

## Policy Update February 2022

### Introduction

At the time of writing, the eyes of the world are on Ukraine. We hope that peace and stability will be restored to the region.

In this update, we are covering the government's Levelling-Up agenda in some detail. We will be reporting on further developments as they become clearer over time.

There is some good news on improvements in the labour market in London, though there are some worrying signs that young people may be entering poor quality jobs, and there is also concern over the mental health of young people.

Our next Policy Update will be a combined April / May edition and will be issued after this year's local council elections in London. Best wishes to all candidates!

### Contents

<b>Overview</b> .....	2
<b>Deadlines</b> .....	2
<b>Levelling Up</b> .....	3
<b>Parliament</b> .....	7
<b>Recovery</b> .....	8
<b>Themes</b> .....	8
<i>Effective Participation</i> .....	8
<i>Achievement</i> .....	9
<i>Progression</i> .....	9
<i>Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance</i> .....	10
<i>Special Educational Needs and Disabilities</i> .....	10
<i>Mental Health</i> .....	11
<i>Funding</i> .....	12
<i>Inclusion</i> .....	12
<i>Youth Justice/YOTs</i> .....	13
<i>Youth Work/Looked After Children</i> .....	13
<b>Statistics</b> .....	14
<i>Attendance</i> .....	14
<i>Achievement</i> .....	14

## Overview

1. The government's White Paper on levelling-up was the main issue in February and its implications across government continue to be the subject of debate. In this paper, we have covered the key points as they affect young people's education and training in London. In parallel with the White Paper, the government also indicated how the UK Shared Prosperity Fund would be used to support the levelling-up agenda.
2. In terms of recovery from Covid-19, we are delighted to see the upturn in the youth labour market, but also note with caution the concerns of the quality and durability of some of the jobs young Londoners would have moved into. The mental health of young people remains a major issue and there is coverage of major research projects highlighting the problem and several initiatives that address it.
3. In early March, the government responded to the Augar Review into post-18 education and also announced the next steps in its programme of reform in post-16 qualifications. We'll cover these in the next Policy Update but links to the open consultations on the related topics are included in the 'deadlines' section below.

## Deadlines

4. Ofqual is consulting on a [proposed regulatory approach for alternative academic and alternative technical qualifications at level 3 in England](#). The consultation closes on 20 April 2022.
5. The government is consulting on [changes to the system of student loans](#). The consultation ends on 6 May 2022.

## Levelling Up

6. On 2 February 2022 the government published the White Paper, [Levelling Up the United Kingdom](#). The White Paper provides substance to the government's 2019 manifesto pledge to share opportunity more equally across the country and includes details of its intention to introduce a new devolution framework, the establishment of a new independent data body and a new Levelling Up Advisory Council. The White Paper is framed around 12 missions and the government intends to consult further on some detailed aspects of the policies outlined in the White Paper.
7. The main points relating to young people's education and skills are:
  - the government will set out a plan for streamlining the local growth funding landscape to reduce the number of individual funding pots and introduce better coordinated bidding processes. However, the White Paper does not offer any new spending and investment and it implies that London and the south-east will receive only highly targeted additional funding in the future. It is unclear whether the full range of services that supported young Londoners through the former European Structural Investment Funds will continue under the proposed funding regime. In particular, the programmes that encouraged young people at risk of early-leaving to continue in learning and the rapid re-engagement of young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) and provided valuable support each year to thousands of young Londoners may not continue in the shape and volume to which we have become accustomed.

- The government is encouraging the integration of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and their business boards into Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs), the Greater London Authority (GLA) and County Deals, where these exist. It is unclear whether these arrangements will provide the basis of employer-led approval of the Local Skills Improvement Plans envisaged by the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill.
8. The headline 'missions' of greatest relevance to young people's education and skills are:
- By 2030, the number of primary school children achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths will have significantly increased. In England, this will mean 90 per cent of children will achieve the expected standard, and the percentage of children meeting the expected standard in the worst performing areas will have increased by over a third (one of the education metrics is the percentage of young people achieving GCSEs (and equivalent qualifications) in English and maths by age 19).
  - By 2030, the number of people successfully completing high-quality skills training will have significantly increased in every area of the UK. In England, this will lead to 200,000 more people successfully completing high-quality skills training annually, driven by 80,000 more people completing courses in the lowest skilled areas (one of the metrics is the proportion of the population aged 16 – 64 with level 3+ qualifications).
9. Beneath these missions are a depth of detail that relate to the entire education and skills systems and the continuum of learning across age groups and stages of learning. Their success depends on the

emergence of a well-connected education, skills and employment system that equips young people with the resilience they need to make transitions at each key stage and into employment.

10. **Education mission:** The White Paper proposes further school improvement through new Education Investment Areas (EIAs), covering the third of council areas where educational attainment is weakest, plus any additional local authorities that contain either an existing Opportunity Area or were previously identified as having the highest potential for rapid improvement. The DfE will also consult on moving schools in these areas with successive 'requires improvement' Ofsted judgements into strong multi-academy trusts, "so that they can better access the support they need to improve". The government "will ensure that talented children from disadvantaged backgrounds have access to a post-16 provider with a track record of progress on to leading universities by opening new 16-19 free schools targeted in areas where they are most needed, such as high priority EIAs." In addition, the White Paper promises to create a new digital education service, the UK National Academy, which will support pupils from all backgrounds and areas of the UK to succeed at the very highest levels.
11. **Skills mission:** The White Paper sets out five elements to support this mission: putting local employers at the heart of provision; strengthening locally accessible institutions; ensuring all individuals have lifetime access to training; offering new opportunities to access high quality work and progress in the workplace; and providing employment support for disabled people and people with health conditions.

12. **DfE Announcement:** The [DfE announced](#) the education elements of the White Paper a day ahead of its official release. This included:
- confirmation of the education mission and the location of the EIAs (none of which are in London)
  - a National Youth Guarantee so that every young person in England will have access to regular clubs and activities, adventures away from home and volunteering opportunities by 2025 (this is also supported by the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport – see also paragraph 53)
  - additional investment in the Supporting Families Programme
  - establishing a new Future Skills Unit which will look at the data and evidence of where skills gaps exist and in what industries
  - making Institutes of Technology (IoTs) the pre-eminent organisation for Science, Technology Engineering and Maths education in England, through which successful IoTs may apply for a Royal Charter, as this is seen as helping them “secure their long-term position as anchor institutions in their regions, placing them on a par with the UK’s world-leading historic universities”
  - doubling the capacity of the Supported Internship programme to provide thousands more young people who have additional needs with the skills to secure and sustain paid employment and drive up the standards and quality of internship delivery across the country for students who have an education, health and care plan.
13. **UK Shared Prosperity Fund:** The government published the pre-launch [guidance](#) for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) in conjunction with the Levelling Up White Paper. It confirmed that the UKSPF will be £2.6 billion allocated up to March 2025 and will be

allocated to places rather than through a competitive bidding process. In London, the allocation will be made to the GLA. The fund will support programmes under the priorities of communities and place; local businesses; and people and skills. Lead bodies will commence the development of Local Investment Plans with local partners from March 2022 to determine the priorities and outcomes for their local area. Details of allocations, the Multiply Programme and guidance for investment plans are expected soon. The government is encouraging lead authorities to start collaborating with local partners ahead of the publication of the guidance.

## Parliament

14. The [Skills and Post-16 Education Bill](#) completed its legislative stages in the House of Commons. The Commons agreed changes to measures supporting careers information in schools and other amendments proposed by the government. The Bill now passes back to the Lords for consideration of the changes the Commons made to the Bill.
15. There was a [debate](#) on the effectiveness of the government's education catch-up and mental health recovery programmes in the House of Commons on 3 February.
16. The Commons Education Committee was told that secondary schools are “missing an opportunity” to link with local youth services to deliver extra-curricular activities and improve pupil wellbeing during a formal hearing on [8 February](#) as part of its inquiry into children's mental health and well-being.

17. The House of Commons Library Service provided a [briefing](#) about policies and services for people with autism spectrum disorder in England.

## Recovery

18. A [Mentoring Programme](#) for young people in need of support has been launched as part of the London Recovery Plan.

## Themes

### *Effective Participation*

#### Positive participation

19. The European Commission's [Building a better understanding of the impact of Early Childhood Education and Care\(ECEC\) on medium- and long-term educational and labour market outcomes in Europe](#) shows the positive long-term benefits of participation in ECEC.

#### NEET and Risk of NEET

20. The [Centre for Social Justice](#) has drawn attention to the practical difficulties of re-engaging 'severely absent' children into education.

#### Learning Landscape

21. The government has [confirmed](#) its intention to introduce a register of children in elective home education (EHE).
22. The [Independent Commission on the College of the Future](#) has called for greater collaboration between colleges and universities to support regional priorities and deliver UK-wide economic recovery.
23. The Association of Employment and Learning Providers has launched a [report](#) that emphasises the importance of independent training providers.



24. The [Independent Assessment Commission](#) (IAC) has called for the GCSE system to be overhauled by giving pupils the opportunity to demonstrate their ability up to the age of 19 rather than at a fixed point in time at the age of 16.
25. Research from the [FFT Education Datalab](#) shows that “elite” sixth forms teach few poorer students and recruit heavily from neighbouring areas.
26. The Work Foundation [reported](#) on engaging employers in the skills system to achieve better outcomes for learners.

### **Apprenticeships**

27. [Prisoners are to be offered apprenticeships](#) for the first time in an unprecedented move to cut crime and address local labour shortages.

### **Quality Improvement**

28. [Ofsted](#) has said that providing individual support for disadvantaged children, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), is key to increasing school attendance.

### **Achievement**

29. [Ofqual](#) has published an overview of the support being provided for each qualification for students taking GCSEs, AS and A levels in 2022.

### **Progression**

#### **Progression to the Labour Market**

30. A Public Accounts Committee [report](#) has been critical of the monitoring of the Kickstart Programme.

31. The [Resolution Foundation](#) reported that although youth employment has improved, many have returned to insecure work.

### **Progression to Further and Higher Education**

32. The government has [confirmed](#) that it will not be pursuing a policy of post-qualification admissions to HE but will focus on working with sector bodies to address identified problems within the current arrangements in a way which is supportive of all students.
33. The [Universities and Colleges Admissions Service](#) (UCAS) has said that more than a quarter of young people from the most disadvantaged areas have applied to start university or college this autumn.

### **Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance**

34. Research by [Association of Accounting Technicians](#) (AAT) has revealed that not enough is being done to educate young people about alternatives to university, with only 29 per cent of 18 to 24 year-olds saying that they heard about alternatives to degrees, such as apprenticeships, while at school.
35. The [London Power Tunnel project](#) is offering schools in south-east London activities, resources or career workshops to inspire young people who may be considering a career in science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM), especially those who want to work for the National Grid.

### **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities**

36. Councillor Damian White, London Councils Executive Member for Schools and Children's Services wrote in [The Municipal Journal](#) to highlight the pressures on services for children with SEND,

particularly free transport for those who need assistance to attend educational settings.

### ***Mental Health***

37. The Department for Education (DfE) has published [State of the nation 2021: children and young people's wellbeing](#), a report on the wellbeing of children and young people over the academic year 2020 to 2021.
38. The Children's Commissioner for England's briefing [Children's mental health services 2020/21](#) rates Clinical Commissioning Groups based on indicators of Children and Young People's Mental Health Services (CYPMHS) performance.
39. UK Youth has [launched](#) a £10m fund to support young people struggling with their mental health.
40. The [Prince's Trust NatWest Youth Index](#) reveals that young people's overall happiness and confidence has hit lowest point in the thirteen year history of survey.
41. A [study](#) from children's charity Coram's Voice suggested that additional support offered to care leavers during the Covid-19 pandemic has helped improve their emotional wellbeing and helped tackle stress, loneliness and anxiety.
42. The BBC [reported](#) that more under-18s than ever have been referred to the NHS for the most serious mental health problems.
43. The latest [QualityWatch](#) report, compiled by The Health Foundation and the Nuffield Trust, raises concern over an overall deterioration in the health and of children and young people during the pandemic.

## ***Funding***

44. Upon completion of the review into the Education and Skills Funding Agency, the government [published](#) both the report and its response. The main changes are that a new strategic centre within the DfE will focus on policy, a regions group (covering families, schools and skills) will be aligned to nine common government regions and a reformed ESFA will concentrate on funding.
45. The [guidance](#) for additional spending on study programmes for 16 to 19 year-olds announced in the Annual Budget and Spending Review (November 2021) shows that educational settings will have some flexibility in its use.
46. Up to £23 million in [government funding](#) (through the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)) will create more Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data conversion courses, helping young people from underrepresented groups including women, black people and people with disabilities join the UK's AI industry.
47. A [report](#) from the National Audit Office has criticized the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) approach to funding local economic growth.

## ***Inclusion***

48. The Education Policy Institute's [COVID-19 and Disadvantage Gaps in Education](#) points to persistent gaps in GCSE attainment based on levels of deprivation in different parts of the country.
49. [Partnership for Young London](#) announced their involvement in a new five year national project to explore young people's regional identities.

50. Partnership for Young London has also launched a peer research [report](#) exploring how young people from minoritized communities with racial identities respond to adversity in their lives.
51. Office for Health Improvement and Disparities' [Wider Determinants of Health: February 2022](#) provides data on the individual, social and environmental factors (identified as: built and natural environment, work and the labour market, vulnerability, income, crime and education) that influence the health of the population and impact on inequalities in health.

### ***Youth Justice/YOTs***

52. The [Youth Custody Data Report](#) for December 2021 shows that there were 142 under-18s in custody whose home Youth Offending Team is based in London.

### ***Youth Work/Looked After Children***

53. DCMS published a [report](#) that provides a summary of findings of the Youth Review, including the announcement of the National Youth Guarantee.
54. Partnership for Young London has launched the second phase of the [Young Londoners Research Programme](#), funded through the London Recovery Programme.
55. The British and Foreign Schools Society is inviting proposals to its [grant programme](#) to improve the educational outcomes and life chances of Young Carers or Care Experienced Young People under the age of 25 in the UK.
56. The [YMCA](#) has drawn attention to the scale of cutbacks in funding for youth services in the last decade.

## Statistics

### Attendance

- 57. The proportion of educational settings open on 20 January was 99.9 per cent and 89.1 per cent of students were in attendance.
- 58. The proportion of educational settings open on 3 February was 100.0 per cent and 90.3 per cent of students were in attendance.

### ***Achievement***

- 59. The DfE [published data](#) showing the proportion of 16 to 64 year olds with a level 3 qualification in local authorities in England.