

# The Impact of Covid-19 on Education

A summary of evidence on the early impacts of lockdown

June 2020

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# Introduction



The impact of the coronavirus will be one of the defining features of a whole generation of British children. The lockdown has had a severe impact on every family and on every aspect of education in this country.

From my own personal experience, my sister, while a teacher by training, has been tackling some very different education challenges as she home schools my niece. Meanwhile, my daughter, a second year apprentice, has been living with the reality of being furloughed and trying to learn technical skills virtually so early in her career.

Everyone will have similar stories to share and, alongside health, education has been one of the key areas in the headlines from the very start of the crisis – from school and college closures to online learning to training provider finances and when or if universities may be able to restart face-to-face courses.

There has been a huge amount written about the impact of Covid-19 on education already. This report digests some of the research and perspectives so far, bringing this together in one place to consider in the round the impact of the coronavirus on education and the youth labour market.

More in depth research will emerge over time and we will publish follow up bulletins continuing to gather and summarise those perspectives. This is important not only to understand and digest what has happened in a very short space of time, but to look to the future, preserve the best of the changes that have happened out of adversity and rebuild a 'new normal' in the education system that much better prepares young people and adults for the future.

## **Alice Barnard**

Chief Executive, Edge Foundation

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Take education. This has traditionally been conceived as a place where children absorb knowledge...so how about this for a reversal: "Education is not about imparting knowledge".

This provokes the idea of helping children develop skills that are not drawn from traditional disciplines. Softer skills. Skills that are important in the real world but which teachers struggle to find time to teach because of the demands of the curriculum. Improvising, for example. Debating. Thinking on one's feet. Working in teams.

## **Matthew Syed**

journalist, broadcaster, author of *Rebel Ideas: The Power of Diverse Thinking*

# A. Covid-19 and the Youth Labour Market

## Overview

It is increasingly clear that, aside from the medical and social impact of the coronavirus, the economic impact will be very deep and long-lasting. The Bank of England\* has warned that the pandemic will push the UK economy towards the deepest recession on record, shrinking by 14% this year. As the Learning and Work Institute identify, Universal Credit claims were already being made at the rate of 100 per minute at the end of March.



It is also clear that these impacts are not being felt evenly across the economy. There is significant regional disparity, with the North East and North West particularly badly hit. There is variation by sector, as the Office for Budget Responsibility's research shows, with education, hospitality and construction highly affected.

This leads to significant disparity by demographics, with women, those on lower pay and in particular young people being the worst affected. Research by the Institute for Fiscal Studies shows that younger workers are nearly two-and-a-half times more likely to work in a sector that is shut down as a result of the pandemic. This is reinforced by the Resolution Foundation, whose work shows that more than a third of 18-24 year olds have been furloughed or lost their main job since the start of the coronavirus pandemic.

The impact is likely to be long-lasting, with the Resolution Foundation also cautioning that youth unemployment could rise by 600,000 to over a million and organisations such as Youth Employment UK fighting to address this because of the long-lasting impact this will have on the wages and job prospects of 'corona class 2020'.

Younger workers are nearly two-and-a-half times more likely to work in a sector that is shut down as a result of the pandemic.

**Institute for Fiscal Studies**

\*Bank of England (May 2020) as reported in BBC News – <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-52566030>

# Coronavirus and the labour market

## Impacts and challenges

Learning and Work Institute (April 2020)

*The report warns that despite the measures put in place by government to protect jobs, unemployment is **set to rise further and faster than during any recession on record**. There were over 400,000 Universal Credit claims in a week at the end of March, a figure over seven times higher than the year before. The number of claims is nearly five times higher than the peak in claims for Jobseekers Allowance – the main unemployment benefit at the time – during the height of the great recession in 2009.*

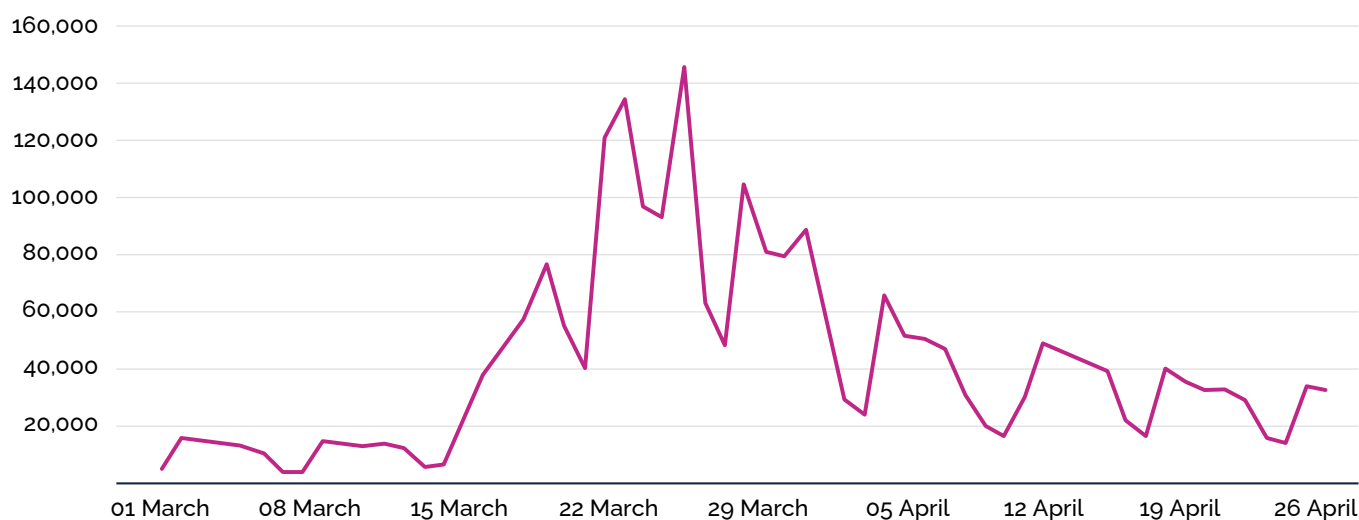
Learning and Work Institute's analysis suggests that the gains of five years of jobs growth – during which employment increased to a record high – **have been reversed in just one month**. The analysis found that unemployment had already increased by half – from 3.9% to 6%, and that is likely to go higher still. Beyond that, the rise in Universal Credit claims has been remarkable – 2.5 million claims during March and April, seven times normal levels. At the peak there were 146,000 claims on 26 March – 100 per minute.

The economic pain inflicted by coronavirus will be felt unequally across the UK. Compared to the UK as a whole, the **North East and the North West of England**

**both have a higher proportion of employment in 'shutdown sectors'** – which have had to significantly reduce operating in recent weeks to slow the spread of the virus, such as retail and manufacturing.

These regions also have the **highest proportion of employment in the occupations most impacted by coronavirus** – 36% of people in the North East and North West work in the occupations most impacted by the lockdown, compared to 32% in London. London is split, with a higher proportion of people in 'shutdown sectors' but also a higher proportion of people in higher socio-economic groups and able to work from home.

**Graph:** New benefit claims made



Source: DWP, L&W analysis

The regions which face the highest risk of job losses as a result of coronavirus had lower levels of employment before the crisis. This suggests that **the impact of the crisis risks widening regional inequalities**, and frustrating the government's efforts to 'level up' prosperity across the UK.

In addition to the uneven regional impact, the coronavirus crisis risks widening social inequalities. Learning and Work Institute analysis shows that **young people, women, and those with lower levels of qualifications are all at greater risk**:

- Workers aged under 30 are over twice as likely to work in a 'shutdown sector' than those aged 30 or over.
- 20.3% of women work in a shutdown sector, compared to 14.7% of men.
- Workers with no qualifications are over twice as likely to work in a shutdown sector than those with a degree level qualification.

Research by the **Institute for Student Employers (ISE)** suggested that all types of entry-level roles have been reduced by 23% this year, with the volatile jobs market forecast to shrink further as 15% of employers expect to scale back recruitment further in 2021.

Employers are seeking 32% fewer entrants on apprentice or school leaver programmes than originally planned for this year, according to the report, while graduate jobs have been cut by 12%. Internships and placements will also slump by 40%.

The report finds that the increase in unemployment **could have been even larger without the government's unprecedented emergency measures** to support businesses and protect jobs. It calls on government to set out an ambitious strategy to get Britain back to work once the worst of the pandemic is over and when it is safe to further ease the lockdown – backed by a significant additional investment in employment support – in order to prevent a rise in long-term unemployment.



We need to act now to avoid a 'pandemic generation' of young people with poorer education and employment prospects, utilise people's skills for a volunteer army, and help everyone who loses their job get back to work as quickly as possible. Following swift action to support people and businesses at the start of the crisis, it's time to start planning now for how to return to work and invest in people's futures.

**Stephen Evans**

Chief Executive of the Learning and Work Institute

## Sector shutdowns during the coronavirus crisis: which workers are most exposed?

Institute for Fiscal Studies (April 2020)

*Analysis by the Institute for Fiscal Studies builds further on the findings of the Learning and Work Institute, warning that younger workers will be hit hardest, as they are nearly **two-and-a-half times more likely to work in a sector that is shut down** as a result of the pandemic.*

The research shows that sectors that shut down as a result of social distancing measures **employed nearly a third (30%) of all employees under 25**, compared with just one in eight (13%) of workers over 25.

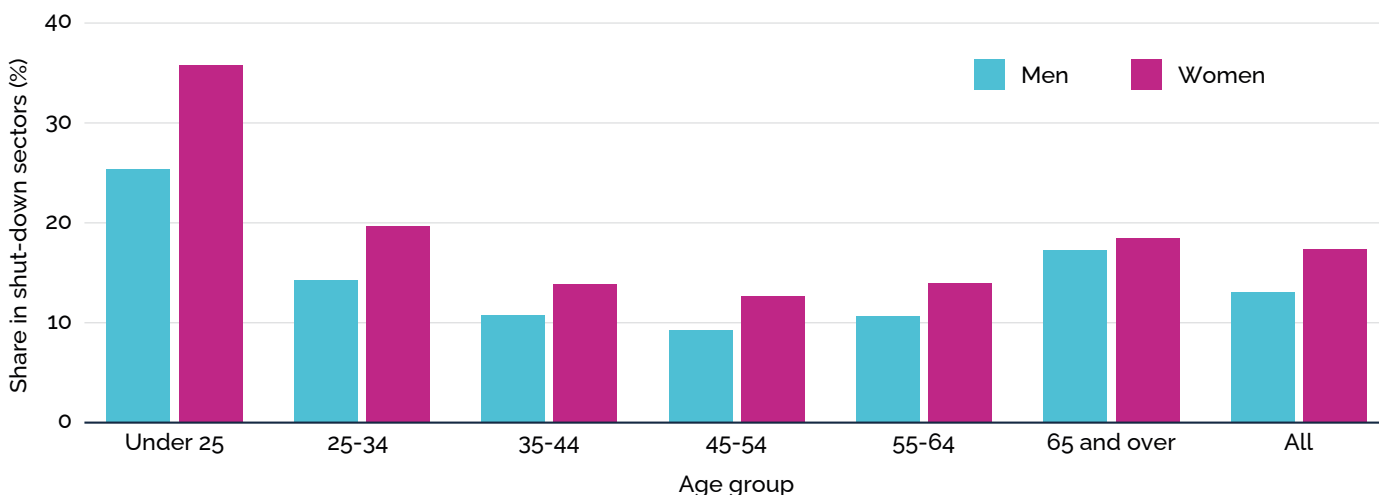
The largest disparity of all is by earnings level. Those with the lowest earnings are about seven times as likely to work in shut-down sectors as those with the highest earnings. **A third (34%) of employees in the bottom tenth of the earnings distribution work in sectors directly affected by the lockdown**, compared to just 5% of those in the top tenth.

Some workers in shut-down sectors will live with partners or other household members who are not directly affected by the lockdown, which may partially cushion them from falls in their own earnings. This is particularly the case for young people whose jobs are most at risk, since **over half (61%) of under-25s who work in shut-down sectors live with their parents**.

Turning to graduates, given the likely scale of the current downturn, **those entering the labour market this year are likely to take at least five, and perhaps ten, years for the effects of poorer earning prospects to wear off.**

Looking at data from past recessions, on average **unemployment rates rose by four percentage points**. That led to a **probability of being in paid work that was seven percentage points lower for young people a year after they entered the labour market**. Even five years on, they were still slightly less likely to be in work at all than were young people who graduated or left school in happier times. Earnings were also affected. For those who did find a job **earnings were 6% lower after one year than they were for 'normal' cohorts and still 2% lower after five years**.

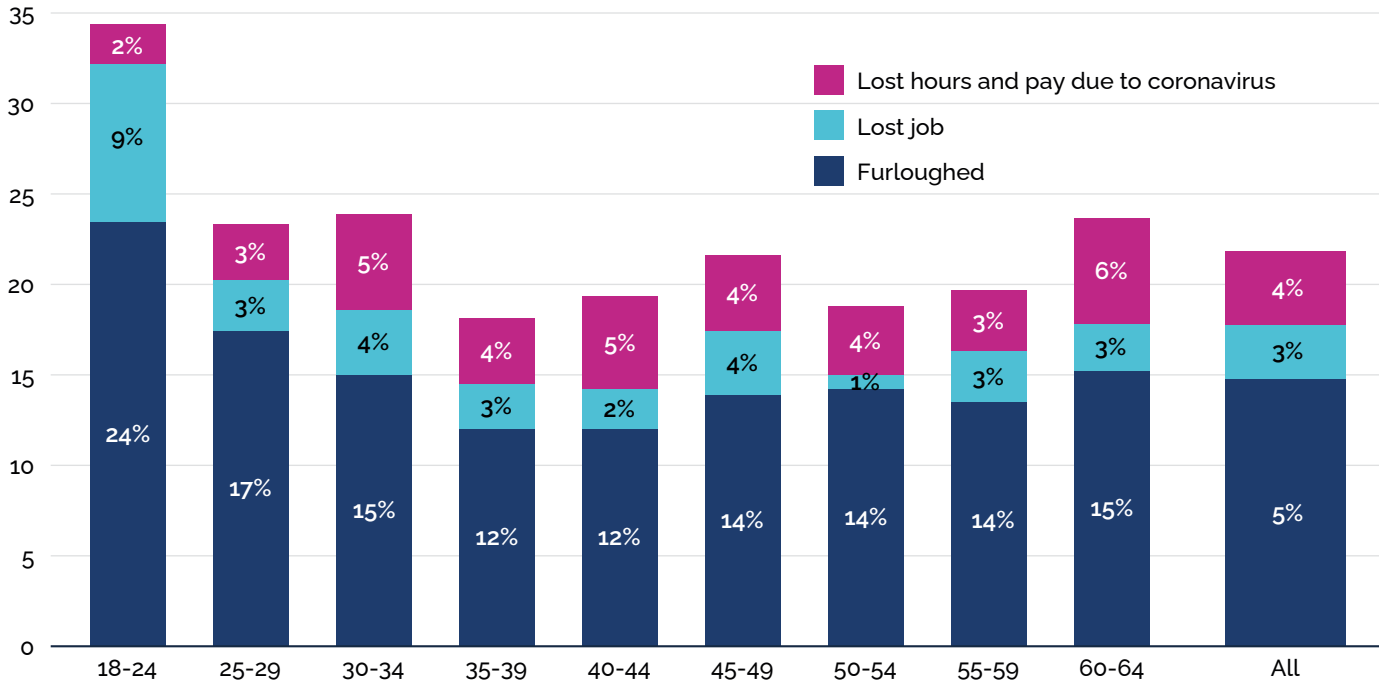
**Graph:** Share of employees in shut-down sectors, by gender and age



Source: ONS (Analysis by IFS)

The key messages from this research are reinforced by work by the Resolution Foundation, which shows that a third of 18-24 year olds have been furloughed or lost their main job since the coronavirus outbreak.

**Graph:** Proportion of employees (excluding full-time students) who have experienced job changes since the coronavirus outbreak – by age group: UK, 6-11 May 2020



Note: Base = all UK adults aged 18-65 who had an employee job prior to the coronavirus outbreak, excluding full-time students  
Source: RF analysis of YouGov, Adults aged 18 to 65 and the coronavirus (Covid-19) © Resolution Foundation 2020 – resolutionfoundation.org



## Coronavirus analysis by sector

Office for Budget Responsibility (April 2020)

*The Office for Budget Responsibility warned that the UK gross domestic product (GDP) could reduce by 35% between April and June, while **unemployment levels could soar by more than 2 million people.***

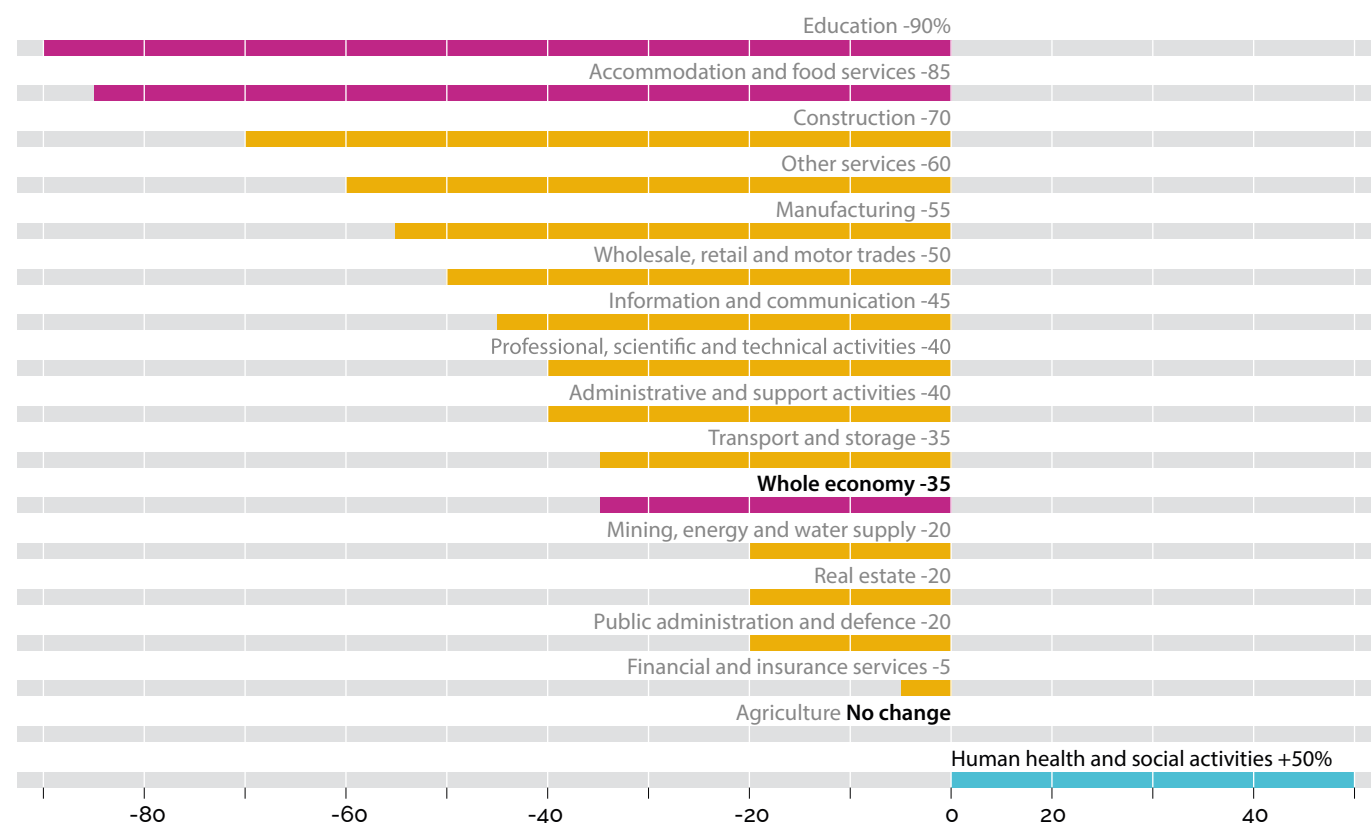
**Education will be the sector hardest hit by the coronavirus crisis**, according to the analysis, with the impact likely to be felt most by universities (see the section on Higher Education – [page 45](#)).

**Accommodation and food services** is another sector under severe strain, with restaurant and hotel bookings dropping to zero and warnings that it will be harder for this sector to bounce back with travel plans cancelled for some time to come.

**The Construction Purchasing Managers Index (PMI)**, a popular gauge of activity in that sector, showed the steepest decline in activity in March since 2008.

With both of these sectors employing large numbers of young people starting their careers, this feeds into the challenges for this generation identified by the Learning and Work Institute and Institute for Fiscal Studies above.

**Graph:** Effect on output relative to baseline



Graphic © The Guardian

Source: OBR

## Coronavirus and youth employment

### Youth Employment UK (April 2020)

*Youth Employment UK is a leading independent social enterprise founded in 2012 to tackle youth unemployment. Chief Executive **Laura-Jane Rawlings** has been leading regular briefings for stakeholders during the pandemic.*

Looking back at the impact of the last major recession following the financial crash in 2008, the country saw more than 1 million young people not in education, employment or training. It **took over seven years to recover to pre-recession levels** of employment for young people and this period left **significant scarring** on those young people affected. Not only were their earnings potential and career prospects reduced, but there were also long-term impacts on their physical and mental health.

Youth Employment UK are concerned that, given the warnings from the Bank of England about the depth of the coming recession, the impact could be even greater. There are already half a million young people unemployed, more than a million displaced from sectors most affected by Covid-19 and a further 400,000 leaving full time education this summer. Working with the Institute for Employment Studies, they think that that in the medium term **youth unemployment could exceed 2 million**.

Based on modelling from the last recession, **young people are likely to be at significantly risk in the recession** – in 2008 they were three times more likely to be unemployed than any other age group. A wide range of research suggests that spending more than six months unemployed at this age can have a significant long-term impact on their careers.



We need coordinated action now to try to reduce the huge impact of the recession on young people's employment and life chances. Along with partners like Impetus and the Youth Futures Foundation, we have founded a Covid-19 Youth Employment Group to try to bring together as many organisations as possible to share intelligence and coordinate our support and resources to address the issues and soften the impact wherever we can.

**Laura-Jane Rawlings**  
CEO of Youth Employment UK

## B. Covid-19 and Disadvantage

### Overview

The effects of school closures and the lockdown in response to the Covid-19 pandemic has been particularly detrimental for the most disadvantaged groups in society, including vulnerable children and young people.



Recent figures from an online survey of 4,000 parents in England by the Institute of Fiscal Studies carried out between April and May shows that children from better-off households are spending 30% more time each day on educational activities than are children from the poorest fifth of households.

This will likely increase educational inequalities between children from better-off and the poorest households. The results of the survey illustrate that a majority of parents of primary and secondary school students are struggling with providing home learning but still have the means to provide some form of support through access to technology, online resources or private tutoring.

For more disadvantaged households these issues are being exacerbated further by challenges with access to technology and connectivity.

For those young people who are particularly at risk - those living in abusive households, temporary

accommodation or who have serious mental health issues – the lockdown has not only paused their learning but in many cases broken their routine and removed their regular safe space, potentially leaving them at greater risk of harm.

Taken together, these effects suggest that the impact of the coronavirus is likely to contribute to further widening the existing achievement gaps for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and vulnerable young people.

Children from better-off households are spending 30% more time each day on educational activities than are children from the poorest fifth of households.

## Covid-19 and social mobility

**Sutton Trust** (April 2020)

*The Sutton Trust's report on the implications of Covid-19 for educational inequality outlines the trust's immediate concerns, looking at how the ongoing crisis is likely to impact the most disadvantaged young people through their time in education and into the workplace. The report highlights how and where disadvantaged young people will be affected the most with the current structures in place during the lockdown.*

The first of the immediate concerns the report raises is **widening access to private and online tuition** during and after school closure to reduce the impact on the attainment gap. For example, in Early Years education, even in normal circumstances, the poorest children are already 11 months behind their better-off peers before they even start at school. There are significant risks of both the short term and long term effects on the most disadvantaged children who may not currently have a suitable home learning environment.

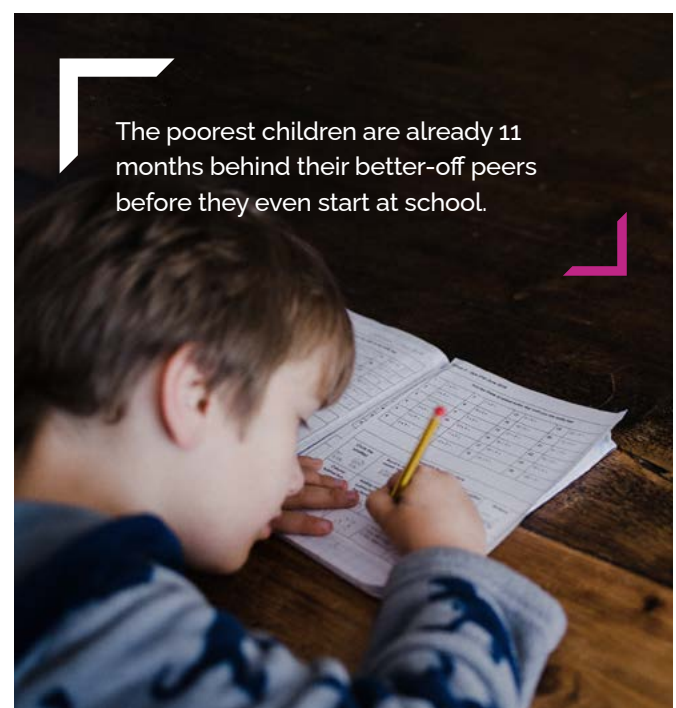
Parents from all backgrounds need to have the right support to help minimise the difference in home learning environments from students of different socio-economic backgrounds. The Sutton Trust has developed guidance for parents to support them during this time.

The suitability of home learning is the second concern raised, in particular **ensuring access to technology and online resources**. Previous research from the Sutton Trust\* found that 34% of parents with children aged 5-16 reported their child does not have access to their own computer, laptop or tablet that they can use to access the internet on at home.

Similarly, there are concerns regarding online learning in higher education, where exams and courses have largely been replaced with online lectures and tuition. This mode of learning may put **students who do not have access to technology or a suitable workspace at a disadvantage**. The report also calls for fair access to higher education and making sure this year's changes

to A level grading and the admissions process do not impact negatively on disadvantaged young people.

The final concern outlined in the report is **protecting apprenticeships** with the immediate concern of the financial impact the crisis will have on these entry-level roles. Even with the government's furlough scheme, apprentices on lower wages will be impacted by lower levels of pay. Additionally, there may be even greater impacts where businesses find themselves struggling more and apprentices are not prioritised.



\*C. Cullinane & R. Montacute (2018) Pay as you go? Sutton Trust. Available at: <https://www.suttontrust.com/ourresearch/internships-pay-as-you-go/>

## The challenge of the 'digital divide'



The Learning Foundation has long understood the value of technology and the impact on learning that can come from putting this into teachers' hands and the hands of each student equally. We have worked and campaigned through 'Digital Access for All' for every child to have access to the internet at home and we know that more than 1 million school-aged children do not have the access they need. The enforced school closures bring this disparity and digital divide starkly and brutally into focus. This is urgent but there is also no quick fix – devices and access to the internet are critical but the use to which they are put is where the real learning dividend is to be found."

**Paul Finnis**

Chief Executive, Learning Foundation

## Covid-19 and social mobility

**LSE (Centre for Economic Performance)** (May 2020)

*The Centre for Economic Performance at LSE published a report on 28 May outlining the impact of Covid-19 on those young people who form part of the “COVID-Generation”. Specifically, how young Britons currently under the age of 25 face declining social mobility unless bold moves are made to create a fairer society.*

The report discusses how the crisis has dramatically affected social inequality. The economic and educational inequality for young people will be wider than ever. Many will struggle to find work, those in work will struggle to climb the income ladder and it will be even more difficult for young people to fulfil their aspirations regardless of their background.



However, for these inequalities not to taint society for years to come the report calls for the pandemic to be a time to develop and implement radical policies that will create a more socially mobile society and a better functioning economy:

- The introduction of job guarantees for people who are unemployed for more than 6 or 12 months.
- A one-off progressive wealth tax on the net worth of the top 1% of richest individuals.
- Living wages for key workers.
- A national tutoring service, with undergraduates and graduates helping children to catch up during the next school year.
- A dual approach to upper secondary schools, with a credible vocational stream alongside current academic routes.
- Random allocation for school and university admissions, where candidates have met a threshold of selection criteria.



We owe it to our young people to ensure that our post-Covid-19 economy is more local, sustainable, inclusive and productive. There is scope and, we believe, demand and appetite to do it.

**Professor Stephen Machin**

Director of The Centre for Economic Performance and co-author of the report

## Assessing the early impact of school and college closures on students in England

**Phil Yeeles, Sam Baars, Ellie Mulcahy** (The Centre for Education and Youth),  
**Will Shield** and **Anna Mountford-Zimdars** (University of Exeter) – June 2020

*As schools prepared to reopen in England, research from the Centre for Education and Youth and the Centre for Social Mobility at the University of Exeter explored how students are feeling about their transitions to higher education, training and employment at a time of extreme uncertainty.*

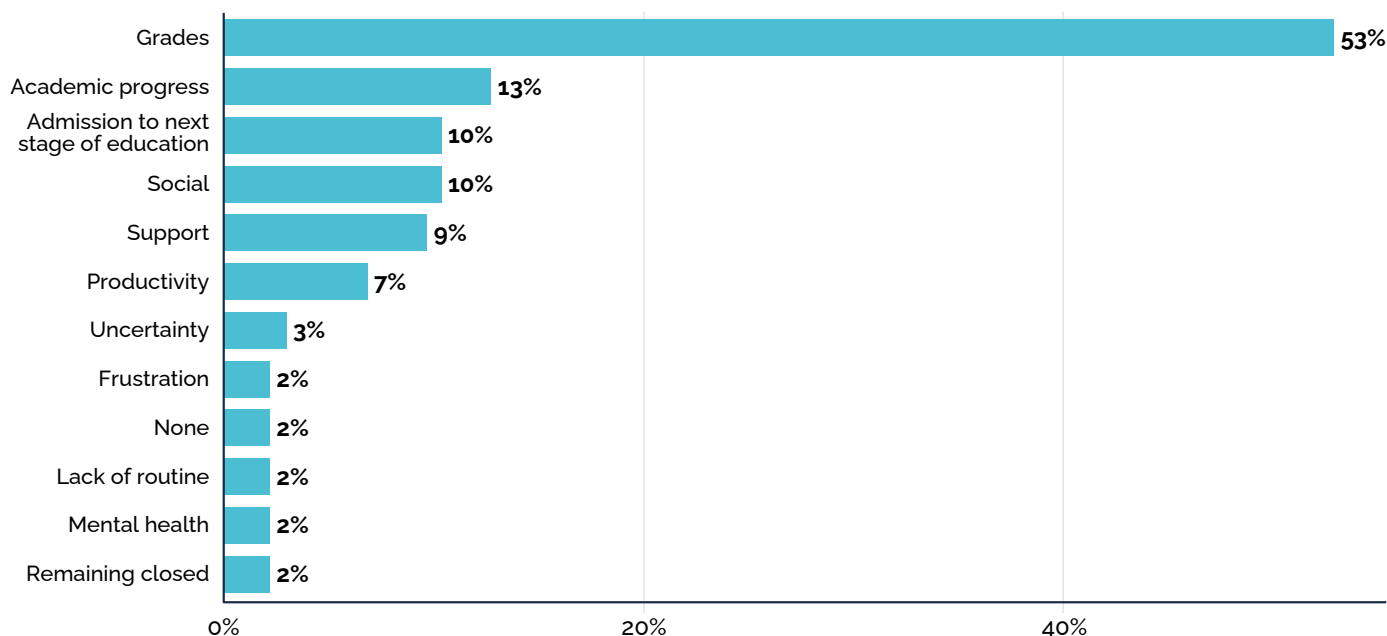
Researchers surveyed 230 students aged 16+ in England between 28 March and 20 April 2020, and found they were **far more likely to be concerned about grades and transitions than not seeing their friends** while their school or college is closed due to Covid-19. When asked what their biggest concern is about their school or college being closed during lockdown, students were **five times as likely to mention worries about grades** with respondents voicing widespread confusion and stress about cancelled exams, predicted grades and university admissions.

Closer analysis of students' open responses revealed students were worried about **predicted grades being**

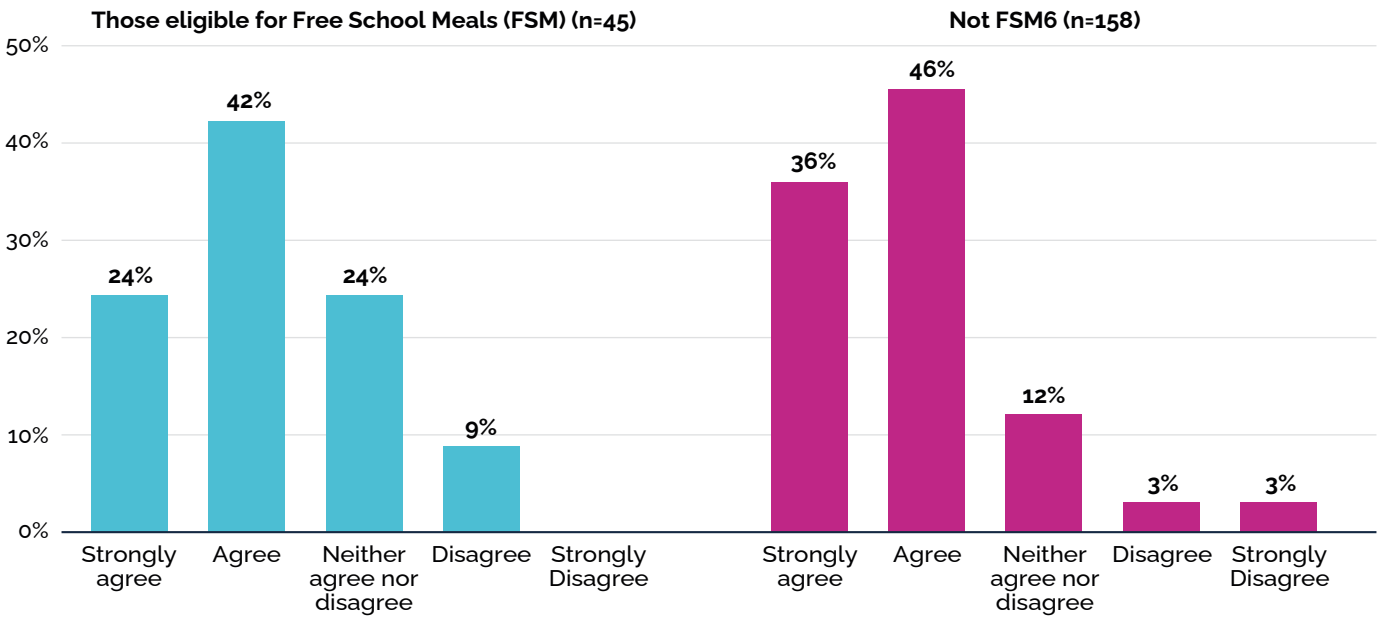
**lower than those they would have achieved in an exam**, and felt confused about how their grades would be calculated. A third of all students surveyed felt more concerned about grades than before schools closed, while a fifth felt more concerned about university admissions.

The disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic this year is likely to have an impact on students' decisions relating to employment and higher education and **has the potential to widen the inequalities that exist when young people leave compulsory education**. The study found that disadvantaged students were less likely to feel they had a plan in place for their future.

**Graph:** Top responses: "What is your biggest concern about your school / college being closed?" (n=202)



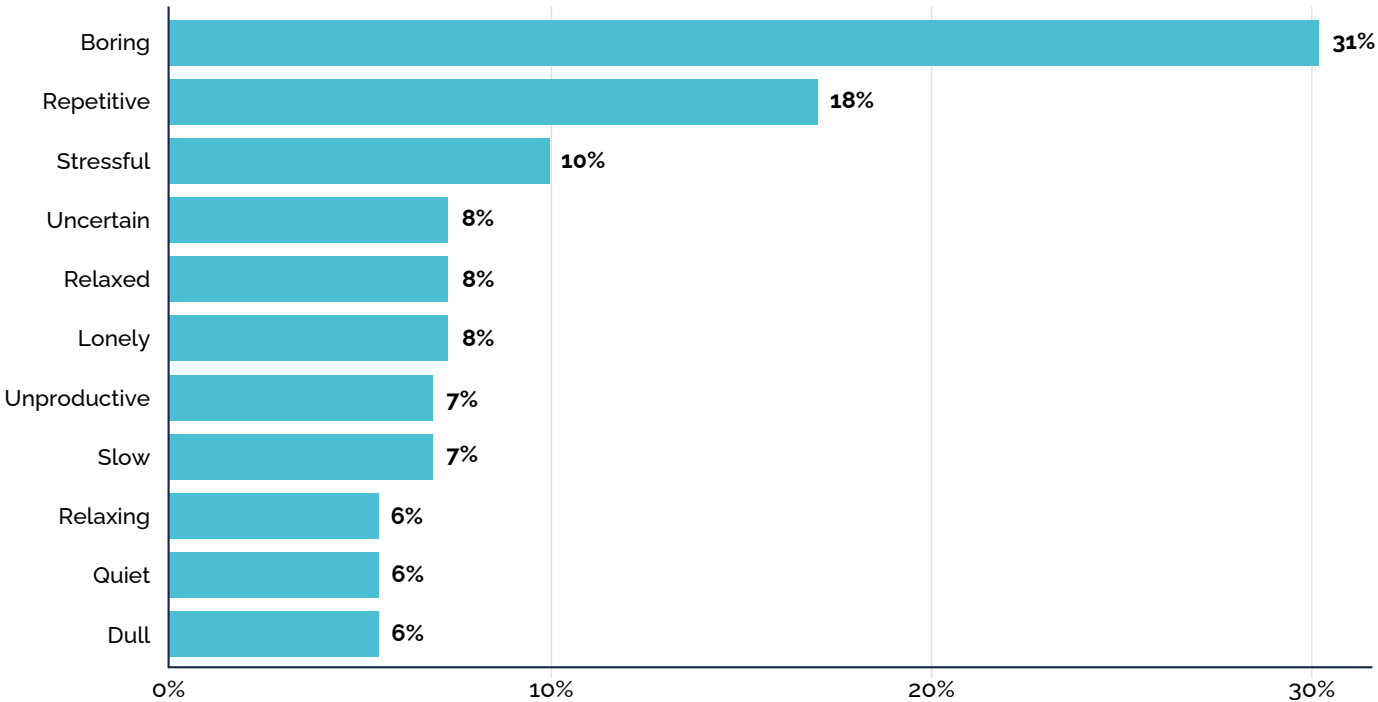
Graph: "I have plans in place for my future"

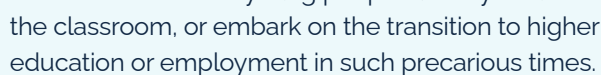


While the study focused on the impact of school and college closure on learning, future plans and transitions, researchers also sought students' perspectives on day-to-day life in lockdown, in their own words. When asked to describe life in three words, **around a third of students (31%) expressed boredom** and around a fifth

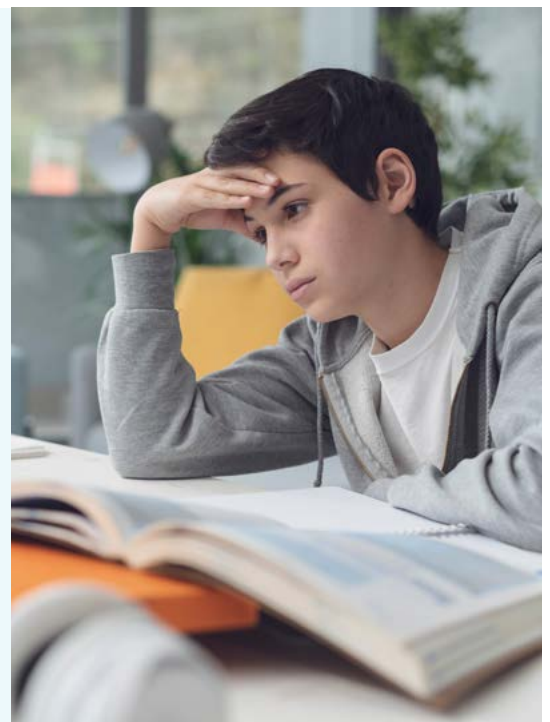
(18%) described life as repetitive. However, students' views were often mixed: 14% of respondents described life as "relaxed" or "relaxing". A number of students commented that the **cancellation of exams had given them more headspace** to reflect more calmly on their next steps and entertain a broader set of aspirations.

Graph: "Please describe day-to-day life at the moment in three words" (n=210)





Director of Research at the Centre for Education  
and Youth



## Impact on young people's mental health

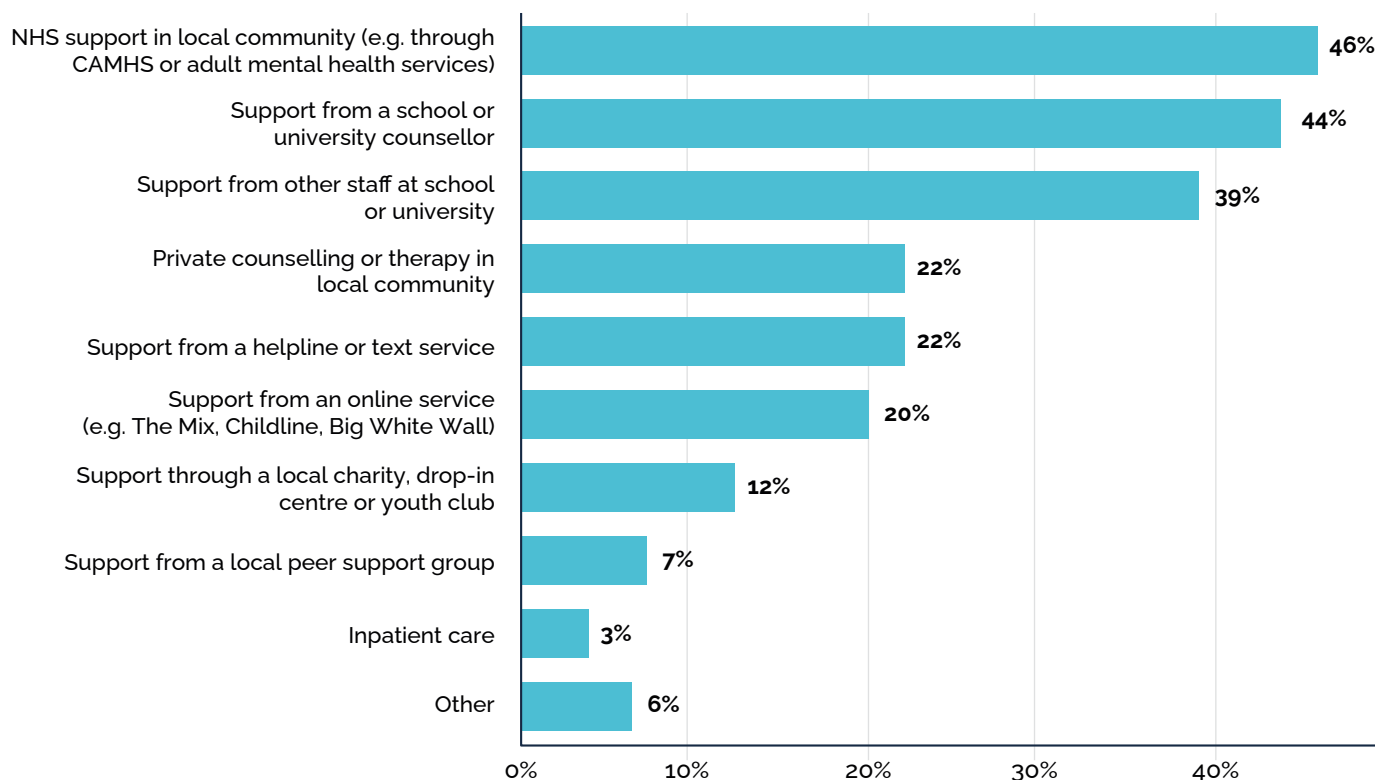
**YoungMinds** (April 2020)

*Research by YoungMinds, a charity providing mental health support, has shown the impact the crisis is continuing to have on young people with a history of mental health problems. Their research surveyed 2,111 young people with mental health needs between 20 and 25 March to understand the impact of the school closures and tightening restrictions.*

The results revealed that 32% agreed that it had made their mental health much worse, and 51% a bit worse. Emma Thomas, Chief Executive of YoungMinds stated: the uncertainty, the anxiety, the fear of becoming ill or seeing a loved one become ill, the loss of our normal routines, the difficulties of social connection, and in many cases the disruption to education could have a profound impact on the nation's mental health.

The report dives into the changes in support that 1,294 of the young people surveyed had received in the past three months. The impact of the pandemic revealed that 74% of respondents were still accessing their support while 26% said they were no longer able to access their support.

**Graph:** Types of mental health support received (1,294 young people surveyed)



The research revealed a **variety of factors respondents quoted that had affected their mental health**.

These included concerns about their family's health, the uncertainty resulting from school and university closures, loss and changes in their routines, loss of social connection often resulting in loneliness and disruption in managing of mental health.

This poses the questions of whether remote support for mental health problems can be as effective as face to face help. Although there have been adaptations to support becoming over the phone or online, the survey suggested these modes were *ineffective or less effective than face-to-face support, because of a lack of privacy at home or a fear of their family overhearing the session*.

The survey shows **unequivocally that young people are in particular need of mental health support during this difficult time** and respondents set out clearly which kinds of activities and support they found most helpful, with face-to-face calls with friends topping the list.

**Table:** Activities respondents found helpful and unhelpful for their mental health

| Activity                        | % found helpful | % found unhelpful |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Face-to-face calls with friends | 72%             | 3%                |
| Watching TV/films               | 72%             | 6%                |
| Exercise                        | 60%             | 7%                |
| Learning new skills             | 59%             | 4%                |
| Reading books                   | 55%             | 6%                |
| Gaming                          | 49%             | 5%                |
| Face-to-face calls with family  | 47%             | 8%                |
| Spending time with family       | 48%             | 23%               |
| Breathing techniques            | 38%             | 14%               |
| Social media                    | 31%             | 36%               |
| Reading/watching the news       | 13%             | 66%               |



## Loneliness during the pandemic

Loneliness has been and continues to be a consequence of the pandemic – staying at home, not seeing family, friends and loved ones has taken a toll on us all. Although older people are particularly vulnerable to feeling lonely, it can affect people of all ages. In a survey by EduKit for schools to understand the wellbeing and experiences of their pupils (9,000 responses across England between 27 April and 25 May) the findings showed:

- **Feelings of loneliness are widespread, especially among older pupils. Up to Year 8, around a third of respondents' report feeling lonely "a bit" or "very often", but for Years 12 and 13 this proportion was more than half, with 20-25% saying that they "very often" feel lonely during lockdown.**

Based on this data, it is estimated that 800,000-900,000 pupils at state schools in England may be feeling lonely "very often" during this period. Feeling lonely can have a negative impact on mental health especially if it lasts for a long period of time.

It is estimated that 800,000-900,000 pupils at state schools in England may be feeling lonely "very often" during this period.

## Impact on vulnerable young people

In April, the Children's Commissioner for England, Anne Longfield, stated that an estimated **two million children in England are in homes where there is either a problem with drug or alcohol abuse, domestic violence or serious mental health problems**. She highlighted that there are more than *128,000 children living in temporary accommodation, nearly 200,000 children referred to social services but not getting help, and 100,000 children caring for other family members*.

The Covid-19 pandemic has made it even more difficult for services to identify and support the most vulnerable children and young people during this crisis. Despite government guidance that vulnerable young people should still physically attend school during lockdown, only a very small proportion have been doing so – the Department for Education published figures suggesting that just 5% of vulnerable children have been attending school.

There have been collective efforts by schools, teachers and social care workers to continue making contact with vulnerable young people who are most affected by the lockdown. The Children's Commissioner has published local area profiles of child vulnerability **identifying how**

**many vulnerable children there are in each local authority area**, and highlighting groups who are at even higher risk due to the impact of Covid-19.

Even so, the impact of lockdown is likely to have been felt most acutely by these vulnerable groups both in terms of education and welfare. The Children's Commissioner has called for greater efforts to support these young people to get back into school alongside an increase in child benefit and accommodation for homeless families.



## C. Covid-19 and Schools

### Overview

Schools have been in the spotlight throughout the Covid-19 crisis with media stories almost every day about school closures and subsequent plans for reopening. On 20 March, schools were closed by the government and presented with a list of key workers that was more extensive than had previously been assumed.



Many are calling for this crisis to be a turning point for the future of education – an end to the predominance of exams and rote learning...

Schools were required to provide face to face education for key workers' children where they could not make other arrangements and for vulnerable children, although the numbers attending were low, sparking significant welfare concerns. At the same time, they have had to provide online and remote learning opportunities for all other students. As the evidence from TES's teacher survey below suggests, delivery has been very varied between schools both in the structure and content.

While teachers have risen to the challenge of adapting their pedagogy for digital delivery, and many say that they want to keep some of these techniques as they return to the 'new normal', the lack of available equipment and connectivity for disadvantaged young people has widened existing educational divides.

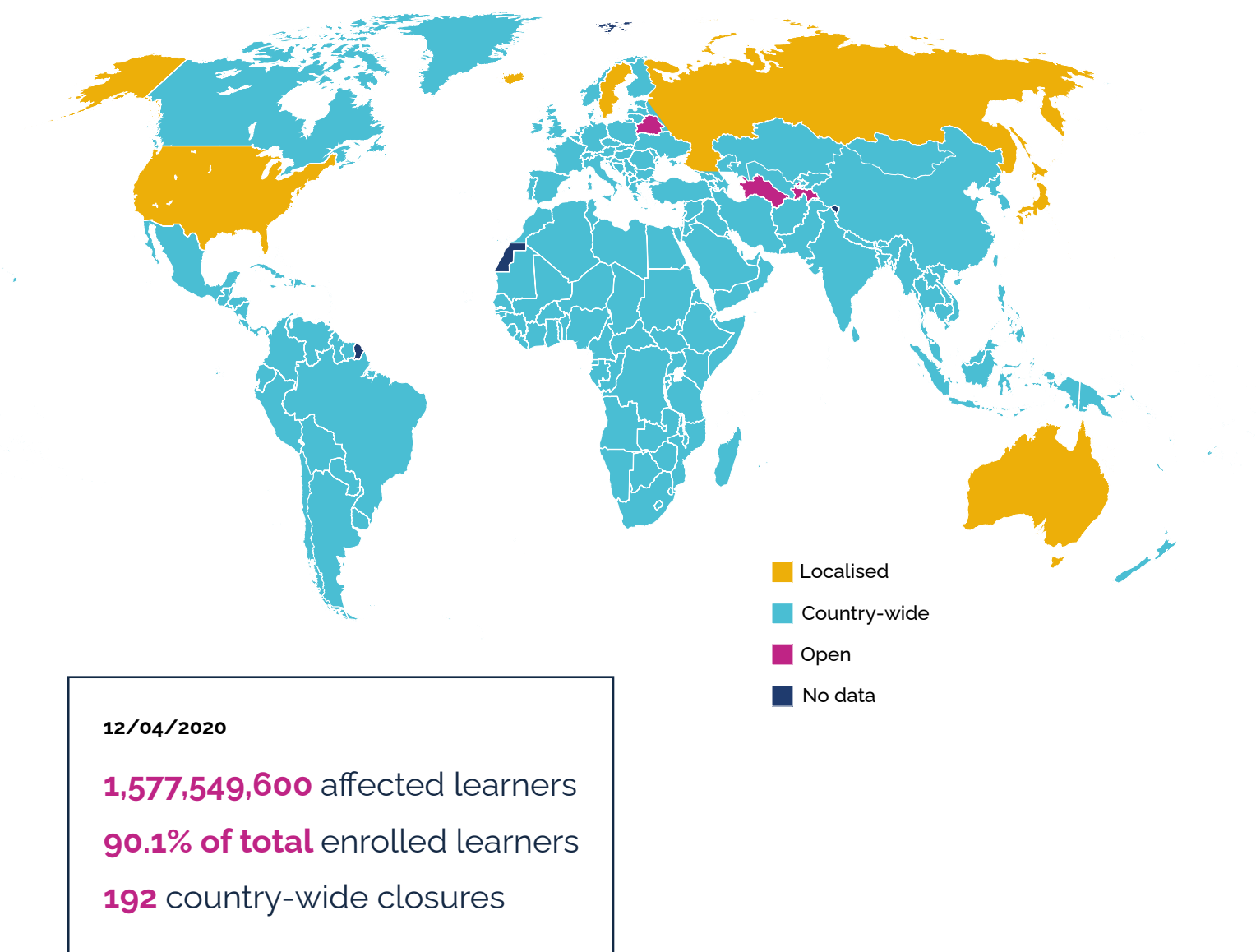
Examinations in 2020 were cancelled and thousands of students, who had been relentlessly told about the importance of exams for years, were suddenly left without this conclusion to their studies. Instead Ofqual established a system for teachers to estimate grades.

As the debate moved on to how and when schools should reopen, thoughts also turned to the future, with many (including teachers and parents, according to Edge and YouGov's polling data – page 25) calling for this crisis to be a turning point for the future of education – an end to the predominance of exams and rote learning, and a focus on the broader skills and qualities that have proved so essential to life during lockdown.

## Addressing the challenges

The most visible change for schools in the UK, as in the rest of the world, during this period has been physical closure in favour of remote or online learning. UNESCO monitoring shows that globally at the height of school closures **more than 1.5 billion learners were affected**, over 90% of students across the world.

**Diagram:** Global monitoring of school closures caused by Covid-19



Source: UNESCO

## The ongoing impact and legacy of the crisis on schools

**Geoff Barton**, General Secretary, Association of School and College Leaders

Necessity, as we know, is the mother of invention. And when we finally emerge from the shadow of the emergency we will have learned many new things.

First of all, the need to **turn round remote learning for millions of children in an incredibly short space of time**, will have given many teachers a great deal of additional experience in the use of technology to deliver education. Digital confidence will have inevitably been variable going into the period of lockdown. Now, the entire education community has undergone a crash course in the use of an array of platforms.

We will have learned more about the possibilities, the pitfalls, and also the constraints. And that last thought should hopefully take us towards a **more joined-up national strategy about how we utilise the full potential of digital technology** to enhance the learning experience. Classroom teaching will continue to be the mainstay of education – and has of course been sorely missed during the lockdown – but this crisis could, and should, be the springboard to take the use of technology to the next level, as part of what we do all the time.

Secondly, we have had to **reinvent the system for awarding grades for GCSEs, A-levels, and other important qualifications**. This summer has seen the cancellation of the annual ritual of exams, along with the accompanying stress levels, and the challenge of marking scripts on an industrial scale.

Instead, schools and colleges are engaged in a process of producing centre-assessed grades. Nobody imagines this will be without problems, and some students will inevitably feel they would have done better if they had the chance to sit exams.

But the fact that we are able to do this at all, does **beg the question of whether a series of cliff-edge exams are the best way to assess young people**. If schools and colleges can accurately award grades, supported by a national system of moderation, there should be no reason why centre assessment should not play a greater role in the future. And this might pave the way too for different types of qualifications, which assess a wider



range of competencies, are taken at stage not age, and do well for all learners, not only those who are most academically able.

Thirdly, this crisis has highlighted once more, the **difficulties faced by the children who experience the greatest degree of challenge in their lives**, and who are often from disadvantaged backgrounds. It is these young people who have most missed the benefit of direct interaction with teachers and learning assistants, and who are most likely to be the wrong side of the digital divide. Catching up on lost learning time is a significant, complex, and difficult task which will require national government to give schools and colleges time, space, and support.

But it also reminds us that **we must do more for these young people all the time**, not through rhetoric but through practical action. A significant investment in high-quality early years education. More support for schools which face the greatest challenges. Improving the supply of teachers, across the board, but particularly in those same schools. And a qualification system which better serves all learners.

If we were to do these things, the devastating impact of the coronavirus crisis, would at least ultimately lead to a legacy of which we could be proud.

## The reality of lockdown for school staff

William Stewart, News Editor, TES

TES received 18,953 survey responses at the end of April from teachers and school staff sharing their reflections on the impact of Covid-19.

Government guidance states that schools should continue to provide education for vulnerable children and children of workers critical to the coronavirus response. The large majority of schools in the UK – **89% of state schools surveyed – have kept their doors open** for some pupils during the lockdown.

Nearly two-third of staff who responded to the survey said that **4% or fewer of pupils were physically attending school** and four-fifths said that no more than 10% of pupils were physically present. These figures have heightened the concerns about vulnerable children falling off the radar during this period.

This has created a huge change in the way teachers are working. Asked where they have 'mainly' been working, **less than a quarter of teachers said they had been going into school at all** – those that did were made up of 19% who had been going to their usual school and a further 3% who have been working in a 'hub' school. The vast majority – 71% – have been working primarily from home.

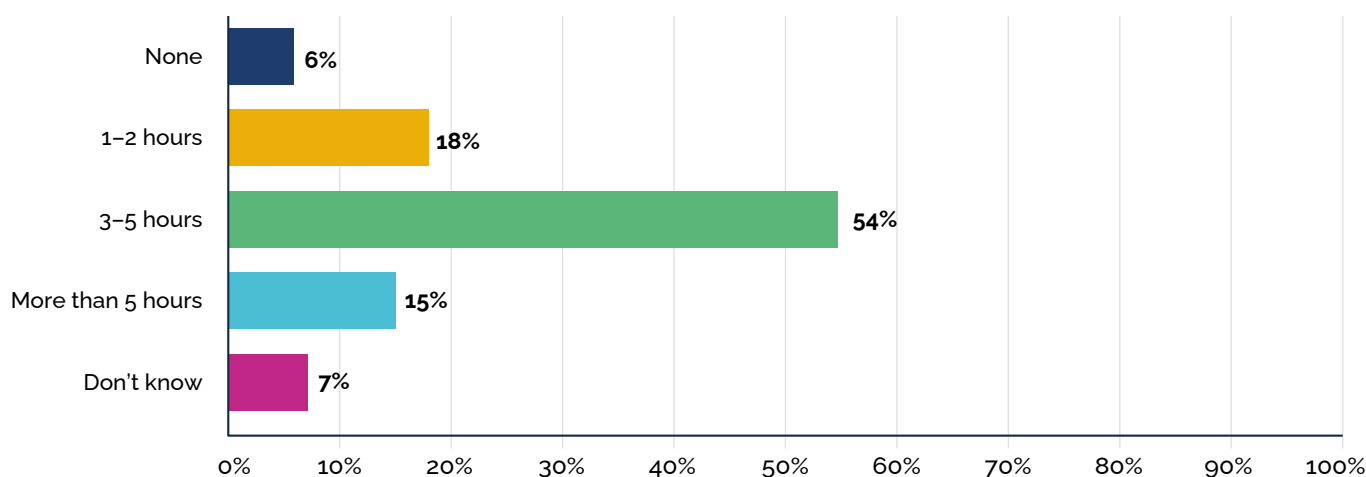
For those pupils physically attending school, the main intention has been to provide a safe place for them. So when those schools that are open were asked how many hours a day, on average, pupils are being taught on site, it was not a surprise when **22% replied 'none – we're offering childcare'**. By contrast 50% stated that they were offering three or more hours of teaching a day.

When looking at what schools have been providing to pupils remotely, the most striking factor is the wide level of variation.

There is also evidence that the difference in levels of tuition may continue to reinforce the inequalities in our system. In state schools, the **figure for those receiving 'more than 5 hours' was 12%, compared to 39% in independent schools**.

89% of state schools surveyed have kept their doors open for some pupils during the lockdown

**Graph:** How many hours of remote lessons per day, per pupil, would you estimate that your school is providing on average?



# The role and challenges of technology

**Neil Bates**, Chair of the Edge Foundation

The impact of this crisis on schools has brought into sharp focus the **importance of access to digital technology and connectivity to support all young people's learning.**

The vast majority of schools, colleges and providers stepped up, transforming classroom-based sessions into online learning modules almost overnight. Prior to the pandemic, there was already a **wealth of online learning resources**, the most effective collated by the Edge Foundation into a simple infographic for parents.

While the crisis has forced a major leap forward for education into fully embracing digital technology, there is a real danger that the already sizeable gap between disadvantaged young people and their better-off peers will widen further, with digital poverty adding a further layer of inequality.

## Home Learning Resources KS3 – KS5

| 1. Where to start  | 2. Great Subject Resources   | 3. Going Further  |
|--|--|---|
| <p><b>Twinkl</b></p> <p>Timetabled lessons for each step of your learning journey</p> <p>▼</p> <p><b>BBC Bitesize</b></p> <p>An online study support resource - daily online lessons available from 20th April 2020</p> <p>▼</p> <p><b>BBC Teach</b></p> <p>Home to thousands of free curriculum-mapped videos</p> | <p><b>Maths</b>      <b>Carol Vorderman</b> - Your online maths tutor (KS3)</p> <p><b>Maths Genie</b> - Past papers, mark schemes and model answers</p> <hr/> <p><b>English</b>      <b>IXL English</b> - Learn skills through online quizzes</p> <p><b>Audible</b> - Instantly stream an incredible collection of stories for free</p> <hr/> <p><b>Art</b>      <b>Tate</b> - Fun art based activities</p> <hr/> <p><b>Science</b>      <b>STEM Learning</b> - Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Technology and Computing resources</p> <hr/> <p><b>Languages</b>      <b>Duolingo</b> - Learn a language for free</p> <hr/> <p><b>Geography</b>      <b>3D Geography</b> - Fun ideas to help with learning about Geography</p> <p><b>Geographical Association</b> - Resources on flooding and tropical rainforests</p> <hr/> <p><b>History</b>      <b>Historical Association</b> - A digital/remote learning and resource sharing hub</p> <hr/> <p><b>Computing</b>      <b>CODE</b> - Computer Science resources and coding tutorials</p> <hr/> | <p>We call this Deeper Learning and career preparation!</p> <p>▼</p> <p><b>Skills Builder</b></p> <p>Building essential skills</p> <p>▼</p> <p><b>Scouts</b></p> <p>Problem solving activities</p> <p>▼</p> <p><b>XP School</b></p> <p>Project Based Learning and Expeditions</p> <p>▼</p> <p><b>WorldSkills</b></p> <p>Career advice toolkit</p> <p>▼</p> <p><b>Start</b></p> <p>Explore the world of work</p> |

**An estimated one million children cannot access the internet**, either because they have no computer or laptop, no connectivity, or both. Around 8% of 16-24-year-olds can only access digital technology through their phones, excluding them from many online learning platforms and restricting them from receiving and submitting work online.

Some of the country's biggest academy trusts acted fast. Academies Enterprise Trust, for instance, committed to spend £2 million on equipment and connectivity for their students on Free School Meals. **Government was rather later to act**, announcing on 19 April a scheme to provide laptops and connectivity to a small tranche of those young people who need them – children with a social worker, care leavers and disadvantaged pupils in Year 10 specifically. Feedback from schools suggests very few of these have been received.

Recognising that local solutions would be quickest and most effective, I have been working with a group of senior industry figures, politicians and charities in a **partnership called Operation Educate**, which seeks to support these digitally disadvantaged young people both during and after the current crisis. We have

launched a pilot project in Hull – supported with laptops donated by the National Grid – in an area where two thirds of children are eligible for free school meals.

The coronavirus outbreak has highlighted **the vital importance of technology for learning**. When schools re-open, children will continue to need digital resources for independent research, homework, and projects, to learn the skills they need for the workplace.

Discussion across many sectors has focused on the 'new normal' post-pandemic. In education, this could be the catalyst for making a transformational leap forward, changing the way we learn and the way in which learning is delivered forever, **fully integrating new digital technology but ensuring that we do not leave disadvantaged young people behind**.

Significant action is needed at a national and local level to ensure our kids remain connected beyond the pandemic and don't miss out on the opportunities of their more affluent peers.



Our Trust covers two secondary and seven primary schools all in disadvantaged areas of Hull.

As we took the curriculum online, we quickly realised that there were huge challenges with access for our students – our own surveys showed that one in three weren't able to get properly connected.

Typical stories included households of four kids all sharing a parent's smartphone with limited data. That household might have been 'connected' according to the official statistics, but those kids weren't able to access learning in any meaningful sense.

Support from a wide range of sources, including our local university, MP and Operation Educate, has enabled us to quickly get hold of hardware and connectivity for some of these families. We've even unplugged and distributed the kit from our classrooms.

But it highlights the ongoing challenges here – significant action is needed at a national and local level to ensure our kids remain connected beyond the pandemic and don't miss out on the opportunities of their more affluent peers.

### **Jonathan Roe**

Executive Headteacher, Yorkshire and the Humber Cooperative Learning Trust.

## The impact on teacher recruitment

**Timo Hannay**, Director, SchoolDash



With support from the Gatsby Foundation and Teacher Tapp, SchoolDash are taking an ongoing look at how the teacher recruitment market has been affected by Covid-19.

Following a rapid decline in the second half of March, teacher recruitment among secondary schools in England remained unseasonably low throughout April. Over this period, there were around **3,000 fewer teacher advertisements compared to 2019**, a fall of 38%.

There were particularly large reductions in the core subjects of maths, science and English, but substantial falls have also been seen in other areas. Data suggested that the deficit continued to grow so that at the end of April **recruitment activity was 40-50% lower than the same period last year**.

Surveys of teachers and school leaders indicated that the decline was due to a combination of lower teacher turnover and practical difficulties faced by schools trying

to recruit during lockdown. Across all respondents, **23% had been planning to leave their current roles, but about a quarter of those (6%) have now decided not to do so** as the uncertainty of the outbreak's impact continues.

There is some evidence from the later stages of the lockdown of an increase in interest in teaching – charity Now Teach, for instance, has said that they have received a 70% increase in applications. However there are **significant questions about whether they will be able to catch up** with postponed hiring and appointments based on remote interviews. Gaps may need to be filled with temporary and supply teachers and this may be one of the significant longer-term impacts of the pandemic on schools.



## Parent and teacher perspectives

Edge and YouGov, (May 2020)

In early May, the Edge Foundation wanted to understand how parents' and teachers' perspectives on education had changed as a result of the pandemic. We carried out a survey with YouGov to gather responses from 1,050 parents and 502 teachers (15-19 May) from across the UK.

Getting more involved in their children's education gave **parents greater insight into the work that teachers and education professionals do**, with half of those surveyed (50%) saying that they valued teachers' work more than they did before the coronavirus outbreak. This was particularly true of female parents (57%).

A significant minority of parents (22%), in particular younger parents, and teachers (21%) felt that their experience of lockdown had **changed their views on valuable careers that they would be happy for children to pursue**. This may reflect the prominence and importance of sectors like logistics and retail during this period – careers that have not always been seen as aspirational for young people.

Focusing on the future, two third of parents surveyed (66%) agreed that **teaching and education in the future needs to change** following the pandemic. This feeling was even clearer amongst teachers (78%) and most marked amongst younger teachers (84% of 25-34 year olds). One aspect of this has been teachers embracing online ideas and techniques – 54% of those surveyed said that they will continue to use digital tools once lockdown is over, and this was particularly prominent amongst older teachers (56% of teachers aged 55+).

The most striking thing that parents and teachers agree upon is that they want this pandemic to lead to a **much broader and more rounded education**, which helps children to develop a range of skills and positive values, and is grounded in real world examples and practical opportunities.

Parents and teachers want this pandemic to lead to a much broader and more rounded education ...

Education should help children develop a range of skills like critical thinking, problem solving and communication.

92%  
of parents

96%  
of teachers

Education should help children develop values like kindness, empathy and community cohesion.

86%  
of parents

96%  
of teachers



## Opportunities for change

### How project based learning (PBL) can benefit children, schools and families

**Jane Dowden**, Education Innovations Manager,  
British Science Association



If things are hard for teachers and schools in this crisis, they are certainly no easier for families acclimatising to home learning. Our situation means the disadvantage gap is likely to be worsened, not just by inequality of access to resources, but by inequality of parents' ability to support too. This means some children will be making more progress than others, but it's not just that. **Entire subjects could fall by the wayside too.**

It is natural to want to help with subjects we feel more confident about rather than those we struggle with, and we have known since long before this crisis that **maths and sciences present parents with the greatest difficulty**. A decade ago, over a third of parents struggled to support their children with maths, and over a quarter with sciences, reporting a sense of embarrassment because of it. Some 60% of 9- to 13-year-olds reported that their parents confused them when they tried to help.

**Curriculum reform has only increased the academic demands** of these subjects in the interim, and we shouldn't be surprised to find that this is still the case now that we find ourselves in a situation where all school work is homework. In addition, the fact that a great deal of learning time is spent either staring at a computer screen or at the pages of a textbook only makes it harder to keep motivation up.

As such, it is important to find methods of learning and teaching that are more engaging and more accessible to both students and parents, and **project-based learning (PBL) is perfectly suited to the task**. It encourages students to identify real-world problems and create solutions, allowing for more hands-on learning as well as helping students sharpen their critical and independent thinking skills.

As a home-learning strategy it's a great leveller, engaging parents and students as equals in an investigation that requires them to develop expertise, rather than assuming the presence of an expert to provide guidance and support.

For example, a student (and their parent) might decide to build their own loudspeaker or create an interactive model to explain a scientific phenomenon. This more creative approach prevents STEM being viewed as exclusively academic and instead demonstrates how it is a part of everything we do. **It makes the subject more relatable and gives families a greater sense of ownership**, boosting and sustaining engagement.

**PBL also allows families to bring in other subjects they feel passionate about** (or at least are more comfortable with). This generates a sense of pride, as it becomes truly their own achievement rather than a task that has been handed to them. PBL is diverse and inclusive by default.

**Perhaps most importantly of all, PBL is fun.** Whether making and testing their own ceramic jewellery or investigating how sanitation can help solve global health challenges, students will have taken time to identify and investigate a problem they care about and constructed or communicated their own solutions.



## Why Covid-19 should spell the end of GCSEs

**Mark Dutton**, English Teacher and Director of the Scholars Programme, Queen Elizabeth's Hospital, Bristol



When Boris Johnson announced on 18 March that schools would be closed and that GCSE exams would be cancelled, my son, who is in Year 11, said: "It won't make any difference in the long run, will it, Dad?"



As a parent, and as a secondary school teacher, I had to agree with him: it very likely will make no difference at all.

By sitting national exams just once, at 18, he will have had an educational experience more like the rest of students his age across Europe: the UK is the only European country to assess students nationally at age 16, then do it all over again two years later at age 18.

All of which begs the question: with GCSE exams cancelled this year due to the coronavirus pandemic,

and with it making very little difference in the long run for our Year 11 students, is it finally time that we considered scrapping GCSEs altogether?

If cancelling GCSEs this year due to the coronavirus pandemic can teach us anything, it's that we should scrap GCSEs completely; it's time for the UK to move into the 21st century, join other European countries and start assessing our students nationally only once, at the end of their secondary schooling at age 18.

## Six reasons why teachers should continue recording lessons after Covid-19

**Tricia McCartney**, Head of Primary Literacy, School 21, London



Pre-recording videos for children and parents has become my new normal during lockdown. When conversation turned to continuing this practice when back in the classroom at first I felt sceptical about it being a time-consuming add-on, but now I am very excited about how we can expand our practice and our impact. This is just one of the ways in which we can deepen and change our practice, building on what we have learned during this period.

- Better quality interventions could close the gap quicker - Collaboratively planned, pre-recorded teacher explanations can be used anywhere and at any time during the school day.
- Student absence does not need to equate to learning lost – Record your screen and your verbal explanation in real time and that learning is locked in the Cloud forever.
- Technology could allow us to alter our pace for specific groups – We can now use our virtual selves to allow children to re-watch, pause and repeat at their own pace, freeing our physical selves to circulate the classroom.
- Videos can produce two expert teachers in the room, instead of one – Pre-recording a short video can allow children to independently access an explanation and model of their next steps, without interruption to the guided group.
- Children should create content to share with their parents at home – Get the children to record an example of their method in class. Upload to the Cloud – now they can teach their parents and work in harmony.
- We should open ourselves up to feedback from colleagues, parents and most importantly, the children – Are you about to teach that concept that the children struggle with every year? Why not offer your explanation up for critique? A meaningful dialogue between home and school could be ignited.

*You can find more reflections and lessons from lockdown from the Big Education team at [www.learningfromlockdown.com](http://www.learningfromlockdown.com).*





## CASE STUDY

### XP, Doncaster

Before the Covid-19 outbreak and the subsequent lockdown, the XP Trust's six schools (covering 200 staff and over 2,000 children aged 3-18) already connected in a real, meaningful and proactive way with staff, students, parents and wider community. Their approach to openness and community engagement was recognised by the RSA in their work on Schools Without Walls.

As preparations for lockdown began, XP focused on three key goals – keeping students safe, keeping the schools open for as long as possible and continuing their innovative curriculum approach online. They created a clear plan to make this happen.

#### Safeguarding

Before lockdown, a trust-wide check-in programme, delivered by the SEND co-ordinator and Wellbeing Lead, was created, with process and protocols for regular check-ins with vulnerable students and their families.

#### Technical Support

The loan of Chromebooks to make sure every student had access to online learning was hugely important and a swiftly implemented audit made sure this happened. To make sure there was maximum engagement with

students and parents at home from day one a series of 'How To' videos for parents were created with Realsmart, the trust's technology partner.

A parent online help centre then reinforced this support. This enabled Google classroom hangouts, online self-marking quizzes and expert talks to be a daily part of the provision and continued delivery of the curriculum.

#### Staff Teams

The executive team met daily at 8am and there has been a report at the end of the day for all staff. At moments of key change, there have been briefings for all staff.

This colleague camaraderie and continuity has been vital and supported with virtual staff appreciation cards, fortnightly weekend online quiz evenings and sharing of material and updates.

## The Bigger Picture

Every week from the start of lockdown, 'This Week in the Trust' a film & online magazine of work, expeditions & quirky videos were created by the Comms Crew, with great support from staff, students and parents. Feel Good Friday videos from parents and children at home dancing and singing has also been a feature, as has artwork celebrating key workers and carers. Baking, building, virtual art galleries, thank yous to partners in the business and creative world and in primary schools, weekly class awards and certificates have all been popular.



\*you can find out more about Crew in Edge's film at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=5j\\_EJfWeP8A&t=4s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5j_EJfWeP8A&t=4s).

Year 11 students, who would have been taking their GCSEs have been busy authoring and creating a book 'Once in a Lifetime', which looks at their school life since Year 7 and the impact of Crew\*, what they'd like to share about their learning and finally the impact of Covid-19. This book will be published in the autumn, helping to mark this rite of passage.

Regular and meaningful phone contact with students as well as the online connection has also meant that any issues with home or school life (all the trust's schools have remained physically open) have been picked up swiftly. Vulnerable students and their families have been given wider support through the organisation of food vouchers, essential toiletries and other items where necessary.

All of this work has been underlined by the continued idea and practice of Crew – the trust's pastoral and support system that places 12-13 students and a teacher in a team for their whole school career.

As preparations for lockdown began, XP focused on three key goals – keeping students safe, keeping the schools open for as long as possible and continuing their innovative curriculum approach online.



## D. Covid-19 and Further Education

### Overview

The further education (FE) sector faces very similar challenges to schools and higher education institutions as a result of Covid-19. In addition, the size of the sector, and the complexity of its provision and learner population present specific challenges. There are 2.2 million learners aged 14 years and older in FE colleges.

Amongst 16-18 year olds, 34% study and work in FE and Sixth Form colleges as opposed to 24% in state schools and twice as many 16-18 year olds in FE colleges claimed free school meals at the age of 15 than in maintained schools and academy sixth forms. The sector offers 137,000 adults higher education courses and 264,000 apprenticeship courses. Clearly, these statistics (AoC, 2020) suggest a very complex landscape in terms of coverage of age groups, ability, family and personal backgrounds of its learners.

The sudden lockdown of the country in March created an unprecedented teaching and learning environment that meant for the FE sector rethinking technical, professional and vocational education delivery. The online environment is particularly challenging for the teaching, learning and assessment of practical skills. Many colleges had already introduced some online teaching, which gave them a base to work from, but even

so, supporting learners having to work from home has been a significant challenge. Some feel that Covid-19 has become a catalyst for new ways of delivering learning.

These challenging times simultaneously present great opportunities to showcase the importance of skilled labour, vocational education and training (VET), and how these contribute and support the economy and the country as a whole during this pandemic and the recovery. More than ever before, highly skilled professionals are openly acknowledged and praised for being key workers, such as nurses and carers. Some professions, previously not seen as aspirational, such as drivers and bakers, are suddenly the most in demand from the population. In the coming months, FE will have a huge part to play in both offering initial training, and reskilling and upskilling people to connect them back to the economy once restrictions are lifted. FE presents a key part of the recovery and solution for the future.



FE will have a huge part to play in both offering initial training, and reskilling and upskilling people to connect them back to the economy.

## Covid-19 and colleges

### AoC's early summer survey

**Association of Colleges (AoC)** (May 2020)

*Following the closure of all schools and colleges on 18 March 2020, AoC undertook a survey of the 244 colleges in England. Within a week, 125 surveys were returned – more than 90% by principals or chief executives. On the basis of the survey, AoC provided a report to assist discussion about what happens next. This is a rich source of information – there is a summary in this article and more details in the full report.*

### Teaching and learning since the shutdown

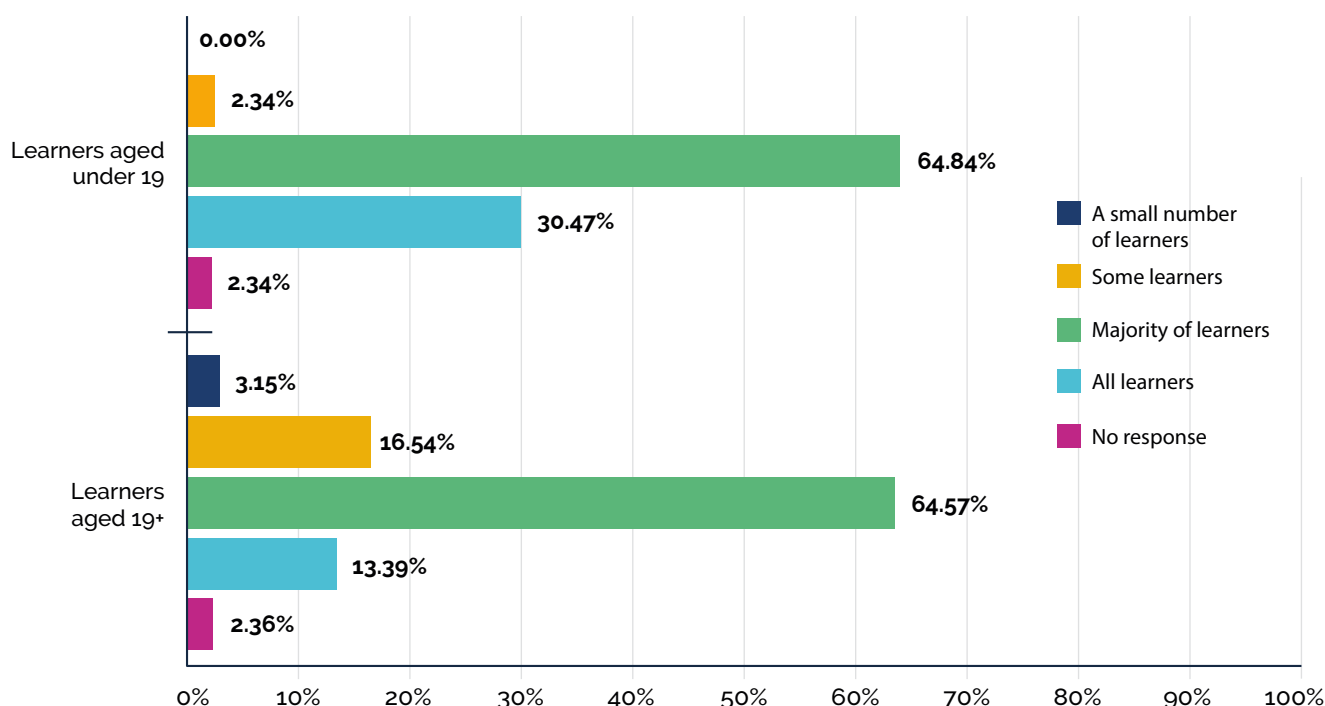
Trying to replicate the classroom experience online is difficult and a **mixture of teaching and learning methods** is indicated as the approach taken in most colleges. Tools such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom and Moodle have been popular platforms to engage learners.

**43% of learners are doing less than three quarters of their planned hours** and may need further support or

catch up time in future. Colleges reported that students on lower level courses or with special educational needs were more disengaged. Almost all younger learners were receiving timetabled lessons remotely but generally in a reduced form. Nearly all colleges (96%) have systems in place to collect participation in remote learning.

Many colleges are now thinking about how to **capitalise on best practice and sustain this change post crisis**.

**Graph:** "Approximately, what proportion of your learners are continuing their learning remotely?"





## Finance, funding and staffing

The most significant estimated financial impact in the 2019/20 financial year is on college financial health (40% predicting a deterioration; 15% not knowing). The more serious consequence reported is the view from **30% of college leaders that the 2019-20 financial impact will create significant cashflow issues** and 13% report a significant threat to solvency.

## Oversight of colleges

The shutdown brought the **suspension of the vast majority of oversight and intervention activity** – for example, Ofsted inspections and FE commissioners' visits, while the Office for Students (OfS) wrote to colleges signaling a change in their approach. FE faces tough decisions and their expectations of support from the FE commissioner team include, for example, liaising with ESFA over exceptional financial support, consultation on finances without triggering intervention and pausing the intervention process for colleges in financial difficulty as a direct result of Covid-19.

## Reopening and restarting

It is vital to reopen colleges for economic and social reasons. **Many of the courses taught by colleges cannot be taught online** and disadvantaged students, year 11 and growing number of people without work, are priority groups to be supported.

As a preparation for reopening colleges, AoC set up five working groups in support of restarting, covering the areas below. While the Department for Education need to take action, this has to happen in consultation with colleges leads.

- Physical re-opening of the estate
- Ensuring the safe return of staff to work (including issues associate with social distancing, shielding and PPE)
- Financial issues associated with smaller teaching groups, transport, IT
- Online start to next year (including enrolment, data sharing with schools)
- Curriculum issues.

## A view from independent training providers

Paul Warner (AELP)



*On 16 April, the Chancellor said he wanted “to ensure that no viable business slips through our safety net of support as we help protect jobs and the economy.”*

A worthy aspiration, but for many independent training providers, the words have rung hollow. Levied apprenticeship providers that were not so long ago being lauded for taking on this new provision found it meant they would receive no support under the Cabinet Office supplier relief scheme.

The apprenticeship levy structure has enabled many to keep going for the moment without Coronavirus Business Interruption Loans, but the cash is now beginning to rapidly dry up, just as the ability to apply for

this support does likewise. This leaves the apprenticeship infrastructure in a perilous position at the worst possible moment, with history showing that young people's employment prospects suffer the most during a recession, and recent statistics now beginning to show it is happening once again.

Young people's employment prospects suffer the most during a recession ...

## Covid-19 and post-16 education

Susan Pember and Mark Corney – NCFE and Campaign for Learning (April 2020)

*With every aspect of the post-16 education skills, employment and welfare system under stress from the lockdown, this paper aims to encourage the post-16 education and employment sectors to think about the actions which will be needed for a very different September due to the pandemic.*

In England, there are 125,000 young people aged 16 – 17 in jobs outside of full-time education – with 50,000 in apprenticeships. There are 2.4 million 18 – 24 year olds in jobs outside of full-time education – with 300,000 in apprenticeships. By September 2020, around **450,000 18 – 24 year olds will leave full-time further and higher education and will be looking for jobs.** A smaller economy and employers in survival mode will make rising youth unemployment inevitable (see section on Covid-19 and the Youth Labour Market – page 2).

Those aged 16-24 are traditionally hit hard during recessions so there is no time to lose, says Susan Pember. The paper highlights that there needs to be a

plan in June ready for September. *Whitehall must plan for a different September with a different mix of provision and financial support for 16- 18 year olds, 18-24 year olds and adults in further education,* says Mark Corney.

An approach presented in the paper to thinking through the economic impacts of Covid-19 on post -16 education, skills and employment, **distinguishes between direct and consequential impacts** (see table opposite). The framework is intended to generate debate rather than be portrayed as the definitive way to think about the economic impacts on post-16 education and employment.

## Covid-19: Thinking through the impacts for September

| Direct impacts                                 |  |
|--|--|
| Business population                            | Fewer large, medium- sized and small enterprises as many have gone out of business thus reducing demand for jobs with and without training.  |
| Employer recruitment for jobs without training | Employers who have survived but not recruiting jobs without training.  |
| Employer recruitment for jobs with training    | Employers who have survived but not recruiting new entrants or supporting existing employees for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› jobs with apprenticeships</li> <li>› jobs with part-time higher education</li> <li>› jobs with part-time adult further education</li> <li>› jobs requiring retraining</li> <li>› jobs requiring on-the-job training.</li> </ul>   |
| Workers and post-18 education and training     | Employees, self-employed and agency workers who are in employment but concerned about income and job insecurity not demanding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› co-funded part-time adult further education</li> <li>› fully-funded part-time adult further education</li> <li>› fee and maintenance loans for part-time higher education</li> <li>› fee-loans for part-time adult further education</li> <li>› adult retraining.</li> </ul> |
| Parents  | Parents under financial pressure and unable to pay tuition fees for 16-18 year olds in private education.  |
| Adults   | Adults who self-fund their lifelong learning.  |

| Consequential impacts                                 |  |
|---|--|
| Apprenticeship starts                                 | A collapse in apprenticeship starts by all age groups by levy and non-levy payers out of business or in survival mode.   |
| Work experience and work placements                   | Falling supply of work experience and work placements as employers unable to offer opportunities to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› full-time 16-18 year olds on study programmes</li> <li>› full-time 16-18 year olds on the Transition Programme</li> <li>› full-time 16-19 year olds on T-levels</li> <li>› full-time students on Level 4-5 vocational sub-degrees</li> <li>› full-time sandwich courses</li> </ul> |
| Part-time Level 4-5 technical education               | Falling employer supported part-time Level 4-5 technical education courses   |
| Unemployment  | A significant rise in unemployment from 1.35m to 2.0m and possibly 2.5m which takes the form of short-term joblessness of less than 12 months  |
| Unemployed 16-17 year olds not in full-time education | Other things being equal a significant rise in unemployment as 16-17 year olds can not combine: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› jobs with apprenticeships</li> <li>› jobs with employer funded training</li> <li>› jobs with part-time education</li> <li>› jobs without training</li> </ul>  |
| Unemployed 18-24 year olds not in full-time education | Other things being equal a significant rise in unemployment amongst 18-24 year olds not in full-time education including without training and jobs with apprenticeships.   |



The apprenticeship system was built around the concept of employers in the driving seat but with some employers no longer taking on staff, a review of the infrastructure is essential. Between August 2018 and July 2019, **apprenticeship starts by under 19 year-olds fell below 100,000 for the first time to 97,700**. Collapsing apprenticeships, falling starts, lack of supply of work experience placements and rising unemployment create an uninviting landscape for September.

It is well documented that recessions impact the job prospects more acutely for young people aged 16 – 24 than adults, and **16-17 year olds in jobs without any form of education and training are most at risk**. What can we expect in September 2020 in terms of student numbers? Mid-year estimates by the Office for National Statistics for Great Britain published in 2018 estimate there will be 23,450 more 16 year olds and 39,300 more 17 year olds in 2020. Considering those who stay in full-time education and those who go to university, it is estimated that **about 150,000 18 year olds will leave**

**full-time further education and be competing for jobs in September 2020**. Policy proposals for the future and issues raised for discussion in the paper included:

- Full time education as a safe haven for young people
- Reducing unemployment through full time education
- Reviewing the national cap on full time student numbers
- National insurance contributions
- Reviewing the UK apprenticeship levy
- Working together with the Department for Education (DfE) and Department of Work & Pensions (DWP)
- Collaboration with UCAS and higher education institutes

Creating a **flexible 16 – 18 education and apprenticeship participation budget** and strengthening education skills by providing a system of real-time funding was also proposed.

To conclude, the report is proposing that, given the severity of the crisis, **a full system review is required in this area**, including looking at the Apprenticeship Levy from scratch and funding models for post-16 education. It is vital to rebuild a system that is resilient and capable of handling future global threats, whether they be pandemic viruses, extremist violence, results of climate change or economic downturns.

About 150,000 18 year olds will leave full-time further education and be competing for jobs in September 2020.



Covid-19 has been disastrous for many people and the economy, but it doesn't have to define the sector. The post -16 education system can come out of this stronger and more innovative – but we need to act now!

**Susan Pember**

## A training opportunity in the crisis

### How the Covid-19 response can help sort out Britain's training mess

**David Goodhart** Policy Exchange (May 2020)



*This report argues that due to Covid-19, the need for an education and training system that is better aligned with the economic and social needs of the UK is ever more apparent. David Goodhart sets out that the system of training is very complex especially for those 50% of young people who do not wish to enter university. The situation is very similar for those after post-compulsory schooling and adult learners. Given the current situation and the level of unemployment, retraining of workers will be also vital.*

The paper questions the extent to which university graduates end up with a meaningful degree that has labour market value. **A third of the graduates are not in graduate jobs five years after graduation** and return to education is low or non-existent for 25% of graduates, suggesting that this education route does not lead to upwards social mobility for a considerable minority of students.

The **apprenticeship levy has not contributed to an increase in apprenticeship places for young people**, and the level and duration of apprenticeships offered at level 3 is still low. There is a clear need for skilled workers at levels 4 and 5, which is very low among the UK adult population - only about 4% have level 4 qualifications.





David Goodhart suggests that the two main groups that are let down by this system are non-university bound school-leavers and adult re-trainers. His conclusions and recommendations are:

- The coronavirus crisis underlines the need for an education and training system that is better aligned with the economic and social needs of the UK. We can no longer afford the luxury of **a wasteful mismatch produced by low value degrees and a disorganised approach to vocational training**.
  - The current crisis also offers an opportunity to **cut through many of the normal blockages and vested interests**, not least since we may – in the wake of the coronavirus crisis – be moving into a period of high unemployment, which will require a radical rethinking of current policy.
  - The government must **overcome the resistance of the higher education sector**, which has quietly become a powerful cultural and economic vested interest.
  - This paper recommends that a **new "opportunity grant", to train or retrain, of at least £3,000 should be on offer for every individual**, with added loans to cover more expensive courses and maintenance costs for those who want to take courses full time (repaid in the same way as student loans). The grant money would not go to the individual but would be drawn down by the training provider or FE college or, in a few cases, university.
- It recommends suspending the apprenticeship levy for new entrants and replacing it with a **radically simplified model focused on school leavers** (only about 9% of whom currently enter an apprenticeship) and young people up to the age of 24, with government and employers splitting the full cost 50:50.
  - Lastly, it recommends the creation of a **sub-set of "applied universities," essentially undoing the policy error of abolishing the polytechnics in 1992**. With the exception of the "higher" vocational courses in medicine, engineering, and perhaps law, most vocational degrees should be clustered in the applied universities.

The outline of the current policy context underpins the recommendations for change. As the author himself recognises in the paper, *these proposals are very rough and ready and need refining*, but they illustrate that this may be a unique time for radical change within the post-16 sector.

The coronavirus crisis underlines the need for an education and training system that is better aligned with the economic and social needs of the UK.

## VET in a time of crisis: Building foundations for resilient vocational education and training systems

OECD (May 2020)

*This OECD policy brief reflects on the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on vocational education and training (VET) systems and how VET systems are responding in OECD countries. The report also includes policy recommendations to support regrowth of strong and resilient VET systems.*

Covid-19 impacted on vocational education and training (VET) systems globally. It has impacted on both how VET is provided, particularly having to take into consideration social distancing, and how VET can adapt to the changing labour market of the future.

The ongoing lockdown in many countries has **interrupted learning in both workplaces and the classroom**. It has particularly **disrupted work-based learning, including apprenticeships, and systems used to assess skills and ultimately award qualifications**.

The report calls for a rapid search for solutions and points to the potential for a silver lining in the long term - *The lockdown may ultimately result in stronger and more resilient VET systems if the right choices are made today.*

The report also demonstrates that there are **examples of excellent practice in different countries** and how they have responded to the unprecedented Covid-19 situation. These *can be replicated across jurisdictions*.

The challenges faced are very similar across the globe. Areas where countries may look for effective solutions include:

- Use of online and virtual platforms
- Training breaks or extensions in learning
- Wage support for apprentice retention
- Leveraging links between work-based and school-based VET
- Flexible skills assessment and awarding of qualifications
- Retraining of redeployed workers.

While there is a clear urgency to respond to the immediate challenges, decisions have to be made that achieve **support VET in the current situation and are consistent with the aim that VET ultimately emerges from this crisis even stronger, more responsive, and more resilient than before.**

There are recommendations that VET policy makers should consider when planning for the future:

- Engage with employers and trade unions
- Start planning today for changes in the labour market that can be foreseen
- Provide financial assistance to VET systems and learners to undertake training in more future-proof sectors and occupations
- Capitalise on the demand for digital, distance offerings
- Examine policies and regulations with regard to the awarding of micro-credentials and digital badges
- Make sure that VET programmes are providing opportunities for learning foundation skills
- Pay particular attention to vulnerable groups
- Focus on efforts to maintain and build a highly qualified workforce of vocational teachers and trainers.



## CASE STUDY

### South East Regional College (Northern Ireland)

South Eastern Regional College (SERC) has 8 campuses and offers a wide range of full-time and part-time, further, and higher education courses and a range of apprenticeships to learners. The everyday college life changed rapidly in March 2020.

Senior Managers met daily throughout March and twice a week since then to contingency plan in the transition to online working, teaching, and learning seeking to support both staff and students. To ensure that students have access to PCs and laptops SERC has provided an extra 327 PCs and laptops (delivered where required) to staff and students in addition to the laptops already allocated to staff. Some students used smart phones to access online services and learning.

SERC has progressed rapidly and seamlessly to online working and learning once the lockdown was announced late March. SERC wanted to continue to engage students and 'create a routine' for them and the college staff by adhering to the current timetable for classes. SERC had developed strategic systems to underpin learning and teaching, key to supporting online working and monitoring progress.

The college has developed effective integrated real-time systems, including two tools to create better business intelligence; the Progress Tracker to track and monitor the progress the students are making in their learning and the SERC Student App which provides key information to students on their mobile phone.

SERC programmes have adopted a cloud-based e-portfolio which supports greater collaboration and facilitates the capture of evidence using key tools such as Class Notebook and Microsoft Teams. The college is using Microsoft Teams to support staff, students, teams, and meetings. To date students are handing in work online and engaging well across the college.

SERC has been using the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) MOODLE extensively to provide a platform to enrich the learning and teaching experience through a

blended approach to learning prior to the pandemic. The analyses show that during the preparatory phase (end of February start of March) for example, MOODLE showed a 300% increase in activities, with over 400,000 access hits in the first week of online learning. Since the move online there has been almost 7000 virtual meetings and classroom sessions and over 200,000 channel messages.

By early April, 63 apprentices were being moved onto the furlough and 17 apprentices have been laid off. SERC has committed to allow these students to finish their qualifications. Online delivery has been introduced for all 778 apprentices for their underpinning knowledge and for support with portfolio building. Attendance at online sessions for apprentices has been more than 80% across all areas

of work. SERC is continuing to deliver to those apprentices who are on furlough to ensure that their learning continues even though their job is on hold. Training Support Officers are continuing to maintain supportive contact with apprentices by telephone and are carrying out progress reviews remotely.

To date positive feedback has been received from students, staff, and parents in relation to the online delivery of learning and assessment.

"I found it easy to go from face to face to online classes and I had access to my tutors when I needed them".  
"I appreciate all the efforts the tutors have put in, I am aware they are doing their absolute best for us and they deserve all the praise in the world for it!"



Students and staff have reacted positively to the online delivery of learning and assessment from level 1 to level 7 and across all curriculum areas. Level 1 programme staff report students are more engaged online than before the crisis. Tutors have developed creative solutions to practical assessments by adapting assessments for example. Performing Arts students have been creating group vlogs and radio plays as they adapt to what is possible in the context of remote working. Effective collaboration and communication have supported learners with the transition to distance learning.

There is a strong commitment at all levels to support students to overcome their barriers, to remain on their programme and to succeed during the pandemic. High levels of collaboration between students who have been able to engage effectively with a wide range of learning tools have been reported. Where specific learning needs have arisen, tutors have worked successfully with learning support staff and SERC's pedagogy mentors to find a solution to help students progress. Staff have reported that in some cases engagement and participation by students is better than in the normal classroom setting.

The college is providing a further layer of student support through a 'College Queries App' which collates student queries and directs them to the appropriate resource. To date queries have been dealt with in relation to learning support services, pastoral support and pedagogic support. Students with additional learning needs engage with their learning support assistants who have received additional training online.


SERC had planned and acted on a comprehensive approach to responding to Covid-19. It is evident that learners and staff are well supported and work together to successfully overcome the current challenges.

There is a strong commitment at all levels to support students to overcome their barriers, to remain on their programme and to succeed during the pandemic.

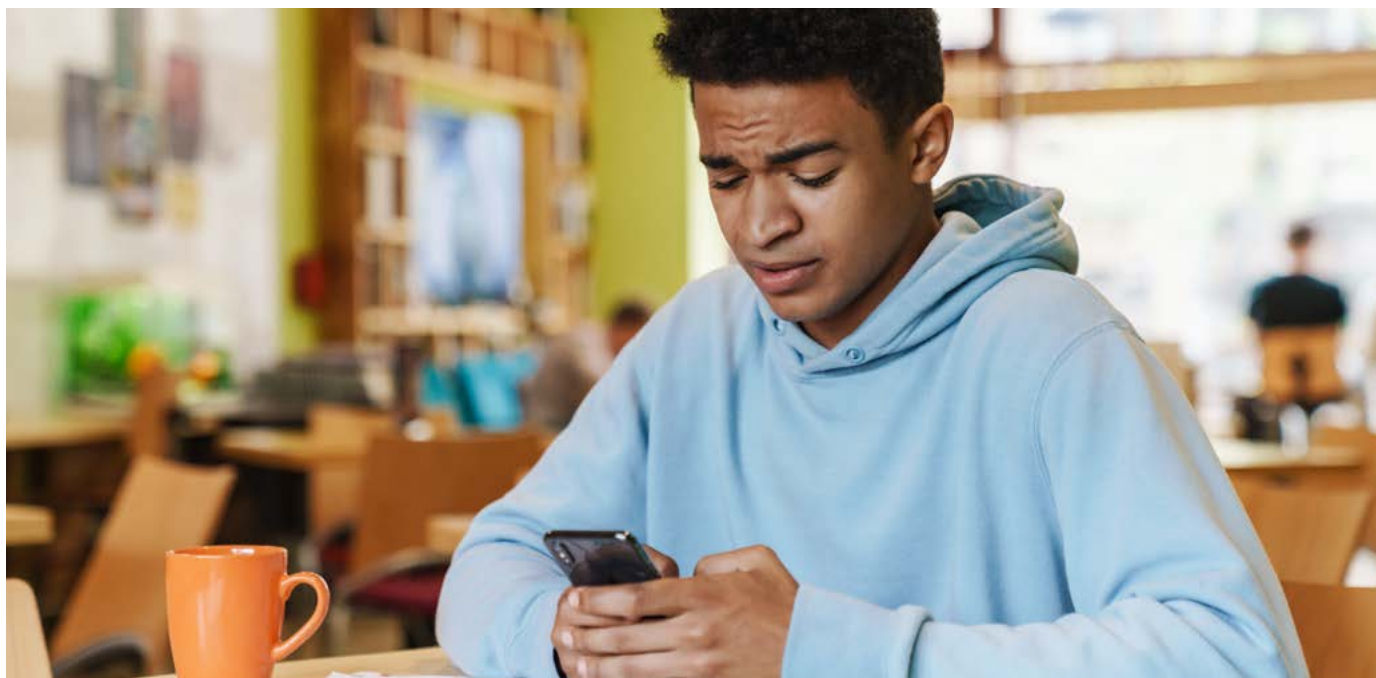
## C. Covid-19 and Higher Education

### Overview

The pandemic has affected the higher education sector immensely and is having a deep, and potentially long-lasting effect, on all aspects of the student journey. Current students have been forced to make a rapid switch to fully online learning, meaning in many cases projects, dissertations and assessments have halted or had to be adapted to being carried out online.



Graduates entering the labour market this year are likely to take at least five, and perhaps ten, years for the effects of it to wear off.



Whilst trying to keep their learning on track, students are also facing increasing financial difficulties. Many students work alongside their studies in the sectors most likely to be affected by the lockdown such as hospitality and services (see Covid-19 and youth employment – page 10). The Sutton Trust (page 49) reported 34% of students have since lost a job, had reduced hours, or not been paid for work completed. Those relying on support from families may also be struggling with jobs lost back home. At the same time, students are expected to continue to pay their full tuition fees and, for many, accommodation costs, whether they are currently residing there or not.

Prospects for the next cohort of students are also uncertain. Many will have never had the opportunity to visit their university choices and the turmoil of their final year assessments raises questions on whether applicants are being able to access their choices fairly. Along with this, applicants, along with the universities, are unsure about what their first year of university may look like. This has led to many potential students considering delaying starting their course. A survey conducted by the consultancy London Economics estimated that about 17% of prospective UK students would not enrol in September if coronavirus restrictions remained, costing the sector £763m in lost tuition fees and teaching grants. Alongside this, UK universities' financial reliance on international students will have huge repercussions as many will choose defer

or cancel places due to travel restrictions and concerns around safety.

Cambridge University have been the first to announce that there will be no face-to-face lectures in the next academic year. This is an attempt to give current, as well as incoming, students some certainty of what they might expect their education to look like in the near future. Questions remain though as to whether students are prepared to learn effectively in this way and staff are skilled and confident to deliver in this way. Questions also remain around the digital capabilities of the university systems themselves, and whether both students and staff are able to access these equally.

Linking back to the section on Covid-19 and the youth labour market (page 2), finishing university and moving into work is also in a precarious place. The Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) (page 51) found that students approaching graduation are feeling more nervous than excited about entering the world of work. A poll carried out by Prospects, one of the UK's biggest graduate recruitment websites, found that 28% of final year university students have had their job offers rescinded or put on hold. Moreover, analysis by IFS indicate that given the likely scale of the current downturn, graduates entering the labour market this year are likely to take at least five, and perhaps ten, years for the effects to wear off.

# What will the new normal look like for universities?

Guild HE (May 2020)



*As for many over the past few months, meetings, working, studying networking and socialising have shifted considerably to online platforms. Universities are in discussions around the range of scenarios that are being considered for the next academic year and beyond. **Alex Bols** from GuildHE discusses the possible implications and opportunities our universities are facing.*

## Scenarios

Whilst we are all hoping for the best, we are thinking through the various alternative scenarios of **how we manage to deliver a high-quality student experience that may be quite different from what was advertised.** If we do start in September, institutions are thinking through how this might happen.

Options include whether to **start the year entirely online, blended or on-campus** but with social distancing. Indeed, many estates staff are currently wandering round campuses with their tape measures trying to work out how many staff and socially distanced students could fit into different rooms, or planning supermarket style one-way systems for narrow corridors. Others are considering whether there might need to be different approaches for different years – with maybe first years on-campus with social distancing but other years studying online or only coming to campus at particular specified times.

One of the key challenges for many GuildHE institutions is the wide variety of professional and technical education that they offer. Many practical subjects are delivered with placements and work-based learning but also a range of subject disciplines that require artistic or performance space, highly specialist equipment, or hands-on experiences with humans and animals, all of which can be relatively difficult to replicate online in a meaningful way.

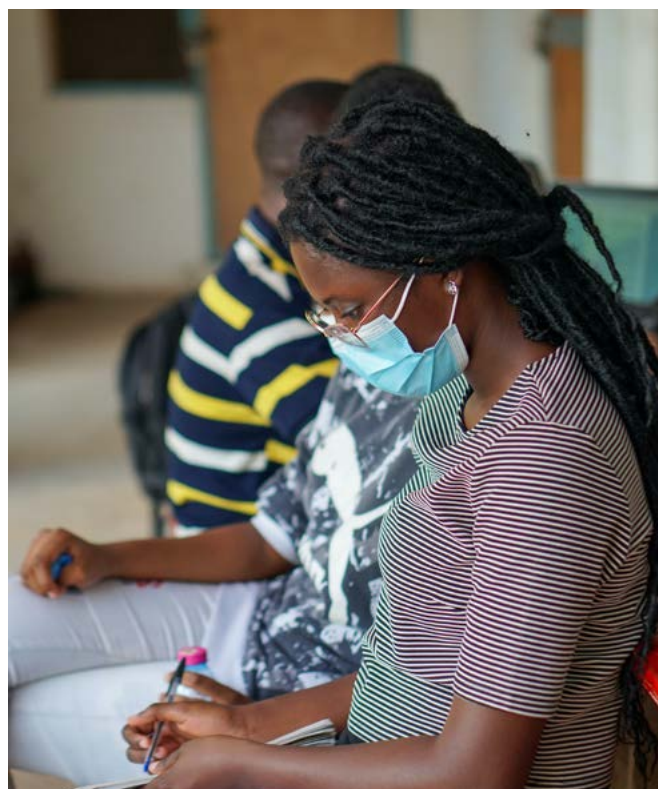
## Informing students

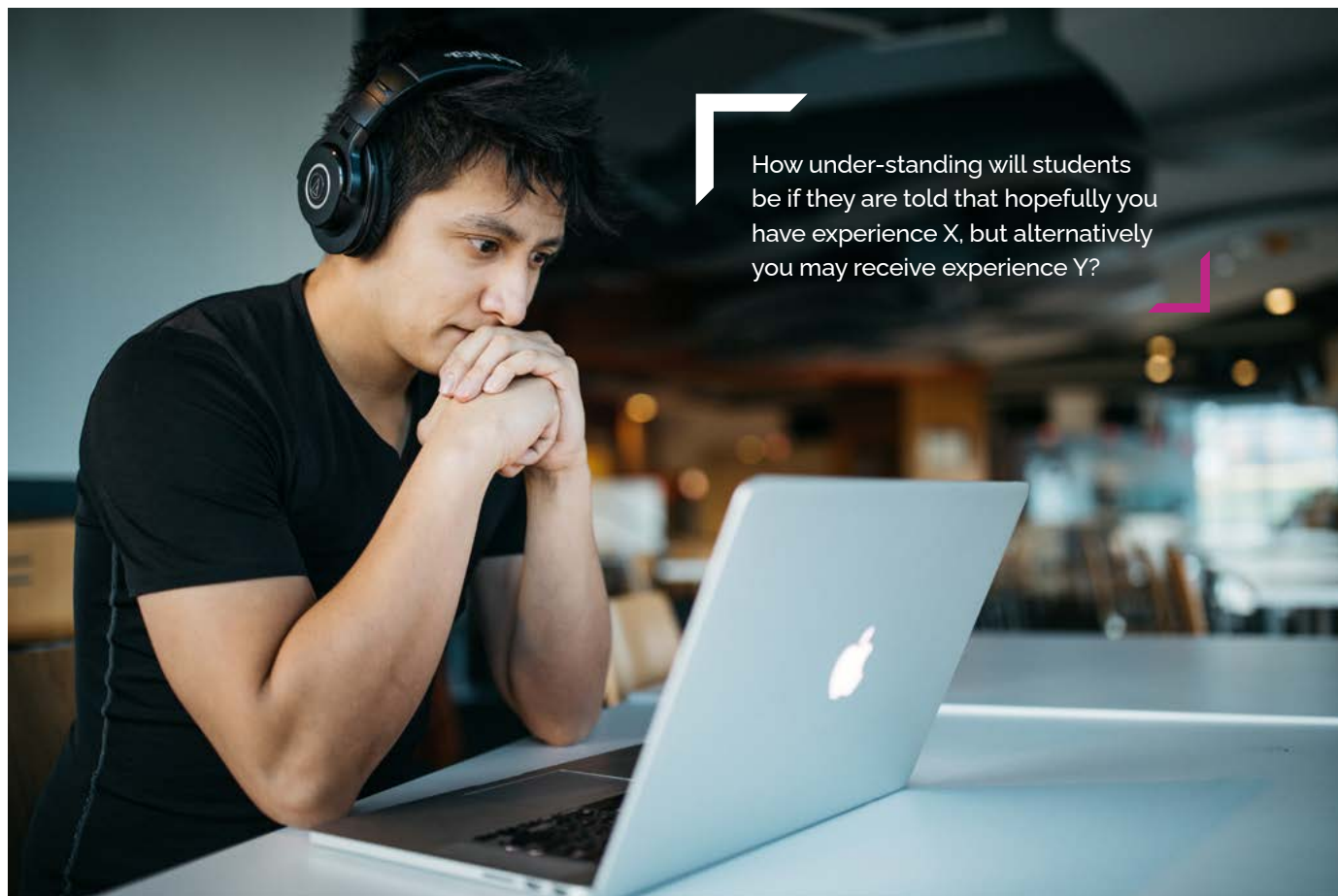
This poses many questions to institutions, not least what they are able to tell current and prospective students about their academic experiences at the start of the

academic year. How understanding will students be if they are told that hopefully you have experience X, but alternatively you may receive experience Y?

## Student experience

Institutions have been supporting the **mental health needs of staff and students during these past weeks.** Access money not being spent on face-to-face outreach in schools, can now be spent on a range of other activities supporting vulnerable students including mental health support. However, we still don't know the longer-term implications of having been on lockdown for several months.





How understanding will students be if they are told that hopefully you have experience X, but alternatively you may receive experience Y?

This raises **questions of whether students will want to continue their studies**, particularly international students, but also how we re-engage students, rebuild an academic community and consider questions around socialisation. This will raise many questions around transitions – from a disrupted school experience into first year, and from a disrupted first and second year into later years at university. There are also questions about the wider student experience that can be a key attraction of “going to uni” and many students’ unions are currently considering how they deliver virtual or distanced Freshers Weeks.

### Staff experience

The impact on staff will be equally important, many of whom may be returning from furlough. Socially distancing classrooms is one thing, but open-plan offices are quite another.

The **staff in the sector have reacted incredibly well to the current crisis** and getting their teaching materials online and supporting students. But this level of change

is not sustainable month after month and so how we support the mental health needs of staff will be essential to the longer-term resilience of the sector but also considering the discombobulating impact for some staff of completely re-thinking their teaching style to support learning online.

Now that we are seeing the benefits of a more blended approach to learning **are we going to simply return to old models of teaching?** If we are to get the most out of these blended approaches there will need to be significant investment in online resources and support for staff and students to get the most out of them.

### The future

The **higher education sector in five-years time is likely to look very different** from the one pre-Covid. We should however consider what features of the higher education sector that we would like to retain but also consider what might have changed for the better, not least their increased engagement with their local communities.

## Impact of Covid-19 on university access

**The Sutton Trust** (May 2020)

*As set out in the section on Covid-19 and Disadvantage (page 9), the pandemic is intensifying education inequalities of children from a very young age. The Sutton Trust additionally highlight the disadvantages some students are facing due to Covid-19 across the whole of the university journey.*



**This year's cohort of university applicants now face months of uncertainty**, as they try to make decisions on their future amid exam cancellations and a new system to determine grades, all without face-to-face support from their school. For students currently attending university, there are challenges too: delivery has shifted online, but not all students will be equally able to access that content, and many are also facing financial insecurity due to the economic impacts of the pandemic.

The Sutton Trust have examined the **ramifications of the current crisis on university applicants and current undergraduate students**, with a focus on young people from less advantaged backgrounds. The main barriers for the next cohort of students trying to access and participate at university are around assessment, support (including information, advice and guidance) and finance. The report highlights the following key findings

from the surveying of students who have applied to university for undergraduate study this year:

- **A fifth of university applicants (19%) have changed their mind about their university** attendance this autumn or have yet to decide. Of those who have changed plans since the Covid-19 crisis, some are now planning to take gap years while others have changed their preferred university. Working class students were more likely to have changed their mind.
- **Almost half (48%) of applicants feel the Covid-19 health crisis will have a negative impact on their chances of getting into their first-choice university.** 31% felt it would have no impact. Working class applicants were more likely to be worried about the negative impact (51%, compared to 43% from middle class homes).

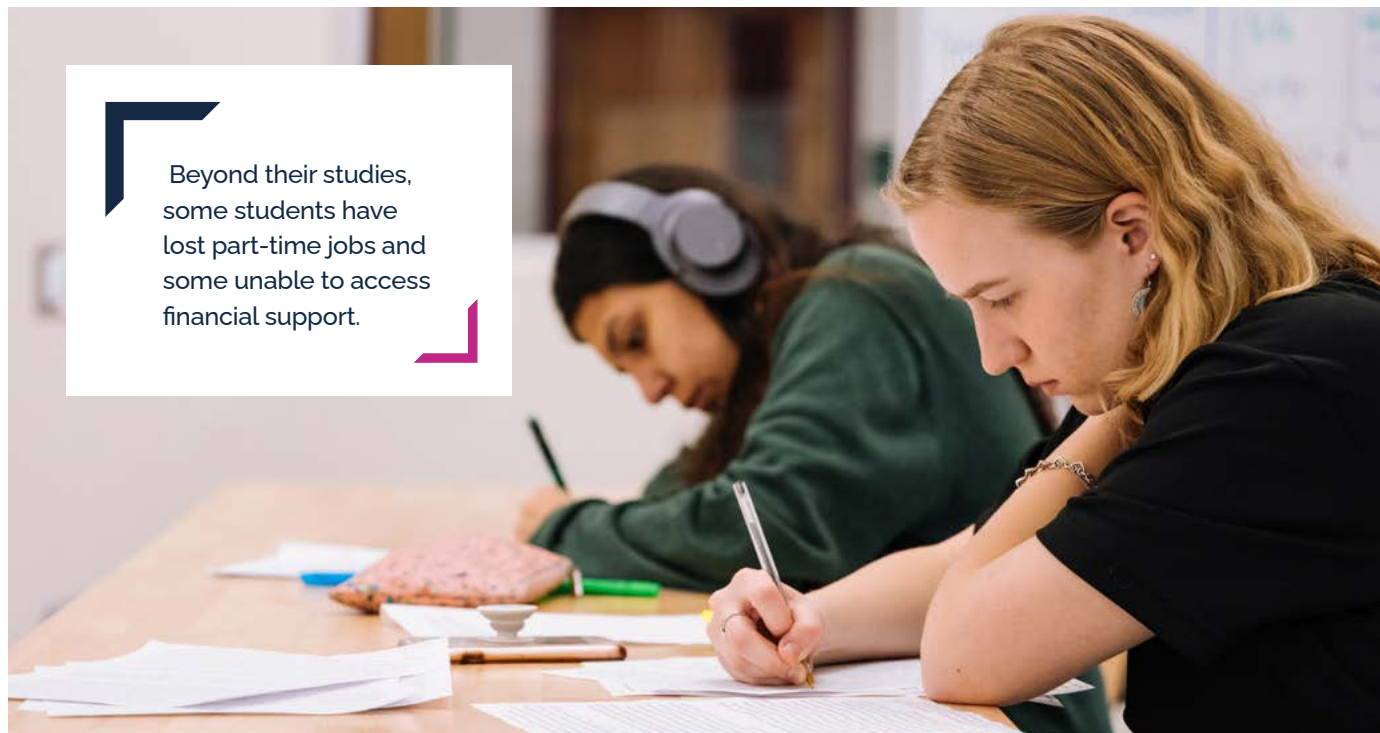
- Many students **do not feel they are receiving enough support from their school** for their university applications (35% are not satisfied overall).
- **43% of university applicants studying for A levels feel that the new assessment procedure will have a negative impact on their grades.** While most feel that the impact will be small, 72% felt that the new grading system is less fair than in a normal year.
- **Over half (52%) say they would be likely to take a replacement exam in the autumn if they don't get the grades they hope for.** 60% of those attending private schools would be likely to resit, compared to 52% at state schools.
- **Applicants from working class backgrounds were twice as likely to have insufficient access** to internet access, devices for learning or a suitable place to study, compared to those from middle class homes.
- **Private schools are almost twice as likely to be still teaching A Level content as state schools** (57% v 30% receiving regular work and feedback from teachers).

With universities closed since March students have now been forced to learn from home, with some leaving campus to move back to families, with study conditions likely to differ considerably between students. Beyond their studies, some students have lost part-time jobs and

some unable to access financial support. The survey of university students in the first half of April, found that:

- **74% of students report that exams and assessments are now being carried out online**, with 27% reporting that some marks are being based on previous assessment.
- **6% of students report that they do not have sufficient access to computers or devices required for learning and assessment.** 5% report that they do not have sufficient internet access, and 23% report lack of access to suitable study space.
- **30% of students report that they are less able to afford study because of the pandemic**, with those outside Russell Group institutions more likely to have such financial concerns.
- **34% of students report that they have lost a job, had reduced hours, or not been paid for work completed.** While 22% report that their parents have been less able to support them financially. Students at post-1992 universities were more likely to have suffered work-related losses.
- **30% of students are unsatisfied with the financial support offered by their university during the crisis, with 36% satisfied.** However, many students are unsure, indicating a lack of awareness of what support their university is offering.

Beyond their studies, some students have lost part-time jobs and some unable to access financial support.



## Open for business?

### Students' views on entering the labour market

Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) (April 2020)

*HEPI's report finds that although the majority of students feel confident about getting a graduate-level job once they leave university (79%), more students feel anxious rather than excited by the prospect. Just under a third of students (29%) stated their perceptions have changed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.*

The survey of over 1,000 full-time undergraduate students was undertaken between 27 March and 1 April 2020, at which time students remained fairly optimistic about their futures, with 71% saying their feelings towards their careers have not changed since the crisis. However, responses were influenced by the students' year of study: 42% of third-year students say the crisis has changed their perception, compared to 27% of second years and only 18% of first years.

Those who answered 'Yes' were invited to explain in what way their perception had changed. Most answers relate to concerns over the economy and employers freezing recruitment, with one student noting that there's been far more redundancies and I feel as if there's going to be a deep recession soon. One student said, I will be setting up my own business and I'm worried how the economy will cope following coronavirus.

Students need now, more than ever, to have access to career guidance from both university services and employers ...

Others were **concerned about entering professions impacted by coronavirus**. Students due to enter healthcare professions highlighted their concerns about the environment they will enter, their fears about staying safe and the expectations that will be put on them, with one such student noting that being a nurse in this pandemic is quite scary.

Concerns were also raised by those who will be looking to enter industries which have been halted by the virus, such as theatre and tourism.

Students also noted that **work experience placements and internships were being cancelled**: *[Covid-19] meant that I had to cancel work placements that I had lined up to improve my employability and help me to decide which sector I want to go into upon graduation. I now will not have the chance to do this as I am about to go into my final year so am feeling unprepared and tense.*

HEPI note that there are some gaps between students' expectations of the labour market and the reality, which, as we have proceeded through this crisis, may be even more pronounced, with many unable to access the sectors and roles they have set their sights on.



The outcomes of the survey highlight why students need now, more than ever, to have access to career guidance from both university services and employers in order to be reassured, better prepared and to navigate this increasingly uncertain world of work. Although many students know what they are looking for in their career, it may be more challenging to make that a reality and, as a sector, it is something we all need to play a part in supporting.

**Michelle Craig**  
Marketing Manager UKI at JobTeaser



## CASE STUDY

# Staffordshire University

*Staffordshire University are learning from the Covid-19 crisis to inform their long-term strategy in order to cultivate more flexible, robust and innovative ways of working which will empower their students to overcome future challenges.*

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, Staffordshire University's students and staff have quickly **pivoted their service provision switching almost exclusively to remote learning and working**. Rapidly scoping and implementing cutting-edge technologies have helped to facilitate this new norm. Working closely with the Students' Union, the university has developed cross-institutional plans and driven a culture change while still focusing on quality. Students quickly adapted to their new circumstances **demonstrating their resilience, dedication and courage**. In particular, ensuring that students are still being prepared for employment has been a top priority for the university.

## Digital GradEX

[www.staffs.ac.uk/gradex](http://www.staffs.ac.uk/gradex)

The annual graduate exhibition usually takes place at this time of year and offers students the chance to share their final year projects and network with employers.

This year Staffs Uni have introduced their **first Digital GradEX20 hosted completely online**. A unique opportunity for final year students to showcase their projects to employers on a digital platform, exposing students to a large network of employers in their industry of interest.

To apply, students submit 100 words about their project and future goals. Career Coaches are available to support the writing of these and to help students come up with ideas. Entries are shared with the university's extensive contacts in industry and publicised, so projects will be seen by more industry experts, recruiters and hirers than ever before.

The online GradEX portal has been updated to offer a more rounded experience for those exhibiting, with the added option to say whether students are still looking for work and if so, what type of opportunities. Students can include links to their LinkedIn profile, e-portfolios,

Instagram, YouTube video or CV too. The Career and Personal Development team are currently holding talks and workshops to support students and to make the most out of this.

### Virtual Internships

Virtual internships and placements are a great way for local, national and global employers to tap into high-calibre talent and skills at Staffordshire University. Not bound by office location or geographical proximity to the campuses, virtual interns can deliver tasks and projects for businesses remotely through digital means.

Further developing remote working skills and experiences of different software platforms, students and graduates have the opportunity to work on exciting projects with large and small employers. The university recruitment service is offering a variety of roles in marketing, digital design, data or software engineering and many more. Students are also encouraged to use virtual opportunities to try new and different roles to those they might normally apply for, while other prearranged internships are moving online.

### Digital Careers Studio

<https://blogs.staffs.ac.uk/careers/2020/10/01/welcome-to-the-digital-careers-studio/>

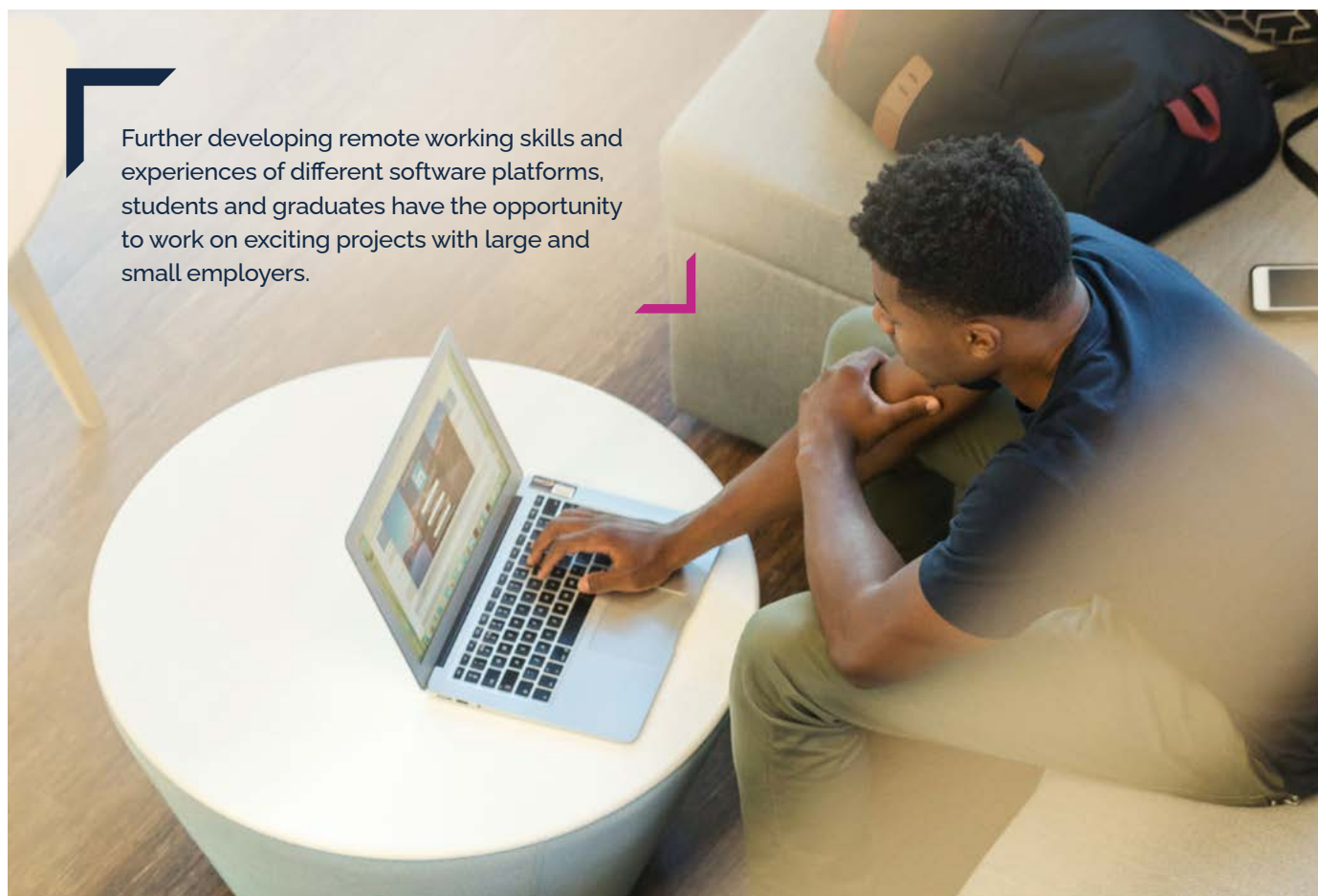
The Careers Service recently moved to a peer-to-peer delivery model and has been evolving the approaches by using technology in different ways. Covid-19 has accelerated these plans with the **Digital Careers Studio offering support online and via social media** along with other new initiatives such as video interviewing technology.

### Careers blog/vlogs

<https://careersatstaffs.wixsite.com/website/blog>

A new careers blog has been introduced, led by **Career Coaches who share regular posts and vlogs** with top tips and advice for students due to graduate this summer. Comparing blog views with last year the site has seen a significant increase in interaction and engagement.

Further developing remote working skills and experiences of different software platforms, students and graduates have the opportunity to work on exciting projects with large and small employers.



## OLIVIA BETHELL The Mill @ Stone (Restaurant)

Olivia is carrying out her role as digital marketing professional and is supporting the business in adapting during the current challenges, which includes delivering meals and doing online cooking lessons.



## CHARLOTTE CUNNINGHAM, MSc Digital Marketing Management

After being furloughed from her role with a Stoke-on-Trent ceramics manufacturer, Charlotte has found a virtual internship with a local microbusiness, a leather repairer.

Charlotte said: *The business currently has no digital presence, so I have offered my expertise for free to help them through this difficult time. It's great because it helps me with my course and doing the placement virtually gives me more flexibility to fit it around my studies.*

*Virtual internships are an ideal opportunity to gain experience and keep busy during lockdown. I think working remotely shows employers that you are committed, self-motivated and organised which can only be good for your CV.*

Charlotte hopes to launch her own digital marketing business, specialising in events and digital marketing campaigns, after she completes her master's degree.

## #WEARETOGETHER CAMPAIGN UniversitiesUK

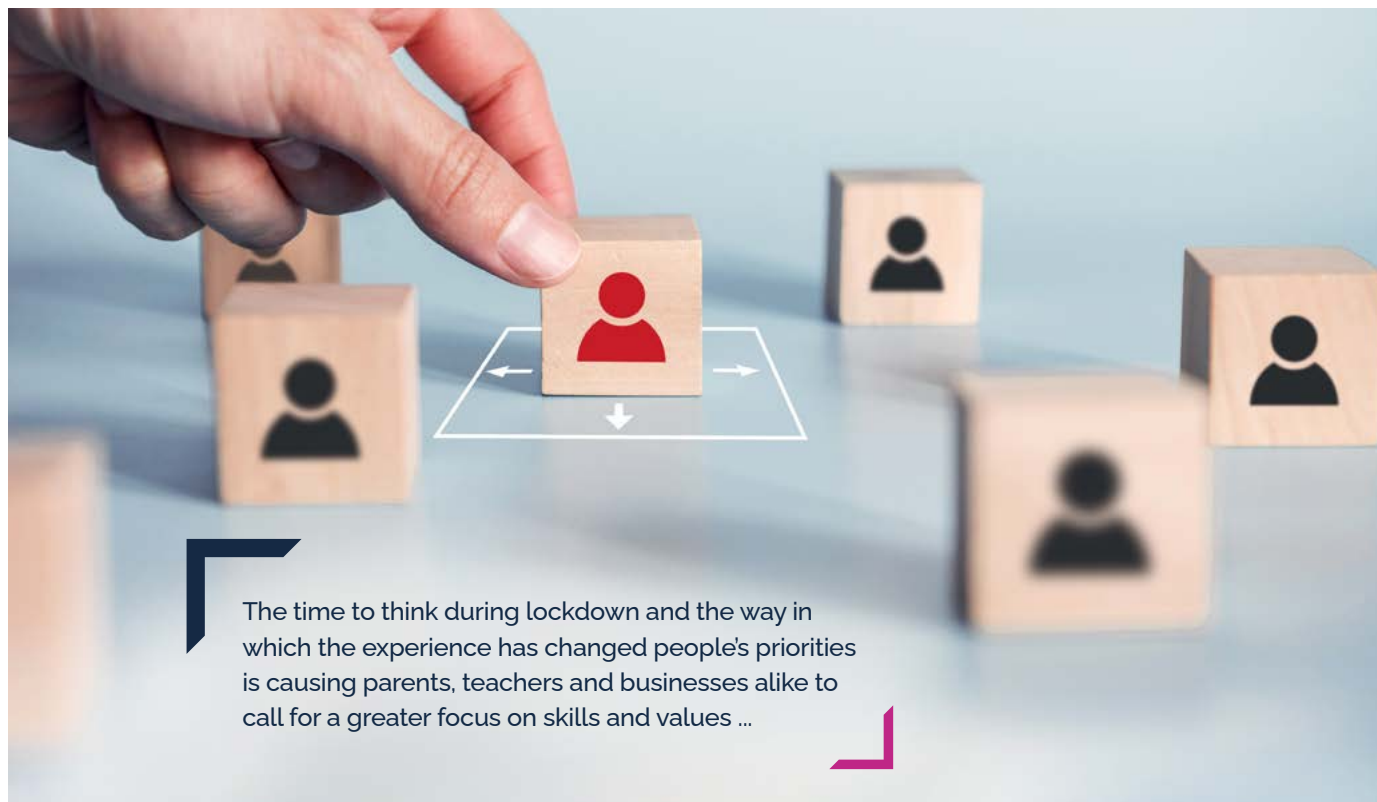
Universities are supporting the national effort against Covid-19 through leading research into developing a vaccine for Covid-19, providing thousands of medical and nursing student volunteers, supplying specialist equipment and facilities worth millions of pounds to support the NHS, as well as supporting schooling at home:

- The University of Southampton has produced a series of videos on how to have conversations with children and teenagers about Covid-19.
- The University of Birmingham is offering practical support to parents who have suddenly found themselves in a classroom scenario.
- 30 Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) students from Cardiff Metropolitan University have devised a weekly programme of activities designed for Key Stage 3 learners. From English to physics, including conducting experiments using household items.
- A unique collaboration from the University of the West of England Bristol is letting people in self isolation use robots to remotely access one of Britain's most iconic art galleries.



# Conclusion

*A huge amount has happened in a very short space of time as the education system has responded to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. This report has gathered and summarised some of the key rapid research and wider perspectives.*



The time to think during lockdown and the way in which the experience has changed people's priorities is causing parents, teachers and businesses alike to call for a greater focus on skills and values ...

- For the **youth labour market**, it is very clear that we have entered a period of severe challenge for the economy, which is likely to lead to the deepest recession on record. Based on evidence from previous recessions, the impact is likely to be felt disproportionately by young people – a third of 18-24 year olds were already furloughed or had lost their main job during the first months of lockdown.
- The wider impact of the crisis on **disadvantaged groups** has exacerbated existing divides. As schools and colleges closed, vulnerable children were left without a physical safe haven, while disadvantaged families did not have access to the equipment or connectivity to take full advantage of online and digital learning.
- **Schools** have had to cope with being particularly in the spotlight, from closures through to the controversy about when and how to reopen. They have tried to adapt wherever possible to online and digital delivery, whilst safeguarding a small number of children on site. The mighty end-point exams of GCSEs and A-Levels were cancelled and teachers required to estimate grades for this year.
- In the **Further Education** sector, the diversity of provision posed a particular challenge. Like colleagues in schools, colleges moved provision and assessment online wherever possible, but that presented particular challenges in the case of vocational and technical education. With the wider changes in the labour market, many apprentices have been furloughed or lost their jobs, with future apprenticeship starts very uncertain as businesses manage the ongoing risk of the crisis. Independent training providers in particular have faced enormous financial challenges.

- For Higher Education, students and staff were equally forced to make a rapid shift to online learning, which looks set to remain a mainstay in the next academic year. Many students have lost the part time work that they rely on to support their studies and all who are graduating are facing a very challenging entry to the labour market, while universities themselves raise significant fears over their future financial stability.

This is undoubtedly a hugely challenging portrait of the education system, but it is also true that during the crisis education professionals from every sector have stepped up to adapt and change to fit the rapidly evolving landscape. We must applaud them, but most importantly we must help them to hold onto some of the changes that they have made to create a silver lining from this crisis – **a renewed and reinvigorated education system.**

Clearly one aspect of that is greater integration of digital techniques and delivery to enrich the existing system and increase access, but it goes deeper. The cancellation of exams this year

has proved that they are not as essential as might have been thought. The time to think during lockdown and the way in which the experience has changed people's priorities is causing parents, teachers and businesses alike to call for a greater focus on skills and values, not a return to old-fashioned rote learning.

At Edge, we want to continue to support and develop thinking in this area as the education system sits at the forefront of developing the 'new normal', reinventing itself to mix online and face to face opportunities and to instil those essential 'post-pandemic' skills like resilience and adaptability that will help the next generation to tackle some of society's long-standing challenges.



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