academies-programme>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/50-million-to-deliver-world-class-facilities-for-t-level-students>

*Another year of grade inflation?*<sup>19</sup> in which he maintains that the emergency procedures adopted for awarding A-level grades in 2020 were a recipe for grade inflation. Professor Smithers says that, because the grade received was to be the highest of the teacher's predicted grade, the Ofqual calculated grade (or, in the case of Wales, the AS grade achieved in 2019) this led to:

- the first ever 100 per cent pass rate
- the highest ever percentage of A\*/A grades
- a bonanza for subjective subjects
- the biggest ever gap in favour of girls at A\*/A.

9.3 The paper argues that the government began the 2020 to 2021 academic year determined that there should be exams, but eventually had to give way. There was, however, time to make teacher assessment more systematic and controlled. It says that the early signs are that this year will be another bumper year for grades, justified as compensation for all the disruption suffered. The danger is that the inflated grades or, as the paper puts it, "lower standards", will become the new norm. Relying on teacher assessment for two years will also strengthen the hand of those who wish to see it replace examinations permanently.

9.4 Ofqual has confirmed<sup>20</sup> that teacher-assessed grades are to end and exams will return next year for vocational and technical qualifications but awarding bodies will be allowed to adapt assessments in 2021/22 for qualifications like functional skills and T Levels, in light of how Covid-19 has affected students' learning. This decision follows a consultation that concluded in July.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://fb77c667c4d6e21c1e06.b-cdn.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CoveredAL2021.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/arrangements-for-the-assessment-and-awarding-of-vocational-technical-and-other-general-qualifications-2021-to-2022>



## 10 Progressions - the Labour Market

- 10.1 The labour market statistics published by the ONS on 17 August 2021<sup>21</sup> show that unemployment among young people has begun to decrease as Covid-19 restrictions are being lifted across the UK. The main points are:
- the proportion of 16 to 24-year-olds out of work between April and June decreased 0.6 percentage points compared with the previous quarter
  - employment rates for the same age group increased by 1.4 percentage points
  - young people (those aged 16 to 24 years) have been particularly affected by the pandemic, with the employment rate decreasing and the unemployment and economic inactivity rates increasing by more than seen for those aged 25 years and over. “Over the last quarter, however, there was a stronger increase in the employment rate and a decrease in the unemployment and inactivity rates for young people.
- 10.2 The Resolution Foundation has shown how the labour market recovery since the economy opened up after the last lockdown has varied across the country<sup>22</sup>. Areas dependent on tourism (such as coastal areas, which were among the hardest hit earlier in the pandemic) have seen faster recovery than cities (such as central London).
- 10.3 Analysis of benefits claimants made by the Resolution Foundation<sup>23</sup> (funded by the Nuffield Foundation) shows that the proportion of young adults (16 to 24 year-olds) claiming income-related benefits increased from 9 to 15 per cent during the Covid crisis – a larger increase than any other age group – helping to reverse a decade’s-long fall in the share of people receiving benefits and highlighting the vital role Universal Credit (UC) has played during the pandemic.

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/employmentintheuk/august2021>

<sup>22</sup> <https://economy2030.resolutionfoundation.org/reports/levelling-up-and-down-britain/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/age-old-or-new-age/>

- 10.4 The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) has launched a campaign to boost youth employment. The *One Million Chances*<sup>24</sup> campaign aims to help undo the damage done to young people's career prospects due to Covid-19 and address staff shortages that are affecting many businesses.
- 10.5 The Youth Futures Foundation, established in December 2019 to improve employment outcomes for young people from marginalised backgrounds, committed to grant £18.7million in 19 months to improve the youth employment system<sup>25</sup>. It announced its latest round of grant awards and one of the recipients was The Ubele Initiative, based in Haringey, which will use its grant to deliver an initiative for Black and ethnic minority-led organisations in supporting young people into employment.

## 11 Progression to Further and Higher Education

- 11.1 The DfE reported that a record rate of young people will be taking up university places this year, up 11 per cent on last year, after this year's A level results were announced<sup>26</sup>. More than 210,000 18-year-old students in England have had their university places confirmed, with 192,000 at their first choice after increases in top grades for students from all backgrounds.
- 11.2 Research from UCAS<sup>27</sup> shows that more than three quarters (78 per cent) of students at key stage 5 who were getting their results this year and did not plan to immediately start a three year full-time undergraduate degree, were interested in starting an apprenticeship. Published ahead of A level results day, the research shows that 56 per cent of 17 to 19 year olds who were

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<sup>24</sup> [https://www.cipd.co.uk/news-views/campaigns/one-million-chances?utm\\_source=mc&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=PR\\_090821-OneMillionChances.One+Million+Chances&utm\\_campaign=pr&utm\\_term=5320015](https://www.cipd.co.uk/news-views/campaigns/one-million-chances?utm_source=mc&utm_medium=email&utm_content=PR_090821-OneMillionChances.One+Million+Chances&utm_campaign=pr&utm_term=5320015)

<sup>25</sup> <https://youthfuturesfoundation.org/news/18-7-million-committed-to-tackle-youth-unemployment-crisis/>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/record-numbers-of-students-take-up-university-places>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.ucas.com/corporate/news-and-key-documents/news/new-ucas-research-shows-strong-demand-apprenticeships-students-keen-keep-learning-autumn>

anticipating their grades this year but did not intend to start a traditional degree course in the autumn, had considered an apprenticeship. A further 22 per cent said their main plan is an apprenticeship (16 per cent higher/degree level, 6 per cent advanced level). In 2020, 37 per cent of UK 18 year olds progressed from secondary education onto university or college through UCAS.

- 11.3 A report from the Learning at Work Institute<sup>28</sup> comments on the state of employer investment in skills during the recession brought on by Covid-19 and the government's response to it. The report says that job-related training will be vital as the economy recovers, with the pandemic having witnessed accelerated technological change, increased digitalisation and firms discovering new ways to harness emerging technologies, increasing demand for new skills. It adds that training will also be an important contributor to innovation, productivity and wage growth. It also offers pathways for people to upskill and for wage progression. It cites other research that has demonstrated how training significantly increases the chances of escaping low pay. It says that employers play a vital role in job-related training and development. Ultimately, the main reason employers invest in skills is to meet business need and deliver their business strategies, but the UK has long suffered from low and unequal employer investment in skills, and declining investment prior to the pandemic was identified as one of the likely contributors to the 'productivity puzzle'. The report maintains that low productivity and low skills are interlinked.

## 12 Careers Guidance

- 12.1 Ahead of A-level results day, the City & Guilds Group published an analysis<sup>29</sup> of the impact of the pandemic on young people's decisions about their futures – with more school leavers turning towards university as a default

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<sup>28</sup> [https://learningandwork.org.uk/resources/research-and-reports/learning-at-work-employer-investment-in-skills/?vgo\\_ee=mjzlcqa4y%2F3a3WY5MtUdAKlwrtaeqmINH4www3aBP9IOV8PCHCW2SQhD%2BF%2Fb8KUK](https://learningandwork.org.uk/resources/research-and-reports/learning-at-work-employer-investment-in-skills/?vgo_ee=mjzlcqa4y%2F3a3WY5MtUdAKlwrtaeqmINH4www3aBP9IOV8PCHCW2SQhD%2BF%2Fb8KUK)

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.cityandguilds.com/news/august-2021/more-young-people-turning-to-university-post-pandemic-job-market>

choice as uncertainty in the jobs market bites. However, with data suggesting that university may not live up to career and salary expectations, and with many of today's university graduates set to leave with tens of thousands of pounds worth of debt, City & Guilds Group is urging school leavers to consider all the options available when considering their next steps. The research reveals that nearly three fifths (57 per cent) of UK 17 to 19-year-olds in their final two years of school say their decisions about post education work/training have changed as a result of the pandemic, with a fifth (20 per cent) saying that they now want to stay in full time education for longer than they originally intended.

- 12.2 Research carried out by Career Map<sup>30</sup>, in which 1,200 UK business owners and HR leaders were surveyed, found that four in five UK employers don't require degree qualifications for entry level jobs.
- 12.3 In *Transition to ambition: navigating the careers maze*<sup>31</sup> the think tank Policy Connect explores the role of the careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) system in supporting transition from education into employment in England. The report outlines the background to the research, highlighting the opportunity provided by the Covid-19 pandemic to consider the national approach to CEIAG and how well it supports young people and adults to transition into long-term employment. It identifies three cross-cutting themes: careers strategy, digital poverty and labour market information. The report mainly examines CEIAG provision in FE and Apprenticeships but also comments on HE, including the graduate labour market, university careers services and student/graduate employers. It considers adults outside of the education system, including reskilling, retraining and the National Careers Service. Its conclusions and recommendations include for the government to provide a framework for a stable, long-term careers strategy.
- 12.4 The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has published two reports as part of its *Career Readiness in the Pandemic*

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<sup>30</sup> <https://careermap.co.uk/>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.policyconnect.org.uk/research/transition-ambition-navigating-careers-maze>

project. These short reports provide advice from international evidence on how schools can help students to succeed in their transitions into work.

12.5 In *Getting a job - How schools can help students in the competition for employment after education*<sup>32</sup> the OSCE observes that while young people are leaving education more qualified than ever before, in many countries they are struggling to compete for jobs. Compared to older workers, young people tend to have less work experience, fewer useful contacts and less know-how about how to get a job. Young people face additional challenges in preparing for online recruitment processes. There are, however, things that secondary schools can do to help students get a job and ongoing analysis of national longitudinal surveys in four countries reveal associations with better employment outcomes. The paper looks at how school can demystify the recruitment process, teach students how to apply for jobs and help them prepare to succeed in job interviews.

12.6 *Getting the most out of employer engagement in career guidance*<sup>33</sup> emphasises that employer engagement is fundamental to career guidance. Research studies show that school activities like career talks and workplace visits that involve people from workplaces are often linked with better employment outcomes. Many young people though, have limited opportunity to engage with employers and people in work while still in school. This short paper draws on international practice and evidence, including new analysis exploring the impact of employer engagement on student transitions into work, to ask:

- why engage employers in career guidance?
- What does good employer engagement look like?
- How to deliver employer engagement effectively, efficiently and equitably?

12.7 The paper also highlights ways in which schools are using online technologies to enhance student access to employers within career guidance

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<sup>32</sup> [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/getting-a-job\\_9ac1ab37-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/getting-a-job_9ac1ab37-en)

<sup>33</sup> [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/getting-the-most-out-of-employer-engagement-in-career-guidance\\_fbbc3788-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/getting-the-most-out-of-employer-engagement-in-career-guidance_fbbc3788-en)

(the OECD is hosting a free, online October conference on research and practice<sup>34</sup>.)

### **13 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)**

- 13.1 Research commissioned by the SEN Policy Research Forum<sup>35</sup> has shown that there is continuing and considerable inequity in the levels of High Needs funding allocated to English local authorities, which cannot be explained by differences in need. The research also says that local authority systems that make greater use of specialist provision are likely to involve greater financial costs.

### **14 Funding**

- 14.1 The Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) published research showing that sixth forms and colleges in England need an extra £570million this year to keep pace with the rising number of students<sup>36</sup>.
- 14.2 Colleges have been invited to bid for a share of a £2million fund to develop new short HE courses in “important” subject areas<sup>37</sup>. Up to 20 colleges and universities will be chosen to develop level 4 to 6 courses between six weeks and a year in STEM, healthcare, digital innovation, education, and supporting Net Zero.
- 14.3 The outcomes of the first funding round under the Turing Scheme have been published<sup>38</sup> (the Turing Scheme replaced the European Union (EU)’s Erasmus+ Programme to provide opportunities for international study). A total of 363 applications from universities, schools and further education and

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<sup>34</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/education/career-readiness/lessons-how-schools-best-equip-students-working-lives-conference-october-2021.htm>

<sup>35</sup> <https://senpolicyresearchforum.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/High-Needs-research-summary-website-pdf-nw-20-July-21.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/15578>

<sup>37</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/news/short-university-courses-to-provide-flexible-training?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm\\_source=255be669-5bd1-49da-a1ad-6bb57caeecdc&utm\\_content=immediately](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/short-university-courses-to-provide-flexible-training?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=255be669-5bd1-49da-a1ad-6bb57caeecdc&utm_content=immediately)

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.turing-scheme.org.uk/project-community/funding-results/>

training providers across the United Kingdom were approved from 412 applications received by the Turing Scheme Delivery Partner, a consortium of the British Council and Ecorys UK. The successful applications will receive almost £100 million of funding and will allow more than 40,000 students, learners and pupils to experience study and work around the world during the 2021-22 academic year after<sup>39</sup>. As part of the new global scheme, Canada, Japan and the United States are among more than 150 international destinations where UK participants will be funded to take up placements – with around 48 per cent of places going to those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The breakdown of the successful applications is as follows:

- HE Organisations, 139 in England of which 28 are in London
- FE and Vocational Education and Training Organisations, 110 in England of which 22 are in London
- School Funded Organisations 114 in England of which 22 are in London.

14.4 The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) announced that the government will invest an additional £2million into the #iwill Fund<sup>40</sup>, which will be matched by The National Lottery Community Fund to create thousands of new volunteering, social action and community activities for young people.

14.5 The government has announced investment of £20million on the family hubs initiative. Family hubs are designed to support vulnerable families<sup>41</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/40000-students-to-study-across-the-globe-as-part-of-new-turing-scheme>

<sup>40</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-4-million-boost-towards-opportunities-for-young-people?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm\\_source=942d344c-e369-4ff1-945e-ccd52df726c7&utm\\_content=daily](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-4-million-boost-towards-opportunities-for-young-people?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=942d344c-e369-4ff1-945e-ccd52df726c7&utm_content=daily)

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/20m-to-provide-more-early-help-for-vulnerable-families>

14.6 The Youth Endowment Fund is opening a grant round in partnership with Comic Relief for programmes that support families, keep children safe and divert them from violent crime<sup>42</sup>.

## **15 Race, Equality and Social Justice**

15.1 The Bell Foundation has introduced new ESOL Programme partnerships<sup>43</sup> and details how they may offer insights into interventions supporting refugees to achieve their education and employment goals. These include research into young people and ESOL; projects that will explore and evaluate how learning English can support young refugees aged 14 to 25 in their wellbeing and achieving their potential in education; ESOL for employment.

## **16 Mental Health and Anxiety**

16.1 *Recovering from Covid-19: what pupils and schools need now*<sup>44</sup> by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) explores the needs of schools and their pupils following the Covid-19 pandemic, drawing on interviews with senior leaders in primary and secondary schools across England. The report outlines the background to the study, highlighting the disruption to mainstream education caused by the pandemic, and describes the methods used. Its key findings include:

- there are widespread concerns for pupils' wellbeing and mental health, with anxiety the most common issue
- schools cannot rely on specialist services to support pupils
- staff wellbeing is an issue
- schools have responded to pupils' wellbeing and mental health in a number of ways

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<sup>42</sup> <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/grants/a-supportive-home/>

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/news/blog-impact-of-esol-on-refugees-education-and-employment-explored-in-new-partnerships/>

<sup>44</sup> [https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/4593/covid19\\_what\\_schools\\_and\\_pupils\\_need\\_now\\_policy\\_briefing.pdf](https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/4593/covid19_what_schools_and_pupils_need_now_policy_briefing.pdf)



- social distancing is impacting on the quality of teaching and learning, schools are noticing different trends in pupils' behaviour
- self-isolation is having a negative effect on pupils
- schools need timely decision-making and communication from central government
- school leaders feel that the government's current approach to learning recovery is misconceived and unbalanced.

## **17 Youth Service/Youth Work**

17.1 The DfE established a survey of local authorities in England to help understand the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak on Children's Social Care. Local authorities were asked to report to DfE every two weeks except for four weekly surveys over the summer and Christmas holidays. From April 2021 the survey became a monthly return. Each survey return is referred to as a 'wave' and the latest wave (Wave 26) covers the period to 21 July<sup>45</sup>. The headlines are:

- the total number of children looked after (CLA) was 2 per cent higher than the same time in 2019-20 and the total number of children on a child protection plan (CPP) was 5 per cent lower
- a large proportion of CLA, children on a CPP and other children in need (CIN) have been in contact with a social worker in the previous four weeks (66 per cent, 94 per cent and 60 per cent respectively)
- the proportion of social workers not working due to Covid-19 has remained at relatively low levels with 5 per cent of local authorities reporting over 10 per cent of social workers unavailable due to Covid-19
- the proportion of local authorities reporting over 10 per cent of their residential care staff unable to work due to Covid19 has also remained

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<sup>45</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1011433/Vulnerable\\_Children\\_and\\_Young\\_People\\_Survey\\_waves\\_1\\_to\\_26.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1011433/Vulnerable_Children_and_Young_People_Survey_waves_1_to_26.pdf)

low at 3 per cent (some local authorities have small residential care workforces and therefore a small change in the number of staff available may result in a large change in the proportion unavailable)

- the total number of referrals during Wave 26 was 6 per cent lower than the usual number at that time of year
- the total number of children who started to be looked after reported in waves 1 to 26 of the survey was 10,450, around 29 per cent lower than the same period in 2017-20.

17.2 The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Youth Affairs published its interim report into the progress across statutory and voluntary youth services following an extensive review in 2019<sup>46</sup>. Its recommendations include:

- DCMS has retained the lead for youth services and out of school activities, with a Minister responsible for the health and vibrancy of the youth sector - consideration should be given to this being a dual role jointly held at DCMS and DfE, or for a cross-departmental committee to be chaired by the Minister
- most funding of youth services and related activities is through local authorities, although the picture is inconsistent with a patchwork of youth provision across the country - to be effective, local youth partnerships should be established or developed, and incorporate young people in consultation and decision-making
- a national strategy is needed to recruit, train and sustain qualified and entry-level youth workers, and adult volunteers
- there needs to be a common language and shared outcomes to read across government, research and practice, readily understood by young people, for youth work.

17.3 A report by Green Party London Assembly member Sian Berry finds that youth service funding across London as a whole has been cut by 44 per cent

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<sup>46</sup> <http://www.youthappg.org.uk/review-of-youth-work-in-england-interim-report/>

in the last decade<sup>47</sup>. The report says that the average council budget for youth services in 2011 to 2012 was £2.6m and this fell to just £1.1m by 2020 to 21. It suggests that if all councils had been able to maintain budgets at 2011/12 levels, Londoners would have seen at least £242m more invested in support for young people over the past 10 years. The report also identifies a loss of more than 130 youth centres, from a starting point of nearly 300, across London. Tower Hamlets saw the biggest reduction (estimated at just over £1.5m from its youth services budget). Ms Berry has also raised concerns over a lack of provision for girls and young women, noting that 10 boroughs have no female-specific youth services.

## 18 Youth Justice

- 18.1 The official youth custody statistics<sup>48</sup> show that London's secure population of children and young people was 149 in June 2021. This compares with 202 in June 2020 and 145 in May 2021.
- 18.2 The former Children's Commissioner for England, Anne Longfield, has announced that she will head an independent commission (the Commission on Young Lives)<sup>49</sup> that will examine the scale of child criminal exploitation and come up with ways to cut the number of children used by gangs. The commission is due to launch in September 2021.
- 18.3 In *The youth justice system's response to the COVID-19 pandemic*<sup>50</sup>, the Alliance for Youth Justice presents the results of a literature review of the existing policy, practice and research literature about the impacts of coronavirus (Covid-19) on the youth justice system in England especially during the first year of the pandemic. The report considers the impact of the

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<sup>47</sup> [https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sian\\_berry\\_youth\\_services\\_2021\\_blighted\\_generation\\_final.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sian_berry_youth_services_2021_blighted_generation_final.pdf)

<sup>48</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-custody-data?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm\\_source=097ead3b-96cc-4988-8e8f-558f3d9ea098&utm\\_content=daily](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-custody-data?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=097ead3b-96cc-4988-8e8f-558f3d9ea098&utm_content=daily)

<sup>49</sup> <https://twitter.com/coyl2022?lang=en>

<sup>50</sup> <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5f75bfbbfb67fc5ab41154d6/t/60f67f184920142c5d9d59eb/1626767129791/Impact+of+COVID+-+Literature+Review+FINAL.pdf?platform=hootsuite>

pandemic on children in the community, children in court, children in custody (and on release from custody), with specific reference to the implications for courts and children and young people. It discusses the available evidence about the impact of the pandemic on children in the youth justice system and how policies and practices have responded to the crisis. It suggests that the impact of the pandemic on children has been devastating particularly for those from marginalised and disadvantaged communities. The report considers that the government has often failed to distinguish between its approach to adults and children in their policy responses and that there is a need for close monitoring and analysis of needs to ensure that systems and services are able to respond effectively. It also highlights the significant future challenges likely to be caused by the backlogs in the justice system and the effects of the isolation children in custody have suffered due to the pandemic.

- 18.4 The Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre (CASCADE) based in Cardiff has produced the results of its research into good practice in preventing youth violence<sup>51</sup>. The report examines the effectiveness of interventions at a variety of levels and highlights those that have the best results. Although the report is based on experience in Wales, its findings are believed to be transferable to England.

## **19 London**

- 19.1 Wandsworth Council, which has experienced high levels of Covid-19 infections, has been praised by Ofsted<sup>52</sup> for the quality of provision for vulnerable children during the pandemic.

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<sup>51</sup> <https://www.violencepreventionwales.co.uk/cms-assets/research/Mapping-and-horizon-scanning-review-of-youth-violence-prevention.pdf?platform=hootsuite>

<sup>52</sup> <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50168141>

## **Part Two: Policy Update**

This part of the Briefing Note covers policies and reports that have been received in August 2021.

### **20 Qualification Reform**

20.1 The government responded to a petition opposed to the DfE's review of post-16 qualifications at Level 3, which puts government funding at risk for many applied general qualifications, such as BTECs. The government has signalled that it does not intend to change its policy<sup>53</sup>.

### **21 Devolution**

21.1 It has been revealed that the government is undertaking an "all-options-on-the-table" review of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), which is intended to recommend their evolution rather than demise<sup>54</sup>.

### **22 Colleges Week<sup>55</sup>**

22.1 Colleges Week is taking place between 18 and 22 October this year.

### **23 Review of the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)<sup>56</sup>**

23.1 The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) is to be reviewed as part of a wider programme across Government to ensure it remains effective into the future. The review is part of a programme of reviews of public organisations known as arm's length bodies. It will be led by an Independent Lead Reviewer, Professor Sir David Bell, Vice Chancellor of the University of

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<sup>53</sup> <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/592642>

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.lgcplus.com/politics/devolution-and-economic-growth/revealed-government-thinking-on-future-role-of-leps-14-06-2021/>

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.aoc.co.uk/news/colleges-week-2021-save-the-date>

<sup>56</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/news/education-and-skills-funding-agency-review-to-ensure-continued-effectiveness?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm\\_source=8ea5e686-fe92-43ef-b697-019d4057a2bd&utm\\_content=immediately](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/education-and-skills-funding-agency-review-to-ensure-continued-effectiveness?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=8ea5e686-fe92-43ef-b697-019d4057a2bd&utm_content=immediately)

Sunderland. It will consider the ESFA's operating model, governance, accountability model and impact.

## **24 Sure Start<sup>57</sup>**

- 24.1 Research from the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) for the Nuffield Foundation found that the Sure Start programme had long-lasting health benefits for children including reducing hospitalisation later in life.

## **25 Assessment Reform**

- 25.1 Educational charity NCFE has launched a new £1 million fund to develop new and future-focused approaches to assessment in education. The Assessment Innovation Fund (AIF)<sup>58</sup> will be a catalyst for large-scale change by providing evidence-based, alternative assessment solutions to deliver a transformational learning and assessment experience. The fund is now open for applications.

## **26 Education for Sustainable Development<sup>59</sup>**

- 26.1 The Education and Training Foundation has reported that the current Post-16 education system does not adequately educate students on sustainability issues.

## **27 Appointments**

- 27.1 Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith CBE has been appointed as the new chair of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education<sup>60</sup>.

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<sup>57</sup> <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/15573>

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.ncfe.org.uk/help-shape-the-future-of-learning-and-assessment>

<sup>59</sup> [https://www.et-foundation.co.uk/supporting/research/experiences-of-education-for-sustainable-development-in-the-further-education-and-training-sector/?\\_gl=1\\*1sdclu8\\*\\_ga\\*MjEzNzcyMTIzLjE2Mjk5MTA3Mjc.\\*\\_ga\\_6F0PEMWK3W\\*MTYyOTkxMDcyNi4xLjEuMTYyOTkxMDc1Ni4w](https://www.et-foundation.co.uk/supporting/research/experiences-of-education-for-sustainable-development-in-the-further-education-and-training-sector/?_gl=1*1sdclu8*_ga*MjEzNzcyMTIzLjE2Mjk5MTA3Mjc.*_ga_6F0PEMWK3W*MTYyOTkxMDcyNi4xLjEuMTYyOTkxMDc1Ni4w)

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/department-for-education-non-executive-appointments/appointments-made-april-2021-to-march-2022--2>

- 27.2 Owen Jenkins has been appointed as ESFA's Interim Director of Funding.<sup>61</sup>
- 27.3 Angela Noon, Chief Finance Officer and Executive Director of Siemens UK, has taken over as Chair of the Skills and Productivity Board<sup>62</sup>. Ms Noon was appointed by the Secretary of State for Education following the resignation of Stephen van Rooyen.

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<sup>61</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/news/esfa-appoints-interim-funding-director?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm\\_source=1a2195ee-92c6-431d-844a-436cc7e2c565&utm\\_content=immediately](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/esfa-appoints-interim-funding-director?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=1a2195ee-92c6-431d-844a-436cc7e2c565&utm_content=immediately)

<sup>62</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/skills-and-productivity-board>

## Part Three: Performance Update

This part of the Briefing Note includes the latest data on performance. The DfE is trialling a new service to enable its statistical data to be viewed and used<sup>63</sup>.

### 28 Participation

#### *Attendance*

28.1 It has been decided that the system of reporting attendance daily, which was instituted during the first lockdown in March 2020, will continue in September 2021 and be replaced by weekly reporting from October.

#### *Young people not in education, employment or training*

28.2 On 26 August, the ONS published the latest quarterly figures on young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)<sup>64</sup>. These figures cover April to June 2021 and for the UK as a whole (no local or regional breakdowns of these figures have been provided). The main points are:

- there continues to be a strong fall in the number of people aged 16 to 24 years who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), driven largely by those aged 18 to 24 years; there is a rise in young people in full time education whilst the total number of young people is decreasing, these factors have contributed to the fall we observed in recent periods.
- There were an estimated 631,000 young people in the UK who were NEET in April to June 2021, which is a record low; the number had decreased by 104,000 compared with January to March 2021, a record fall, and was down 144,000 compared with April to June 2020, again a record fall.
- There were an estimated 290,000 women aged 16 to 24 years who were NEET in April to June 2021, a record low.

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<sup>63</sup> <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/neet-statistics-annual-brief>

<sup>64</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplenotinwork/unemployment/bulletins/youngpeoplenotineducationemploymentortrainingneet/august2021>



- The percentage of all young people who were NEET in April to June 2021 was estimated at 9.3 per cent, which is a record low; the proportion was down 1.5 percentage points compared with January to March 2021 and down 1.8 percentage points compared with before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in October to December 2019.
- Of all young people in the UK who were NEET in April to June 2021, an estimated 44.4 per cent were looking for, and available for work and therefore classified as unemployed; the remainder were either not looking for work and/or not available for work and were classified as economically inactive.
- The estimated number of people who were NEET and economically inactive April to June 2021 was 351,000, a record low.
- Unemployed young people who were not in education, employment or training: in April to June 2021, there were an estimated 280,000 unemployed young people who were NEET, (a record low), down 42,000 from January to March 2021 and down 25,000 compared with April to June 2020.
- Economically inactive young people who were not in education, employment or training: in April to June 2021, there were an estimated 351,000 economically inactive young people who were NEET, which was a record low. This was down 62,000 from January to March 2021 and down 119,000 compared with April to June 2020. There were 179,000 economically inactive women who were NEET (a record low), down 18,000 on the quarter.
- Young people have been affected the most during the pandemic though the latest NEET figures continue to show a fall. Some of this can be attributed to a decrease in the number of young people, an increase in the number of young people joining full time education, and to an increase in the number of people who said that they were employed but were away from work and had not been paid.

## 29 Achievement

### **2021 Results**

- 29.1 Ofqual's analysis<sup>65</sup> of the year's A level results shows that the gap between pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM), those living with very high levels of disadvantage and Black pupils achieving grade A or above and their peers has widened since 2019. According to the report: "The longstanding gaps indicating lower outcomes of black candidates, FSM candidates, and candidates with a very high level of deprivation relative to their respective reference group, have widened by 1.43, 1.42 and 1.39 percentage points respectively." It also shows an increase in the gap for students on free school meals achieving grade C and above at A-level this year, adding that this gap has increased by 1.14 percentage points between 2020 and 2021, and by 1.03 percentage points between 2019 and 2021.
- 29.2 MIME Consulting has created interactive tools to explore the published Joint Council for Qualifications data for GCSE<sup>66</sup> and A level results<sup>67</sup>. The tools allow you to compare grade breakdowns between subjects and split the data out by gender. Clicking 'Go to year-on-year analysis' lets you explore how a subject's results in 2021 compare to 2020 results.
- 29.3 FFT Education Datalab has also produced infographics and analysis of this year's results<sup>68</sup>.

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<sup>65</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/analysis-of-results-a-levels-and-gcses-summer-2021>

<sup>66</sup> [https://www.mimeconsulting.co.uk/uk-2021-gcse-results-analysis-tool/?utm\\_campaign=12628389\\_Intelligent%20London%20-%20Sept%202021&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=London%20Councils&dm\\_i=192K,71O4L,71JL3B,UKZS2,1](https://www.mimeconsulting.co.uk/uk-2021-gcse-results-analysis-tool/?utm_campaign=12628389_Intelligent%20London%20-%20Sept%202021&utm_medium=email&utm_source=London%20Councils&dm_i=192K,71O4L,71JL3B,UKZS2,1)

<sup>67</sup> [https://www.mimeconsulting.co.uk/a-level-results-2021/?utm\\_campaign=12628389\\_Intelligent%20London%20-%20Sept%202021&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=London%20Councils&dm\\_i=192K,71O4L,71JL3B,UKZS2,1](https://www.mimeconsulting.co.uk/a-level-results-2021/?utm_campaign=12628389_Intelligent%20London%20-%20Sept%202021&utm_medium=email&utm_source=London%20Councils&dm_i=192K,71O4L,71JL3B,UKZS2,1)

<sup>68</sup> <https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/category/assessment/>

## 30 Intelligent London<sup>69</sup>

30.1 Intelligent London makes the very best of data analysis and visualisation techniques so that those with an interest in supporting and promoting the interests of young people can easily access reliable and up-to-date data. The latest updates include:

- In the local overview section:
  - o borough local overview packs and the London Region overview pack have been updated
  - o the figures for qualified to Level 2 including English and maths have been restored.
- In LA Landscape:
  - o Absence and exclusions – Exclusions  
Note: Covid-19. The fall in exclusion rates across England in 2020 (and in every London local authority) was driven by the closure of schools for the vast majority of pupils in March 2020 in response to Covid-19 (though exclusions were still possible). It is therefore not directly comparable with other years.
  - o Schools and pupils – Ethnicity
  - o Schools and pupils - Free school meals
  - o Schools and pupils - Pupil referral units
  - o Schools and pupils - SEN pupils
  - o Schools and pupils – Secondary schools
  - o Participation Education and training - 16 year olds
  - o Education and training - 16-17 year olds
  - o Education and training - 17 year olds
  - o Education and training – NEET
- See also paragraph 29.2

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<sup>69</sup> <http://www.intelligentlondon.org.uk/>

## **31 Recommendation**

- 31.1 Recipients are asked to note the content of this report and submit any comments by email: [peter.obrien@londoncouncils.gov.uk](mailto:peter.obrien@londoncouncils.gov.uk).

## Annex: Sources of Official Guidance

The general guidance on Covid-19 and the government's response<sup>70</sup>

Specific guidance on education<sup>71</sup>

The Office for National Statistics (ONS), which supports government at all levels with relevant data and intelligence<sup>72</sup>

NHS information on coronavirus<sup>73</sup>

Q&A from Public Health England on coronavirus<sup>74</sup>. **Please note:** The National Institute for Health Protection (NIHP) has been set up to bring together Public Health England (PHE), NHS Test and Trace and the analytical capability of the Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) under a single leadership team. This is the first step towards becoming a single organisation focused on tackling COVID-19 and protecting the nation's health.

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<sup>70</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

<sup>71</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-Covid-19-guidance-for-schools-and-other-educational-settings>

<sup>72</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/search/research-and-statistics>

<sup>73</sup> <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

<sup>74</sup> <https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2020/01/23/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-what-you-need-to-know/>