



Education Committee

Oral evidence: [The impact of Covid-19 on education and children's services](#), HC 254

Wednesday 3 June 2020

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Members present: Robert Halfon (Chair); Jonathan Gullis; Tom Hunt; Dr Caroline Johnson; Kim Johnson; David Johnston; Ian Mearns; David Simmonds; Christian Wakeford.

Questions 383-451

Witnesses

I: Anne Longfield OBE, Children's Commissioner; David Laws, Executive Chairman, Education Policy Institute; and Natalie Perera, Executive Director, Education Policy Institute.

II: Professor Becky Francis, Chief Executive, Education Endowment Foundation; James Turner, Chief Executive, The Sutton Trust; and Susannah Hardyman, Chief Executive, Action Tutoring.

Written evidence from witnesses:

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Anne Longfield OBE, David Laws and Natalie Perera.

Chair: Good morning, everyone. It is good to see a very distinguished panel of witnesses today. It is more like a roundtable than a heavy scrutiny session. Each of you, in your own way, has been doing some remarkable work over the past few weeks.

I will start with the Children's Commissioner but first I ask the witnesses to introduce themselves, with their titles, for the benefit of those watching. Anne, we will start with you.

Anne Longfield: I am Anne Longfield, the Children's Commissioner for England.

David Laws: I am David Laws, Chairman of the Education Policy Institute.

Natalie Perera: I am Natalie Perera, Executive Director of the Education Policy Institute.

Q383 **Chair:** Thank you. I hope it's okay to call you by your first names. I will start with you, Anne. Over the past few weeks, you have written quite extensively in briefings and newspaper articles on the importance of children going back to school and the effect on vulnerable children. Will you expand a little on that and explain how important it is for children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to be back in school?

Anne Longfield: My main focus over this period has been to highlight how the very vulnerable children, who experienced vulnerability before lockdown, became heightened in every aspect of their vulnerability during that lockdown period. That really looked at a number of aspects: first, vulnerability in the home context—highly important in terms of their learning, and highlighting the work that I have been doing over the last three years to highlight vulnerability and the fact that about 2 million children live in very fragile home environments with high levels of severe mental health conditions, addiction and domestic abuse, which of course has been recognised during this period.

There are also those who are much more hidden, such as young carers or those who are homeless or living in temporary accommodation. All will be at a distinct disadvantage during an emergency like this. There are those who are educationally disadvantaged, who started behind relative to their peers in school, who might be behind in terms of their development goals when they start school—we know that about 13% of children are, and in some areas it is much more—and those who will not come out of school with the basic levels of qualification, which is about 20%. There are also those who did not have the tech, the access to broadband or the digital support that they need to be able to survive this kind of period.

Those are the ones that I have been looking at particularly. I have also been aware that although many were disadvantaged before, some are experiencing additional disadvantages over the period—parents might have lost their job or there might be additional trauma within the home. For all of those, there are of course actions that can be taken to mitigate them. I have been very clear in pushing for the Government to acknowledge them, identify the level and scale and then take action on each one, in a joined-up way, to mitigate the risks, but also to help children get the springboard they need to be able to recover.

Q384 **Chair:** Thank you. Can I ask the whole panel what they think the effect on the attainment gap will be of so many children not being in school, particularly disadvantaged children?

David Laws: Do you want me to start on that?

Chair: Yes, please.

David Laws: So far, we do not have any reliable data from England that allows us to say with certainty what has happened to the gap so far. Obviously, we also don't know how long the period of disruption is going to last. But we can say three things about the gap and what is likely to happen now.

The first observation is that we went into what is effectively an education crisis in a not particularly strong position in relation to gap closure. We had seen the gap, fortunately, close in England over the last 10 or 15 years, from Government to Government, but over the last couple of years the closure of the gap appears to have ground to a halt, so we go into this crisis without any positive downward momentum to narrow the gap, and at a point that was already looking like it could be a turning point towards a more adverse direction.

Secondly, we cannot say for certain what has happened to the disadvantage gap so far, but as we have heard from the Children's Commissioner, all the evidence that has come in so far, both about what happened in previous similar crises and in the surveys undertaken by the Sutton Trust and the IFS, which are very useful, indicates that disadvantaged youngsters are suffering more and are less able to cope with a home learning environment than youngsters from more advantaged backgrounds.

The third point that we would want to make is that recently people have lost sight a bit of the fact that there is one particular group of children who have not benefited from gap closure over the last 15 years. That is those who find themselves in persistently disadvantaged households, where their parents are out of work for 80% or more of their time in school. For those young people, the gap has not shrunk over the last 10 or 15 years; it has actually increased slightly. And we think, given that the gap is likely to increase for all disadvantaged youngsters over the next year or so, that the persistently disadvantaged are likely to fall further behind other students than they have at any time in the last couple of decades.

That presents a particular challenge to parts of the country with very high densities of those disadvantaged pupils. In some parts of inner London, one in four pupils is in that persistently disadvantaged group who are two years of learning behind other students by the time they take their GCSEs. If we look at other parts of the country, where one in five pupils are in the persistently disadvantaged group, we have places like Liverpool, Knowsley, Manchester, Middlesbrough and Sunderland. We know that the Government wanted to level up opportunity over the next few years. I'm afraid that in the absence of interventions to stop the gap widening, we are not going to see a levelling up, particularly for this group, but we may see the most difficult circumstances that they have faced for some time in relation to other pupils.

Q385 **Chair:** Natalie, do you want to say anything?

Natalie Perera: David has summarised the points that we wanted to make from the EPI. There are just a couple of things to also flag. We will not be able to know the true nature of the gap until after students have taken their exams next year, 2021. Once we get the data for that, we will be able to analyse it and create a true understanding of what started to happen post covid.

As well as those persistently poor pupils that David described, there are—Anne touched on this too—other groups within that disadvantaged category that have also not fared so well over the last few years. They include black Caribbean pupils, pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, and certain pupils for whom English is an additional language; that will depend very much on what their home language is and how newly arrived to the country they are. So as well as looking at the overall indicator of disadvantage, we need to focus in on these particularly vulnerable groups as well.

Q386 **Chair:** Anne, you answered some of this in your opening remarks. I know that many schools have been doing incredible things for pupils, because I have seen it in my own constituency of Harlow, but do you have any particular view on how the schools have actually coped during this, and how well they have been able to get their children learning, and helping them, whether it is online or sending homework home? Should the Department have set out much clearer guidance from the very beginning to schools on what should happen in terms of making sure that children learn during the lockdown?

Anne Longfield: We have all seen the fantastic examples of what some schools are doing, especially those schools that are in areas of disadvantage and those schools that have always acted in this way. I have spoken to a lot of schools, and kids as well, and what I have come to realise is that actually schools have not necessarily changed the way they work over this period. If they have always engaged with the community, they have continued to do so and enhanced that, and if they have been schools that have prioritised learning in different ways, they will be continuing to do that. So, there have been some fantastic examples of absolute lifelines in communities.



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However, what strikes me most of all is the lack of consistency. When you talk to young people about their experience, it goes from complete full-day classes on Teams to those who have not yet had a phone call with anyone. It goes from schools that are dropping off learning packs for children in care, talking to them, and picking up those packs at the end of the day, to children who are working with their parents. Then, of course, the fact of the matter is that there is an awful lot of children who won't have had very much, if anything at all.

I have been looking at Teacher Tapp surveys, and a survey that they did over April or March said that teachers believed that two thirds of children were going online for less than two hours a day, and that increases to 90% not getting more than two hours a day online for disadvantaged groups. The number of children who have been falling through the gaps between the online access and what is available to them, either at home or at school, is significant.

I know that we will talk about coming back to school, but a lot will depend on how many children get into school before the summer and before September, but I do believe there was a need for greater consistency and then for greater guidance from Government on what was expected. I know schools, for instance, have been given Teams—all schools, I was told, were given Teams and therefore all pupils could be given Teams, but I do not think that is widely known.

Q387 Chair: If I may interject, one particularly stark figure I saw was that 900 head teachers said that 700,000 pupils were not doing any school work at home. Do you recognise those figures—all of you? Anne, you just finish off first.

Anne Longfield: Certainly, 700,000 children do not have access to the tech; 700,000 children do not have access to broadband or a laptop. 60,000 do not have broadband; they will not have their own tablet. You can imagine that if a home has five people in it and one tablet, no one can dominate that all the time. That figure sounds very viable—very credible—to me.

I do think there should have been more guidance and more consistency with that. I think there was a role for more support from the REACT teams in regional areas, and the regional school commissioners, to be able to support that level of consistency. And I also think that for those children who are not going to be back in school before September, which could be many millions of children, there is now a need in this interim period for more consistency and guidance about what is offered.

Q388 Chair: Would the other witnesses like to comment on those issues?

David Laws: Yes. When we consider the vulnerability of many children and the households that they are in, it would be unsurprising if there was quite a small amount of learning going on at this time in those particular households.



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What we know from the useful surveys that the IFS and the Sutton Trust have conducted is that whenever you measure access to learning during this lockdown period, there is a very obvious social class gradient to it. Basically, children in private schools are getting the most support in the home environment and probably from their schools, and then that goes down to the most affluent in the state system, and then the poorest getting the least support. I think they have also flagged up some differences between children in secondary school, where perhaps it is easier to do some of the online learning and it is easier to engage students, compared with primary. Primary students are appearing not to be as engaged in online learning during this lockdown, so they may be falling further behind in some respects.

Chair: I am going to bring in David Johnston, Jonathan Gullis and then David Simmonds for some quick questions.

Q389 **David Johnston:** Thank you, Chair. My question is to David and Natalie. What you said about the persistently disadvantaged is very interesting. Schools are pretty good at knowing who is in the pupil premium category, but I wonder how good they are at knowing who is in the persistently disadvantaged category. If they are not as good as you think they should be, what can we do to make sure that they really target that group when all schools are back properly?

David Laws: That is a good question. They will obviously know who is on the pupil premium, but they will not necessarily know why and for how long the parents have been out of work—in fact, they most certainly won't know that. The only way that they are likely to pick that up is, first, if they are in an area where persistent disadvantage is particularly high. As school leaders, they will probably know what the local community is like and they will have a sense of how many of those households are out of work. The other thing, quite bluntly, is that those children are typically well behind the less disadvantaged disadvantaged pupils—it is two years behind, on average, for persistently disadvantaged pupils, when they are taking their GCSEs, versus one and a half years for the total number of pupils who are on pupil premium. If they are targeting the pupils with the weakest attainment and the worst progress among their pupil premium group, they will probably be doing a pretty good job of it.

Anne Longfield: I would absolutely agree with everything that David has just said, but there is the wider issue about the ability of central Government, local government and indeed partners being able to identify who those vulnerable children are and being able to ensure that they are not only known and seen, but get the support they need.

One of the things that my office has been doing over this period is working with the Cabinet Office and the DfE to advise on a local dashboard of vulnerability. From that, you would be able to feed in live information such as unemployment and things like accident and emergency attendance. That would really give a depth of understanding not only of the scale of need in an area, but also that looks at individual children. There is a system-wide approach here. Schools will know and be doing their best, but



there is a much bigger issue about other agencies being able to help inform that and support.

Natalie Perera: There might be a quicker and more practical thing that the Government can help with. Schools will know which pupils are eligible for free school meals. If that pupil has been in their school, whether primary or secondary, they will know whether they have been consistently eligible for free school meals each year. That is how they can target those persistently disadvantaged pupils.

Where that might break down is the transition between primary and secondary school. It is really important that the DfE issues really helpful guidance about how schools can support that transition, including identifying where pupils are more persistently disadvantaged.

Q390 **Chair:** Anne, do you have anything to add?

Anne Longfield: I am just going to give a plug for all the interventions before school. There is the two-and-a-half-year-old check, where we can be identifying where the vulnerabilities are. There is the foundation stage profile when they come into school. Along the way, there are lots of opportunities to identify and then take action.

Chair: Thank you. Can I very gently ask—just because we have broadcasting restrictions—the witnesses to be as concise as possible? We could listen to you for hours, but it is just because of broadcasting restrictions. Can I bring in Jonathan, then Tom?

Q391 **Jonathan Gullis:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you to Natalie, David and Anne for joining us. Obviously, the report suggested that before this, the gap between non-disadvantaged and disadvantaged was about 18.1 months when they got towards the end of secondary school. We have seen the paper that the Education Endowment Fund have released, and I made a quick scan of their summary of their findings this morning, to add in what David mentioned earlier about the Sutton Trust and IFS. Can I ask you guys what you expect that gap, or what do you perceive that gap, to be when we return? I'll start with Natalie, and then Anne and David, if that's okay.

Natalie Perera: Thank you. I think the paper that the EEF has published today is as close as we can get to an estimate of what is likely to happen to the gap. They have taken into account where schools have been closed in other circumstances, to help inform their estimations, but I think the main point is that there is widespread consensus that the gap will widen as a result of the pandemic, and we should be focusing on what can Government and schools do now to mitigate that.

David Laws: The only thing I would add to Natalie's comments and what I said earlier is that, obviously, the gap is a function of the attainment of both disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils, and we do not know yet just how badly affected many of the non-disadvantaged pupils—many of whom are not in obviously privileged households at all but just on average or sometimes below average incomes—will be. It is very important

to focus on this gap, which I think will inevitably increase over the period ahead, but what will also be very important and interesting for policy makers and others in your Committee is the extent to which there are also large learning losses across the rest of the pupil population, because whether this is just a gap problem or a generalised learning loss will inform to some extent what policy interventions we need.

Q392 **Jonathan Gullis:** Anne, before you answer, can I just ask is that what you are scared of in children's services? Barnardo's told us about the fact that there are going to be an awful lot of children who are not seen as vulnerable who have fallen into vulnerability due to the coronavirus pandemic. Is that something that you guys raised with the heads, while you are looking at your modelling to try and identify these people?

Natalie Perera: We are very worried about both children who were already identified as vulnerable and those who have become vulnerable since the lockdown period began. We know about one in five referrals to social services are made by schools, so when children are not in school, there is a real risk that they slip through the net.

Anne Longfield: We have seen a drop-off of about half of all the referrals to social services, because it is mainly GPs and schools who refer, as Natalie says. There are disadvantaged children that went into lockdown; there are those that have become either doubly disadvantaged or, indeed, new disadvantaged, if you like; but the scale of other children that will be not reaching their potential because of this time out of education is also immense. If we stick to the numbers of classes that are going back right now, that could be 8 million children that have been out of school for six months by September. That is a significant number of children.

We looked at figures for kids not going online, and that was before their parents went back to work and before the sun came out for any length of time, and frankly before other things became more interesting. The shops will be open soon, and kids could have spent two and half months browsing Primark but not been in school. The other distractions will increase, and those who are disadvantaged, who maybe have negative experiences at school, will have more and more time away from it. Some head teachers have relayed to me that they stay up worrying whether those children will ever come back, because the leap that that would need to get them back into school will be so vast.

Chair: I know David is waiting patiently but Tom and Kim have some quick questions.

Q393 **Tom Hunt:** This is mainly for Anne. Thank you for everything you have been doing over the last few months. You have done a brilliant job. I have seen some of your comments and completely agree with what you said.

I have two quick questions. First, on vulnerable children and the reasonably low levels of attendance at school, I have a slight concern that the reason why some of these children are vulnerable is, frankly, because of welfare issues at home and, sadly, sometimes because of



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their parents. It seems to me slightly strange that you are putting the ball pretty much entirely in the parents' court. To some extent, sadly, the damage has been done, but would it have been wiser for the Government earlier on to have made school more of a requirement than an option for children, and particularly for vulnerable children in the category where there are potential welfare issues at home?

Secondly, we spoke about the great work that many schools and teachers have done in these incredibly unique and challenging circumstances, but some of the national surveys would indicate that levels of online engagement have been fairly low, particularly in deprived communities—

Chair: Okay.

Anne Longfield: In terms of vulnerable children attending school, first of all it is very good that school places were kept open for vulnerable kids. I could not have assumed that would happen, but it did, so I was really pleased about that. The attendance levels have been low. When they came in first at 2%, I was really disappointed. They have now got to about 15% and seem to have plateaued.

There was obviously a big shock for everyone in terms of the lockdown, and the messages of "Don't use these places unless you have to" were loud and clear for kids with key worker parents and also vulnerable parents. The fact that they were called vulnerable places did not help. If they had been called priority places, seen more as an offer of support and respite, that probably would have been more helpful.

I know people have been working really hard to get those kids into school. Some will have health issues that do not make that possible. But, if I had to look again, in hindsight there is something at the beginning which would have made those messages clearer and made it more part of the deal that, actually, this was going to be a stressful period and respite was available, with the expectation being that those offers would have been taken up. That would have been clearer to everyone. As it was, that combination of factors—at an extremely stressful time, obviously, for everyone—meant that did not happen and the majority of kids stayed at home. I have forgotten the other part of your question.

Chair: Don't worry. Does anyone else want to comment briefly in a nutshell? Okay. I will bring in Kim.

Q394 **Kim Johnson:** Thank you. Hello, Anne. My question is about inconsistencies. You mentioned those between private schools and state schools earlier, but has that been broken down at all between academies, free schools and LEA schools?

Anne Longfield: I am not aware of that breakdown at the moment. I have seen the same surveys as all of us from the Sutton Trust, the IFS and others. It is a piece of work, actually, that I intend to do in the future, to look at how different groups of schools could be bonded. We may look at it in terms of maintained schools, academies and others and private schools, but we would also want to look at the culture of that school and



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whether it is one of the 10% of schools that exclude most pupils—in other words, whether it is a school that puts a high degree of emphasis on wellbeing in the first place. So there are some useful lessons to look back on, but clearly we are not quite there yet.

Q395 David Simmonds: My first question has largely been answered, but I would be interested in hearing from the panel about what learning you think there is for the Department about the guidance they provide to schools, parents and local authorities about checking on the wellbeing of this group of vulnerable children during this period.

As a follow-on, Anne, you mentioned the local dashboard of vulnerability, which I know is used widely by local authorities. In my local authority of Hillingdon, we have a quite effective system for garnering that information called CHAT—I think the London Borough of Harrow uses the same one—and the database called Access maps all that vulnerability which Government is aware of. For me, your point on talking to the Cabinet Office about that raises this issue. How do we avoid fragmentation in the response that we have to support children in catching up? At local level, the local authority has that statutory responsibility, it already has a high degree of awareness of who those vulnerable children are, what their circumstances are and what resources are available to deal with them and support them. My concern is that we end up with a whole slew of small, nationally commissioned projects that just do not have the traction in supporting that group which, as David described, has been persistently vulnerable and persistently disadvantaged for a long period of time.

David Laws: Natalie may want to say more about the guidance and actions that the Government have taken so far. The point that I wanted to make in response to your question, David, is just how important it is now, regardless to what has happened to date. We understand the Government have been responding to a pretty unusual crisis, not just in the Education Department, but elsewhere. Regardless of any slowness and errors to date, there is now a real need for a proper coherent plan including catch-up that schools can implement as soon as possible, but certainly by the time schools hope to be back in the autumn term.

For school leaders and local authorities, academy chains and others to do that work effectively, they need to have as much guidance as early as possible from the Government, including being in on any changes to funding that are planned—the sort of things that some of you, including the Chairman, have been talking about like the catch-up premium. If we are going to do things like this, we need announcements by early July at the very latest so that schools can plan for new arrangements, but potentially a persistence of home learning. They may need to do more on that in the autumn term.

Also, if the Government are going to deliver any financial support for catch-up, the earlier schools know that, the more effectively the money will be spent. Your report later this month will be helpful and Government



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action early in July before schools break up will be extremely important. Natalie may want to say more about guidance and vulnerable children.

Natalie Perera: In terms of what we can learn from the DfE and how it has approached guidance, again, one of our key concerns is the capacity of particularly the social care system before the lockdown period started. We know that around half of local authority children's services were already either inadequate or deemed "requires improvement" by Ofsted, so the capacity of the system to keep up during the lockdown period is something we have been particularly worried about.

We are also particularly concerned about students with education, health and care plans, where the DfE has issued guidance to local authorities diluting their requirement to meet the EHCPs. That is somewhat understandable given the pandemic, but there needs to be clear plans and a road map in place for how young people will get their needs met under their education, health and care plans.

Finally, we have seen, and it has been very widely reported, the delays in implementation of programmes like free school meals and getting laptops to vulnerable learners. The DfE needs to think about how it can make that more responsive.

Anne Longfield: I don't know whether I froze or the rest of the world froze earlier. Guidance is the thing that headteachers talk to me about most. They have to get it off their chest when I first speak to them and what they say is that they get so much guidance so rapidly updated that it is a job in itself to keep up with it. Something comes in on a Friday, 70 pages, it is updated on a Monday and it is another 70 pages, often without clear indication of what has changed. There has to be a better way of doing that. Also, it does not give the assurance that there is a long-term plan and we are working towards it in this way. It just feels it is an interim next step.

On guidance around social care, it has been pretty much the same—large amounts of it over time. I was particularly worried about the guidance around social care and the relaxation of regulations, and I spoke strongly about that. I think it was completely misjudged, not necessary, and could not be justified. Although it was understandable at the beginning of the crisis, many of the things that were put in to mitigate, such as worries about staffing levels, have not come to pass, so I have asked for those to be revoked, and Ministers have reassured me that they will review those in the very short distance future.

In terms of fragmentation, this is really important. There has to be a strong national plan now so that there is consistency. It has to be announced well in advance of its implementation and it has to have funding behind it. I would not want there to be national recruitment or, for instance, tutor groups to be able to run a national programme. That would take more time than was available, and schools know best what is available in that area. But there has to be clear expectation nationally, proper funding behind it, and then a support programme, again, using the



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REACT teams and those around them to be able to help local councils and local schools make the most of that funding and that expectation.

With the summer schools, I think there is only a window of about two weeks before they start to run out of time, and that is a really urgent to-do list for everyone who has the power to make it happen.

Q396 David Simmonds: It is reassuring to hear the views that have been expressed. Clearly, learning from the guidance is important. My concern is that there is a ready-made system that can put this funding to good use now. It already has the intelligence based upon local knowledge of who those children are and what their circumstances are, and has those resources at its disposal. I would like to hear a little more clarity about whether the best approach is to feed the resource and the additional money that has been announced into that system so that it gets straight to the frontline. Or do we need to go through trying to create national-level contracts that risk, as we have seen in the past, spreading the funding so thinly that the difference it makes in the life of that vulnerable child is so little that it is barely worth doing compared with what would have been achieved, for example, through a virtual school in the local area.

David Laws: I think David makes a very good point that if the structures that we have at present can be used to deliver the services that we need, then it makes sense to use those and the expertise that there is rather than to create things completely from fresh. There are some parts of the UK, including Wales, where their experience so far in delivering some of the programmes to schools through local authorities, for example, has actually been quite effective and arguably smoother than in England, so I think it makes sense not to reinvent structures if you have got structures that can deliver, particularly in circumstances that are new.

Natalie Perera: In terms of targeting support to schools for the catch-up and post-pandemic support, our paper to the Committee sets out a series of recommendations, one of which is a doubling of the pupil premium that is targeted at certain year groups and certain demographics of pupils, but essentially gives schools the money and the autonomy to use that funding to buy support and intervention programmes that best meet the needs of their pupils. We think that that is likely to be more effective than a national, top-down programme.

Q397 Ian Mearns: Just a quick point, Anne. In terms of organising the catch-up stuff and getting the army of people that would be required to do so, part of the problem with using that approach is that quite often the level of need in an area is in inverse proportion to the capacity of the area to meet that need. How do we get round that particular problem? I am not anticipating the Harrogate Townswomen's Guild rushing to the aid of central Gateshead kids any time soon.

Anne Longfield: Oh, I don't know!

I think you are absolutely right, and I agree completely with what Natalie and David just said. This has to be doable. We have to get the funding and



national framework there, but then we must leave it to those who have the local networks and local knowledge to make it happen. I think there is already the capacity there. You have students who will be deferring. When you look at the summer activities, you have youth coaches and others who will be able to step in and help. I completely agree that you have that inverse proportion, and extra help is needed to understand that and target that level of support. Understanding that in the first place, and then looking at what the right solution is and working in partnership with the people who have to make it happen, is really important.

Q398 Christian Wakeford: I have two very quick questions. The first is about EHCPs. The timescales for implementing an EHCP are extreme to say the least—26 weeks. What impact do you think that is having on pupils who were in the transition period before going into lockdown? Obviously, we do not have any extra resource or help targeted at them. For pupils who are returning to school, that potentially mitigates the ongoing impact on the attainment gap. However, for children not going back yet—predominantly years 2, 3, 4 and 5—who may already have not been getting a great deal of online tutoring, the potential for online tutoring is now diminishing because there is a greater teacher resource in the classroom. What would you suggest as a way to try to tackle the growing gap for those years?

Natalie Perera: On the point about EHCPs, that is another area that we have identified as a concern. Parents will be extremely frustrated at having got so far in the system and then it being curtailed before the lockdown. That is why I made the point earlier about the Government needing to reissue guidance so that local authorities and other statutory services can get back on track in providing the support needed for pupils with EHCPs now and those who are in the system trying to get those plans in place. Sorry, I forgot what your second question covered.

Q399 Christian Wakeford: The second question was about the years that are not going back. Online resource is now dwindling because more teachers will be in the classroom.

Natalie Perera: Again, as David said, it is really important is that the Government gets guidance to schools as early as possible—both about what should be happening in schools to support catch-up and wellbeing for the pupils who are there, and, if the lockdown continues into autumn, to understand what help and support should be available for the pupils who are not yet going to school. That could include, for example, extending the laptop scheme to disadvantaged children who are not currently eligible for it.

Anne Longfield: On children with EHCPs, there are also those who would not have been eligible, and would not have met the levels of need in the interim period. Just to reiterate, the scale of kids who are going to be in the situation—*[inaudible.]*

In September, we do not know, first, how schools will need to operate, in terms of social distancing and blended learning, because there is not



physical space; and, secondly, what are the plans if there is another spike. This needs to be modelled. I do not know whether there is modelling going on, in terms of learning lost and different options. I would expect that. The laptop scheme needs to expand, too.

Q400 Chair: Before I pass over to Jonathan Gullis, can I ask you this? We are going to come on to the catch-up programme, and as you know I am a strong supporter of it, and I really welcome what you have all been saying. I think it is brilliant. The question that many people ask is how you get those vulnerable children in a catch-up programme, so it is not just the parents who may be motivated already who send their children to these catch-up schools, extra tuition or whatever it might be. I just wondered whether any of you could answer that. David, you go first. Anne, your connection has gone; I don't know whether the broadcasters can re-establish you, please.

David Laws: It is worth saying on the catch-up work that, to the extent to which some of that is small group or one-to-one tuition, there is already quite a lot of online tuition going on, including by some private sector operators, and a lot of that can be quite effective. We know from the EEF toolkit that one-to-one and small-group tuition can have quite significant impacts. Some of that could be going on online and then, as students come back into the school environment, schools can also be using additional pupil premium or catch-up premium, as you have advocated, to deliver the type of evidence-based interventions that the Education Endowment Foundation has recommended.

Natalie Perera: Just to add to that, it is really important when we think about how we engage disadvantaged young people that we do two things. First, we must make sure that they are ready to learn. Our summer school recommendation focuses more on wellbeing and social engagement activities that look to improve young people's mental health and wellbeing, so that they are then ready to learn and to catch up. Secondly, they should not be stigmatising. For example, summer schools or summer camps should be made available to all pupils, but with targeted endeavours to bring in the most disadvantaged too.

Q401 Jonathan Gullis: As the Chair mentioned, I am a huge supporter of the summer catch-up programme, and have advocated for it on the Committee before. For the witnesses' sake, I am a former schoolteacher. Before entering politics, I worked in secondary schools all my career, and as a head of year. I completely agree with Natalie that if we are going to do a summer programme it cannot be simply about education; it also has to have some socialisation and wellbeing, which will be vital to feed in.

Obviously, there are all these different packages and ideas out there, and it is coming to what you think can realistically be afforded, because there is a cost to covid. It is no secret that hundreds of millions have already been spent. Every Department in Government is going to want a slice of a smaller piece of cake. David, I appreciate that you were in Government during difficult times of financial hardship in 2010-15. I was just wondering what you guys think is a realistic model of what we can do.



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One of the things that I think is misconceived about the summer catch-up programme is that, when I mention it, teachers think that I am saying, "You must go back." I have actually advocated that it be the third sector, the voluntary sector—ex-teachers like myself or retired teachers who are keen to come back in. I would be interested to get your thoughts.

Chair: One second—Anne has just come back. The question is from Jonathan Gullis, on the catch-up programme and how it would look, and that it is not just official school openings; it is something much more than that.

David Laws: On funding the programme, it seems quite unlikely at this point in time that there will be significant underspends in the DfE budget. Given that their budget has been under pressure for some time, I would think that if they do want additional funding to catch up they are likely to make a bid to the Treasury in a potential July budget.

We know from research on extra spending, particularly on disadvantaged students, that it does, if structured well and based on evidence, have quite a big impact on progress and learning, and then on their probability of being in employment, their earnings, and their probability of being in poverty. In other words, there is potentially quite a big cost-benefit gain to the country if we avoid learning loss, improve productivity and keep people in employment in the future.

You can argue that so far in this crisis, the Treasury has been willing to spend an extraordinarily large amount of money where it believes the crisis has justified it, and where there is a clear cost-benefit return. We think the package we have recommended on the catch-up, targeted at effective interventions and the most disadvantaged youngsters, is one that would have a good cost-benefit to the Treasury and one that they might therefore be sympathetic to funding centrally, rather than through DfE projects.

Q402 **Jonathan Gullis:** I could not agree with you more. There is going to be a cost to covid and the economy is going to be hit hard. We are aware of that and in my own patch in Stoke-on-Trent, we are seeing that reality start to play out. But, while I am a small "c" conservative, I don't like big state intervention and I believe in lower taxation, I want to get across to the DfE and the Treasury that if we do not invest in education—the biggest driver for social mobility—we will have a whole generation of youngsters failed. The economic damage that that will do in 10 to 20 years will far outweigh the damage we will see now. I wanted to make that point to you. Natalie, I will come back to you.

Natalie Perera: On the summer catch-up programme or summer camps, we completely agree. In our written evidence, we recommend that those summer camps should or could be primarily staffed by early years workers, play workers, youth workers and, as you say, former teachers. It does not have to rely just on the teaching workforce, and it should not be focused on academic catch-up. We do not have the data on the workforce to be able to model the scale or how much it would cost, but I met with



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the DfE special adviser, who said they are looking at summer school options, and I offered them our help to look at it.

Q403 **Jonathan Gullis:** Anne, before I come to you, I want to say that I loved your article yesterday. I was saying before, when you dropped off, that I think summer schools are a must, and like Robert on this Committee, I have called for them time and again. I would like to hear your thoughts on the costs of this, if possible.

Chair: I don't want the Committee to turn into a number of Members and you, Anne, but, while I can't speak for everyone, a number of us definitely think you are doing a remarkable job, especially in the current climate, so thank you.

Anne Longfield: That is very kind of you—more to come. I missed too much there, and I might get cut off again, so I need to go fast now, but on the catch-up programme, looking just at the amounts here and the business case, it will be about 2% of the education budget. If you took it into a billion, you are only talking about a small amount here in terms of education.

The risk of not doing that, in terms of both the short and long-term impact on kids, is not only that you will have a generation of kids who will come out without the grades they could or the learning for future life they could, but, if we think there is a recession coming, we want them in the best place to be able to tackle that. We have seen the huge, big, inventive, fast furlough scheme, the business support scheme and the like—and, indeed, the NHS—all of which have shown what can be done. We have to do that for children. The PM has said that education, children and schools are a priority, so this is the next stage of that.

Chair: Could you carry on, but very briefly, please?

Anne Longfield: I have been an advocate of the summer schools for some time, but what we need here is that creativity. Most schools I have talked to over this period have said they would love to do it; they used to do it but stopped because of funding. They would know how to do it. A secondary school would probably have 70 to 100 kids. It would be something that people understand completely and are well-versed to be able to make happen. The council and local authority, too, would be able to see those benefits and be able to help.

Q404 **Chair:** I'll just bring in David very quickly. You know the Treasury more than most. Is there a danger that the Treasury will think, "Actually, we've got a huge problem with a lack of skills and we need to meet our skills deficit. There are going to be thousands of people unemployed, so all the extra money we have needs to be invested in that."? Not that I am against that—as you know, I am passionate about skills and I want investment—but there is a danger that all the money goes to that and is not spent on these kinds of programme.

David Laws: I think that the Treasury will certainly be concerned about learning loss, the impact on productivity and future wages, and, therefore,



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tax revenue. They will be attracted by packages that are time limited, and we've talked about a one-year boost to the pupil premium. Of course, this crisis could last longer, but they would be more attracted to things that do not add permanently to public spending.

You are right that, understandably, they will be very concerned about young people who are completing their education journey or expecting to enter the labour market this year, particularly with lower levels of qualification. There is going to be a strong cost-benefit case not only for helping some of those youngsters to catch up, particularly if they haven't got a sound basis in English and maths, but for keeping them in education, improving their skills and making them go on to do higher levels of qualification, rather than entering the labour market, becoming unemployed and having long-term scarring impacts. You are quite right that the Treasury will be looking not only at education in schools.

Chair: Thank you. Jonathan, do you have anything more to say before we go on to Tom?

Q405 **Jonathan Gullis:** The only quick thing is that we talked about the guidance at present, but my big concern for my teachers is what that is going to look like in September. At the moment there are a lot of assumptions that the current situation is going to continue, although it may be tweaked. I am interested to gauge your opinions about whether schools should be going back in September. Should we be opening the doors again? The longer this goes on, the more damage happens, and headteachers are desperate for clarity.

Chair: Can we have one-sentence answers please, as we are running quite a bit behind schedule?

Natalie Perera: All I will say is that the DfE is starting to issue that guidance ASAP, as David said. On the question of whether schools should reopen in September, that needs to be guided entirely by the scientific advice.

Chair: Thank you. Anyone else, briefly?

David Laws: I was just going to add that there has been a temptation to think that we are in an environment of home learning now and, hopefully, we will be back in September. Sadly, we may end up with considerable disruption to schools in September, October and November, so planning and giving guidance now for a situation where there may be some home learning for a lot of pupils for a long time would be very sensible. Starting the process of thinking about catch-up now, rather than giving up on various children who are not coming back into school until September, would be very important. There should be engagement with all children, in all year groups, before the summer.

Q406 **Tom Hunt:** This is a question that I was going to ask earlier, which is to do with Ofsted. We had a session with the chief inspector from Ofsted a few weeks. She said that when inspections start in future, they wouldn't assess and look at how schools have performed over the last couple of



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months. Clearly, these have been unprecedented circumstances and it is difficult to do that, but, from the national surveys, it would seem that most schools have done a great job.

Some, perhaps, haven't done a good job and the damage caused to children by that will be significant. Does the panel think that, in future, Ofsted should cast an eye, in a very careful way, over how schools have performed over the last few months and how they have risen to the challenge presented by covid?

Anne Longfield: I do completely agree. It is interesting that in some European countries, their inspectors have increased their inspections during this period, but in a supportive way. They have given guidance to people as well.

The clear emphasis needs to be on catch-up, on support for disadvantaged children and on support for emotional health and wellbeing, as part of that overall analysis. I agree completely that Ofsted needs to be part of the recovery, in a much more supportive role, but really looking at how schools have responded.

David Laws: I think it is very important that Ofsted reviews the lessons from the period of closure, not least if this is going to go on for some time. There is no reason why they cannot do a report that looks at best practice, without that being a commentary on each individual school at a time of maximum disruption. They should do a general lessons piece of work and I am sure that would be welcomed by most schools.

Q407 **Chair:** Can I just ask you to set out briefly—I know you have sent the evidence to us, but just for the public—what you think the costs of a catch-up programme would be? If you could just give us figures because of time, that would be very helpful. Anne, do you want to start?

Anne Longfield: The EPI is looking at a catch-up programme of, I think, £1.2 billion. I have not costed a summer school, but clearly it would be within there. You have to look at the cost-benefit analysis, which is that the risk of not doing it would be the deficit in learning for those children.

Natalie Perera: To be clear, our £1.2 billion figure only includes the proposals on an uplift to the pupil premium that we make, and that is for one year only. For the summer schools, again, we have not costed it, but we are happy to work with the Department to do that.

Q408 **Chair:** I am a big supporter of the pupil premium, but the problem is that there is no ring-fencing of it at all, so it can be spent on anything, often including helping with the deficits in the school budget. If you just had a pupil premium-plus, as you are suggesting, is there a danger that it could go the same way? Would it be better to have a separate pot called a catch-up premium?

Natalie Perera: It could be. The main issue is that it is targeted at the right pupils. The pupil premium does come with clear accountability and transparency requirements, so I think that is sufficient.



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David Laws: Natalie has already described our pupil premium catch-up proposal. I just want to come back to the point that I think you were making earlier, which is that there is a very strong case for significant funding for the colleges sector and for 16 to 19 and later provision, to stop a generation of young people being dumped into a labour market that does not exist. Particularly for lower-skilled youngsters, 16 to 19 always tends to be a Cinderella-inflected area. In this crisis, it needs to not be overlooked; it needs to get funding as well as this catch-up support.

Anne Longfield: Briefly, I would propose ring-fencing, because then you know where you are and it gives it that priority. However, in terms of accountability, it has to be very clearly able to justify lessening the disadvantage gap. That is what has to be held to account.

Chair: Thank you. Before I bring in Kim finally to ask about exams, Caroline has a question. Good morning to you, by the way; sorry, I hadn't seen you on the call.

Q409 **Dr Caroline Johnson:** Morning; I've been sat here quietly. I wanted to ask a question about the summer school. Would you envisage that being something available to all children, or just targeted children, and if it is the latter, how will you identify which children will need it? I understand that teachers know which children were significantly disadvantaged before this pandemic, but there will be families that have fallen on to difficult times during the covid pandemic who they may not be aware of. How would you suggest that those families are identified?

Anne Longfield: Some of this depends on what amount of money is available. For the size of scheme that I would see, I would want it to be as much towards a universal offer as possible; however, you will need to target it, because some children will really benefit from this. It can be done on a school basis, so the school can identify the children. It could be open to children for a whole range of measures, but the school can additionally encourage some children to attend. We talked previously about how that can be done: how children's services, working with directors of public health and schools, can identify those children. I think it is something that is very doable. If you ask school headteachers, they will be able to tell you which kids will need this, and could be actively working with parents to help get them into those classes.

One final thing I will sneak in is that there was a question about how you get the kids in and not have them stigmatised. It has been done in the past. You have to make them appealing; you have to make them more than school learning during school time; and you have to get a whole range of people in who can make them attractive and fun, and work with parents, so kids want to be there.

Chair: Kim, we are going to finish with you. We have some important questions on exams.

Q410 **Kim Johnson:** Thank you, Chair, and hello, panel. My question is about exams. There are concerns about the system for calculating exam



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grades. Research from the Sutton Trust states that disadvantaged students may lose out under a system of awarding grades that relies on teacher assessment, and that will particularly apply to black pupils. What are the issues with relying on teacher assessments and unconscious bias? What should be done to ensure that disadvantaged students are not adversely affected?

Natalie Perera: The EPI responded to the Ofqual consultation on that. We highlighted precisely those concerns about the impact of teacher bias on certain groups of pupils, including black children and those with special educational needs. We proposed an alternative method that might mitigate, or that would mitigate, some of those inherent biases.

Ofqual have since announced that they are sticking with the proposals that they consulted on. The question is, where do we go from here to make sure that those risks do not emerge? Where we need to focus now is on the opportunity to take exams in the autumn, and making sure that for disadvantaged pupils in particular, they have fair access to taking those exams, they are encouraged by their schools and their families to do so, and the cost of exam fees does not pose a barrier to schools for enabling those disadvantaged children to take their exams in the autumn.

Q411 **Kim Johnson:** Thank you, Natalie. My second question is about re-sits. Research from the Sutton Trust published in April found that since schools closed in March, nearly twice the proportion of pupils from middle-class backgrounds, 30%, have had access to digital learning online, compared with 16% of pupils from working-class backgrounds. That unequal access is likely to have an impact on preparation for autumn exams and has implications for equitable redress through the current appeals process. What barriers are disadvantaged students likely to face should they wish to improve their grade by re-sitting exams in the autumn, and what should the Department do to remove those barriers?

Natalie Perera: Again, I think it is going to be the level of catch-up that is needed, which we have talked about at great length during this session. Particularly important will be the lost learning for pupils for whom English is an additional language, where they will have lost a term's worth of interventions. It is critical during the lockdown period, and if and when schools fully reopen in the autumn, that schools are able to support those disadvantaged students to prepare for their exams if they choose to retake them. As I say, the DfE should help to make sure that cost does not pose a barrier to enabling that.

Q412 **Kim Johnson:** Do you believe that targeted funding should be made available? We have heard an awful lot during the crisis that frontline key workers tend to be black and low skilled, so their kids would fall into that risk category as well. Should the Department be focused and targeted on supporting the particular young people who you have mentioned in your report?

Natalie Perera: We have been clear that there are certain pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium, where targeted additional funding should be made available from September. One of the concerns we have about



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retaking or taking exams in the autumn is that students might be put off by schools if they incur additional exam fees. That is an area where we think the DfE ought to help.

Chair: David Laws, very briefly please.

David Laws: It is a good question. It underlines the need, in the autumn term as well as now, for all those disadvantaged youngsters to have the right access to IT at home, because there may still be learning disruption. If we get a catch-up premium, it would be possible for that to be used for online one-to-one tuition, which can be quite effective.

Q413 **Chair:** Anne, I will ask a final question directly to you, if I may. We talked a bit about this earlier, but do you agree that there is going to be, given the coronavirus, a new frontier of vulnerable children? That has been suggested by the Safeguarding Alliance that came to see us. That is going to be about not just free school meal pupils, but a whole range of different categories, particularly the just-about-managing and those who have now suffered, whether from a safeguarding crisis at home, not being in the home, joining gangs or whatever it may be.

Anne Longfield: I do, completely. What the crisis has exposed is the precarious nature of vulnerability. I have been talking about child vulnerability for a long time. Through this crisis, people have been able to see what that really means. There are also children whose families will be in very different situations as they come out of this crisis than when they went in.

There has been a welcome focus at the centre of Government on aspects of vulnerability for children. We need to follow through with support, planning and funding to help those children recover, and really to reset this whole system, so that we identify those children who are vulnerable and give them the support they need—across Government and locally—to be able to have the prospects we all wish them to have, which inevitably means starting early and helping them before school and through that school process.

Q414 **Chair:** Should the new definition of “vulnerable”—of more categories of vulnerable children—be made by you or the Government, or both? Should there be a new list of categories, so to speak?

Anne Longfield: I think this is absolutely essential, because vulnerability still gets defined as children with a social worker or—*[Inaudible]*—they don’t work. There does need to be a redefinition of what “fragile” means for children and childhood.

Chair: Okay. I think you have gone off, but I think we got it. I hope you can hear us.

Anne Longfield: *[Inaudible.]* We need to be particularly aware of that wider group of children and quite how that impact—*[Inaudible.]*

Q415 **Chair:** I think it would be useful if you, as the Children’s Commissioner,



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created a new list of disadvantaged children who will be very vulnerable. That might be helpful to Government and people in education.

Anne Longfield: I will do.

Chair: That's great. Thank you all very much. We have gone over time, but it was well worth it. I am hugely appreciative of all that you are doing. Hopefully it will be listened to by policy makers. We will now have a three-minute break before we welcome our new panel.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Professor Becky Francis, James Turner and Susannah Hardyman.

Q416 **Chair:** It gives me huge pleasure to welcome our next panel. For the benefit of the tape and those listening on Parliament TV, could you kindly introduce yourselves briefly, with your titles?

Professor Becky Francis: I am Professor Becky Francis, chair and CEO of the Education Endowment Foundation.

Susannah Hardyman: I am Susannah Hardyman, founder and chief executive of Action Tutoring.

James Turner: I am James Turner, CEO of the Sutton Trust.

Q417 **Chair:** Thank you very much. I would ask, because of broadcasting restrictions, that your answers be as concise and succinct as possible—that would be very helpful to us. We really appreciate your coming.

Could you all start off by setting out what you feel the loss in the attainment gap is since coronavirus, particularly in terms of the left-behind or disadvantaged pupils? In the previous session, David Laws mentioned something about overall learning loss. Have you done any analysis of that? Becky, do you want to start? If you are happy for us to call you by your first names, please just nod your heads.

Professor Becky Francis: That's lovely—thank you. It was great to hear the coverage of this in the first session. I think that you have already picked up that between 2011 and 2019, the attainment gap narrowed somewhat in both primary and secondary school. School closures due to coronavirus are likely to reverse that progress and our analysis—published today—which, as you know, is based on the systematic search of the literature on school closures, suggests that the gap at the end of primary school could widen between 11% and 75% between March and September, compared with its present size. That is really severe.

Of course, that analysis comes with caveats. Schools closed due to coronavirus are very different in terms of the situation compared with summer holidays closures more usually. That has been the focus of almost all the high-quality research in this area, so that is a challenge. Some of those differences might lead us to be more optimistic because there have

been such excellent attempts at support from schools and from families over this period of lockdown. So you might anticipate that there has actually been more learning gain than there would be during school holidays. But of course, those other differences might also imply that the projections are actually conservative because, whereas in the summer holidays schools are closed equally for all, we know that in the present circumstances—as the Sutton Trust and others have already said—although remote learning has helped many children, the degree to which disadvantaged kids have managed to engage and access provision has been on average lower than for other kids, right across a range of metrics.

There is a range of other reasons for which we might expect that differential to emerge: access to tech, which has already been mentioned—whether access to computers, screens, broadband and so on; the availability of resources in the home; and, of course, the differential ability of parents to support kids with their learning. All these are likely to compound the gap and we estimate that it will be very severe.

James Turner: Just to echo what Becky said, I think the EEF findings are really helpful in giving the big picture on what the attainment gap is likely to do over the next few months.

Our research has been looking at what home schooling means for a poor family compared with someone from a better-off background. We have already heard this morning that there are differences between the provision offered by private schools compared with state schools, but even within the state sector we have seen a lot of variability. Affluent state schools seem more geared up to online learning, for a variety of reasons, and the teachers also report that they are getting more work back from students and that that work is of a high quality. If you look at the other side, if you are serving a disadvantaged population, as Becky said, there will be problems with access to technology, there will be problems with a quiet place to work and it is less likely that your parents will be able to support you in learning. We think there will be a widening of the gap, which is why it is so important that we look now at what we can do while many schools are still closed, but also at what we can do in terms of catch-up when hopefully the majority of schools will be back in the autumn.

Q418 **Chair:** Thank you. We are going to come on to catch-up a bit later. Susannah, do you want to say anything on this?

Susannah Hardyman: Good morning. To give a little bit of context, Action Tutoring is a national educational charity that works with children from disadvantaged backgrounds who are at risk of not achieving national standards. We partner with schools and provide high-quality volunteers to support them in English and Maths.

We have heard enormous variation from our partner schools about their concerns and what is going on in home learning during this time. Some of this has been cited already—access to tech, parental ability to support, enough devices for the whole family and a quiet space to work. One



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headteacher summed it up brilliantly to me by saying that we are suddenly expecting parents to become teaching assistants, particularly for primary school pupils. For many in that community—this was from a school with 70% of pupils eligible for free school meals—the parents haven't got the time, the resources, the skills or even the language necessarily to be able to do that. That of course creates huge variation between pupils who do have those benefits at home and those who don't.

I would add that Action Tutoring has been around for eight years, with a mission to try to help tackle the attainment gap through the programme that we offer. We have seen some fantastic results with our pupils repeatedly outperforming the national averages for disadvantaged backgrounds despite being considered highly at risk of not reaching those national standards, so while the attainment gap hasn't been closing in recent years and in some places has been widening, there are pockets of good examples of where progress is being made, which we can learn from.

Q419 **Chair:** Can I ask something I asked the previous panel? In your view, should there have been more guidance from the Department for Education on what schools could do to help pupils who were not at school in the lockdown? The Sutton Trust has published a lot about this. The figure for kids not learning seems to be close to 1 million—700,000. It seems to be an extraordinary number of pupils.

James Turner: Some more guidance would have helped in terms of the variability we have seen in provision between schools, but it is a balance between moving quickly and offering comprehensive advice, while also recognising that teachers and heads are best positioned to be able to know what suits their communities.

I certainly think there are some things that have been good about the DfE response overall. The focus on vulnerable learners at the outset was absolutely right and the work that has been done nationally on things like the Oak Academy has been a really positive step.

Clearly, there is more to be done. We would like to see access to tech front and centre. The year 10 laptop programme is a great start, but it needs to go further and faster. We also agree with the previous panellists that we need a national approach to catch-up and we need that soon, if it is going to be effective in the autumn.

Susannah Hardyman: Schools were faced with some very immediate challenges. The headteachers I have spoken to have literally been driving around dropping off laptops and trying to purchase extra devices and then showing families how to use them. We have had big concerns about broadband access. They were also very concerned immediately about a number of safeguarding challenges for a lot of the pupils that we support—what the home environment was looking like and whether pupils were safe. I think those were the No. 1 priorities for a lot of the headteachers I have spoken to, before they could even get on to the learning. So much comes back to the point about tech and parental support. Until pupils have got the devices and the broadband and the parental support to be able to



engage with whatever the school is putting out, there is only so much that schools can do remotely, but the ones I have been talking to have been trying their absolute best.

Professor Becky Francis: I think you are aware that obviously our focus has been on teaching and learning. I think that there have been real challenges for the Department, and actually for all organisations seeking to support schools, in getting that balance right between too much and too little guidance. And there was a clear risk in the early days particularly that there could be information overload, and inappropriate instruction and accountability at a time of real crisis.

However, it is also important, of course, to think forward, and given the diversity in provision that we have been hearing about in this session, of course it would be good to move towards a minimum common standard, which we then encourage schools to build on ambitiously going forward.

Chair: Did Tom have a quick question?

Q420 **Tom Hunt:** It is particularly to do with the Sutton Trust survey, which showed that there have been reasonably low levels of online engagement. Let's be honest—one of the largest teacher unions in the country appears, from some of the statements I have seen, to have been actively discouraging some of their members from engaging in providing online learning, and to this day are trying to put hurdles in the way of schools reopening. To what extent do you think the positions adopted by those teaching unions have been detrimental to driving up the levels of online engagement during this period?

Professor Becky Francis: I think that everybody has been trying to focus on the balance between health, safety, recognising the importance of the continuing learning and engagement over this period, and I think that it has been really positive, as was mentioned earlier, that the whole sector and the DfE have been mutually concerned with this issue of the emergent gap, which we are focused on now.

I think that getting this balance between the information on the science and the issues around effective learning and support, which I think we are getting to better now—you will be aware that I am on the covid recovery group, although, of course, the contents of that work are confidential. Nevertheless, I think that as we are beginning to make progress now with schools reopening, I think that being able, as I say, to get to a minimum common standard of expectation for the sector would be really—

Q421 **Chair:** Can I just interject there, in relation to Tom's question? If I turn the question around, God forbid there was a second pandemic—a second wave—and we had another lockdown, but how would you avoid the situation where 900 headteachers say that 700,000 pupils are not learning anything at home, or very little?

Professor Becky Francis: This is exactly why we have got to learn and gather the evidence in the present time, urgently and rapidly, as I think our organisations are trying to do, to make sure that we are better

prepared if we were to go into a crisis again, which—let's face it—is perfectly plausible.

What has caught us out, internationally and not just in Britain, is the paucity of evidence about pandemics, particularly in relation to education. So as a sector, I think we are really mobilising, and the EEF and organisations like the ones that are represented today are at the forefront of this.

Q422 **Chair:** In a one-word answer, if this happened again, would you be confident that there was not such a number of children who would not be learning?

Professor Becky Francis: Absolutely. And some of the things that we will talk about in a minute are strategies to make sure that that is the case.

Q423 **Chair:** Can I just get brief answers from James and Susannah on that?

James Turner: I agree with Becky. I think that if this happened again, there should be more clarity on expectations. We need to make sure that schools and teachers are given the support and training so that they can make the most of online learning and remote learning. I think that some of the things that we want to put in place around tuition and around a more ambitious national infrastructure will really help.

Chair: Thank you.

Susannah Hardyman: I agree with everything that has just been said. I would just add that I think that if more could be done to tackle some of the tech issues earlier—pre-emptively, ahead of something like this happening again—that would be a big step forward, because it has taken some of the headteachers we have spoken to several weeks to get the right equipment to the right families, and that has obviously had a knock-on impact on how delayed the learning has been.

Chair: Thank you.

Q424 **David Simmonds:** Just to pick up on those points, I am always concerned about the risk that the big national programmes do not bring the added value to the day-to-day lives of the children they are designed to help. I would be interested in hearing from the panel about how we avoid fragmentation, so that there are not lots of well-intentioned projects that do not really make a difference—that has been the historical problem when these kind of things are commissioned at a national level. How do we use the local expertise and experience in local authorities and multi-academy trusts to make sure that what is commissioned is really useful, rather than a thing that attracts the best headlines?

James Turner: We would like to see a national framework that balances those things. It is important that heads have discretion about where they spend their money, as they know best how to meet their pupils' needs, but it is only through a national approach with some funding attached that we will start to see the change that we want.



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The starting point for all of us is the evidence. The evidence around tutoring, for example, is really strong. It is cost-effective and practical, and we think it is scaleable. We think it can help both now, with the immediate consequences of the pandemic, and in the medium term, in terms of the attainment gap that existed long before schools were closed. If we can harness at a national level some of the great capacity that is in the tutoring sector in organisations like Susannah's, as well as finding new ways to bring in new tutors to the sector—graduates, those who have done teacher training or, potentially, retired teachers—that could be a hugely positive approach to the short-term and long-term challenges.

The important thing across all this is quality. Not all tutoring is equal, so we need to make sure the quality is there, and it must be linked back to schools. To go back to your point, it allows local discretion. It is not a sledgehammer; it is a nudging in the right direction to make sure the capacity is there for the most cost-effective approaches to reach more disadvantaged children.

Professor Becky Francis: To compensate for the impact of school closures, we are going to need a really sustained, multi-faceted programme. That echoes some of the remarks that have been made about the funding model. We also need a holistic approach based on the evidence—it is really important to take that away.

There have been lots of calls for immediate action. There was a conversation about summer schools earlier. It is really important to think about an evidence-based approach—the evidence is stronger for some approaches—and we must also think, "This isn't going to be something that we can do quickly." We probably need to be thinking about at least a two-year programme—that is the best way to begin to think about this—sustained across a range of different levels. We should think about what we know, what is going to be effective and what are the likely best bets, in relation to value for money and learning gain, in order to address those gaps.

Clearly, we should focus on literacy and numeracy as the absolutely foundational planks to learning and success through schooling, and the catch-up that will be required there. As James said, the EEF's evidence around tuition is very strong, whether it is high-quality one-to-one tuition or high-quality small group tuition. That is why, with the Sutton Trust and other parties, we are today launching online provision for high-quality tuition.

Chair: David, did you want to come back?

Q425 **David Simmonds:** Yes. A lot of the focus has been on schools but, as we heard in the earlier session, those who are subject to persistent disadvantage may not be the ones who are benefiting from schools as institutions. In fact, many may be in alternative provision, or they may not be in school at the moment. So my question is how do we make sure that we are serving not just the interests of the institutions, in schools improving their results, but the interests of the children who live in that



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community on the whole.

Professor Becky Francis: Do you want me to quickly respond to that?

Chair: Susannah wanted to come in first.

Susannah Hardyman: It was really on the earlier points. James made the very good point about the quality of provision, and I think Becky echoed that too, with talking about the fact that tutoring can be very effective; but the tutoring industry is not regulated, and there is huge variation out there in the quality of provision. I think there is an irony that often charities are held to higher standards because of the accountability that we have to funders, so I think any scheme that is rolled out needs to look very carefully at who the providers are and their quality.

On the issue of how you get through to schools, I think there are so many great programmes out there that have a really good track record and evidence, that our experience suggests it can be quite overwhelming for schools to sift through them and identify the ones that will be most relevant for them. It is not uncommon for us to be emailing schools for a couple of years before they finally get through and then say “We wish we had known about you earlier.” So I think there is perhaps some work to be done in how we help schools to identify the most effective programmes and help them to cut through the noise of some of the offers they are receiving, to really work out what will be most useful for them. And I would say that applies whether in school settings or wider settings.

Q426 **David Simmonds:** Chair, if I may—just a really specific question on that point, which is: the teacher workload survey showed, from memory, that 70% of state school teachers are also working as private tutors. I would just ask about the capacity question. If those teachers are doing in their state school role—their day job—additional work to help children catch up, is the tuition sector also going to be able to provide the capacity, given it may well be that it’s the same people we are talking about?

Susannah Hardyman: I think this really depends, about who you want to use as the tutors. Teachers are an obvious route, but at Action Tutoring we attract students; we have corporate volunteers and we have retired volunteers. Certainly for our corporate volunteers and our retired volunteers, they are very values-driven. They want to do this to give back to society. They are not interested in tutoring for money. Yet they make some of our best and most committed and reliable tutors, who really have a fantastic impact on the pupils. With the scale of support that is going to be needed to help pupils to recover from this, and to get back to where they should be in their learning, and to reach their full potential, we need to be thinking really widely about who can be used as a tutor. At Action Tutoring we are incredibly proud of the fact that our youngest tutor is 18 and our oldest is 82. I think that demonstrates that we shouldn’t rule out any demographic here.

Q427 **Chair:** Thank you. Becky, briefly if you can.



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Professor Becky Francis: That has answered the question really well. I think the point is that at the moment there's a sort of wild west in relation to tuition. We want to drive high quality tuition provision to the kids who need it most and currently are least likely to be able to access it, and this is a really obvious opportunity, in relation to that catch-up, and the targeted, often subject-based catch-up that kids will be needing.

James Turner: Yes, absolutely, there is a tension between scale and quality and speed, but the modelling we have done suggests that you could increase tuition substantially while still maintaining quality, which is what we are really keen to see, particularly, I think, to Becky's point, if you take a two to three-year view, recognising there is an urgency but also that this is going to be a lasting thing in the system for a number of years to come.

Q428 **Dr Caroline Johnson:** My question goes back a little bit. You talk about wellbeing and the importance of the summer camp having a wellbeing as well as an educational component. We have taken a view, as a Government, to bring year 6 back because of the transition to senior school and the mental health and emotional wellbeing effects of that. I am interested in how important the panel think that first term, meeting new friends, settling into the new school, is to both children's educational achievement going forward at that school but also to their mental and emotional wellbeing.

Professor Becky Francis: I think that social and emotional wellbeing are clearly going to be absolutely crucial at this stage, and I was interested to hear earlier the focuses around summer school and the opportunities that that approach might provide. Likewise, the issue about transition that I think you are highlighting, there, Caroline, is clearly very important. I think, though, that we just need to be mindful about what we are trying to do and the evidence behind that. The research seems to suggest that summer schools are really only effective in terms of learning gain when they are focused on heavy academic content. Of course, the long-standing problem with some summer school approaches is that they consistently struggle to get disadvantaged kids to attend, which could be a real challenge at short notice.

With all those caveats, I think this comes back to my earlier point about the need for a range of support—a programme of support, as I have said—in the long term, focused primarily on learning. Obviously, that is the EEF's primary concern, but absolutely mindful, as you are indicating, Caroline, that there will for many pupils have been disruption, trauma, emotional upset and so forth.

Q429 **Chair:** Thank you. Can we all be as concise as possible? James, do you want to say something?

James Turner: A lot of the different options on the table, including summer schools, are potentially complementary, and we are going to need to work across a variety of fronts. We run a summer school programme for disadvantaged students to get into university, so we know it can work,



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but I think the challenges that Becky outlined about making sure it reaches the right students and that it is as accessible as possible are very important things to consider.

Susannah Hardyman: I would add that I think the timing is getting very tight to roll out summer schools for this summer, depending on who you are thinking of for the providers, but even for schools to be prepared. That is a big factor—time is ticking. I agree with the point about how to ensure attendance. I can talk later about how we ensure attendance, but that is on our regular term-time programmes. We have certainly found that anything outside term time has significant challenges for engaging this cohort.

Chair: Thank you. That will be a key question later, in terms of how we get disadvantaged children to go to these schools or catch-up programmes.

Q430 **Ian Mearns:** We are, though, through the economic hit of covid-19, going to have a situation where we have significant additional new numbers of children who find themselves in disadvantaged circumstances. Of course, that will be across the whole of the country, but I would not mind betting that there will be significant additional numbers of those children in communities which are already disadvantaged to begin with, because it is the nature of employment, housing and all the rest, which are factors in the way kids live in disadvantaged communities. Have you had any thinking, therefore, about what we are going to do to specifically cater for those newly disadvantaged children, whose parents, because of seasonal work, gig economy work, combinations of part-time work which have gone by the board, now find themselves without the sort of regular incomes that they used to have?

Professor Becky Francis: You mentioned Harrogate and Gateshead earlier, Ian. I guess one of the opportunities of online tuition provision as a technique is exactly that you can mobilise capacity, but geography becomes less of a headache in that regard. Some creative thinking to address those genuine challenges is really important.

Susannah Hardyman: I would add that geography has been a barrier for Action Tutoring. We are in urban cities—places like Newcastle, and Liverpool, and we are down in Brighton, Bristol and in the midlands—but we have been preparing for a while, even before covid hit, for online delivery, recognising that that is probably the best route for us to get to some of these other communities, coastal towns, rural areas and so on. Online tutoring isn't without its challenges, but we think it is really important as a strategy, not just for the covid recovery, but for the long-term tackling of the attainment gap.

Jonathan Gullis: Susannah, if Action Tutoring is looking for a new place, Stoke-on-Trent would absolutely welcome you with open arms, being one of the more deprived parts of the United Kingdom.

Chair: I have already made a bid for Harlow, Jonathan.



Q431 **Jonathan Gullis:** We are all submitting our bids live on TV.

With regard to the summer programme, like Robert and others I am an extremely passionate advocate for this. As someone who has been a teacher all their career before being a Member of Parliament, I can see it is the only way we are going to even vaguely begin to narrow the gap that already was a challenge to start with. The Education Endowment Foundation's report makes it clear that the last 10 years of progress has been completely wiped out, tragically, in what will be six months by September.

With the programme, you have talked about engagement. May I ask the controversial question—which won't shock anyone on the Committee? Do we need to make the programme mandatory for vulnerable groups and then open it up as well, obviously, to those who are not classified as vulnerable, in order to have equality for all but also to ensure that the students who need this most get into the schools?

Professor Becky Francis: That would certainly address the evidence, which is that it is a real struggle to get disadvantaged kids to attend these programmes, but I think it would be very challenging, at the present time, to mandate attendance. That's just my political gut reaction.

Q432 **Chair:** So how do you get the vulnerable children to do these programmes and encourage the parents or carers to get the children learning in this way and going into these summer schools, because otherwise this might just become a haven for the haves? James? Becky, you are very welcome to come back in.

James Turner: Absolutely, with any initiative like this, we need to make sure that it is well targeted and does not widen the gap but gets to those students who need it most. I tend to agree with Becky: mandating it would be difficult and also potentially demotivating for students, who might see it as a sort of punishment. But there are lots of organisations that are working with disadvantaged children and that overcome these obstacles. I don't doubt how difficult that is, but by making this a really valuable experience, by making the logistics as easy as possible, by working with parents and communities and potentially also with peer groups so that there is some peer pressure to go along to these initiatives—summer schools or whatever they might be—all those things can help us to get at the group we all want to help most.

Susannah Hardyman: I am happy to share a bit about how we get pupils to attend at Action Tutoring. Most of our programmes run at either the beginning or the end of the school day, so outside regular school hours. In London, we even have some programmes that run on Saturdays, with successful attendance. But that is not without hard work. What is needed is strong co-operation from the schools to really encourage attendance. We do see real difference in the cultures that schools have around these after-school programmes and the expectations.

We typically work with a cohort of about 20 pupils at a time, bringing in about eight to 10 volunteer tutors, so there is that peer element and they



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don't necessarily feel stigmatised, because they are able to work with their friends and in small groups—normally one to two. But we spend quite a bit of time with the pupils before we even bring in the volunteer tutors. We do an induction session with them, making sure they understand the value of the tutoring. We often attend parents' evenings, if schools will have us along, and have an Action Tutoring stand to explain to parents what we are doing, so that they can hear it from us as well. And some schools are really brilliant at putting on incentives for pupils, whether that be trips or rewards at the end of term if they attend. It can even be simple things like providing some snacks and drinks for the after-school programmes or breakfast for the morning sessions. There are lots of little techniques; there is not one silver bullet to it, but with our schools doing those things and with our support—

Chair: Thank you. Becky, do you want to come back in? And then Jonathan will come in again.

Professor Becky Francis: No, I think that has covered it.

Q433 **Jonathan Gullis:** Obviously, the next question would be the cost of this. We know that there has already been a cost to covid, based just on Government data on their spending. We know that there will be a cost economically. I think you heard me with the last group: I personally think the issue is education, full stop. I am not someone who likes to see mass Government intervention or spending, but I think that if we don't go down this route with education, which we know is the biggest driver of social mobility, there is going to be a 10 or 20-year pain that will come down the road.

I am interested to know what you think the cost would be. The Government have made an announcement today about the new programme of tutoring with some groups. I think, Susannah, that Action Tutoring are involved in it. While I am delighted—I think that is a good scheme—I do fear that it won't reach as far as it should do. I think that if we were in normal times, that would be different, but we are not in normal times, so I am wondering how you can get a wider reach, to the students who need it most.

Professor Becky Francis: There are a couple of things there. The first is the cost. I think that the analysis in the previous session about doing a rigorous cost-benefit analysis here is probably the right way to go. I think we would all, collectively, agree that the risks for this group of students, particularly the disadvantaged, both economically and socially, are really severe. Actually, it would be very, very good value for money, from the Treasury's perspective, to invest in education and catch-up for them now. Perhaps that piece of work needs to be done, but I think the principles are very clear.

In relation to tuition and the questions that you asked, Jonathan, about reach, in terms of the pilot that we launched today we are absolutely focused on the evidence for the effectiveness of tuition as a way to support catch-up. Of course, we are drawing on the EEF's longstanding



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evidence here. We think it is a particularly good bet. We are driving forward that this is absolutely focused on disadvantaged kids and those who will have suffered most during lockdown.

Susannah Hardyman: It costs Action Tutoring approximately £400 to deliver an academic year of tutoring to one of our pupils in either English or maths. That would typically be about two and a half terms of tutoring that take them up to the exams. We think that that is really good value for money. It seems to be broadly in line with the figures that we see from some of our fellow charities, such as the Tutor Trust. It comes back to Becky's point about the cost of not doing this and the long-term investment of this. Actually, a £400 investment in a pupil in the grand scheme of things—their life chances and what it opens up for them in terms of further education, employment or training—is more than worth it.

James Turner: I agree that now is the time to invest in education. There is a cost to not doing so in terms of social mobility, and the future economic prosperity of the country. The question is: if there is additional money, where it is best spent? I think that that should be guided by the evidence of what works. It comes back to tutoring and great programmes like Action Tutoring.

Q434 **Chair:** Becky, you know the Department for Education budget quite well. If the Treasury was reluctant to give extra funds, which I hope is not the case, would you recommend any existing part of the existing DfE budget where some of this money could come from?

Professor Becky Francis: I think that is difficult at the present time, because obviously schools are going to feel very challenged going back. I would very much reiterate the comments that we have already made. I think, though, that there may be some creative ways that we can look at this. There may be possibilities around match funding, for example. Obviously, we are trying to test the appetite from the charitable sector at the moment, and are getting support. There are probably creative ways that we can approach this, and probably incentivise some good practice as well, but ultimately I would support the earlier comments about catch-up, which is going to be desperately needed.

Tom Hunt: I do think that there is something that has not had enough attention. There has been some focus on children with special educational needs, but those with slightly less severe special educational needs—for example, those with dyslexia and dyspraxia—will, I think, be badly impacted by the closures of schools over the past few months.

Linking in with that are predicted grades. There are many unconventional learners. There are many people who do not operate in a classroom environment in a way that pleases all their teachers, but when it comes to exams, they really pull a rabbit out of the hat and show a lot of creativity, et cetera. As somebody who got an A/E in Chemistry once when I was at school, which was “good result, not very good effort”, I have a bit of sympathy for those children. I was just wondering what could be done to make sure that those individuals are not negatively impacted by these



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predicted grades and not having the chance to do an exam. I know that there is an opportunity in the autumn, but it is not quite the same.

Chair: We are coming to some of this later, Tom, at the end. Kim is doing some of this. What I might get the witnesses to do is remember your question, and save it for that moment, if that is okay. Tom, do you want to ask your specific question on disadvantaged children?

Q435 **Tom Hunt:** Sorry about the confusion there. How can we ensure that disadvantaged children attend and engage in the additional learning opportunities, if they are provided?

Chair: We have done a little bit on this, but we just need a bit more from you, I think.

James Turner: Just to reiterate, it is absolutely crucial that, if we are going to put on these new initiatives that we think are much needed, they do get to that group. Otherwise, they may just make things worse in terms of the gap. Some of the things that Susannah said about how these things can become attractive, and how you can engage with schools and with parents, so that the students turn up, are really important. It is a big challenge, but there are organisations that do it. I guess the point of taking an evidence-based approach is to learn from what has worked elsewhere and try to spread it through a national system, so I think that's where we need to start.

Q436 **Chair:** Becky, I know you said you agree with the others—we touched on this before—but give us a view.

Professor Becky Francis: A challenge is that whenever we rely on parents to engage, obviously the gaps get bigger for a range of reasons. At the moment, of course, many working-class parents are those at the frontline and therefore probably have less time to be able to devote to kids, let alone the unequal resources and so forth. The EEF has a tradition of always working through storms. Now that schools are beginning to reopen to a broader range of children, that obviously gives us the possibility of doing that again more effectively. Where schools are working with providers, such as tuition groups like Susannah's, we will get the most effective practice, because schools know their pupils and they know about their pupils' progress and where the gaps will have emerged. Working collaboratively in that way would be most productive.

Susannah Hardyman: I would really agree that school partnerships are absolutely at the heart of our model, and we would find it very difficult to get pupils to attend without the support and the buy-in of schools. With primary it's much easier. We see an average attendance rate of 90% on our primary group programmes, despite the fact that they are before the school day. It is a little bit lower in secondaries, so I think there are bigger challenges with that cohort. But the No. 1 thing that makes a difference is that they build a good relationship with their tutor and they can really see the value of it. As soon as pupils can start to see that it is helping—"I am feeling more confident and understanding things I wasn't understanding in class"—they begin to click and they will buy into it.



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Q437 **Chair:** If you could give one-sentence answers, in terms of who should be doing all this, should it be a mixture of university students, Ofsted inspectors, retired teachers and graduates? Also, should they be volunteers or paid to do this, or a mixture of both?

James Turner: I think we are agnostic on who the tutors are, as long as they reach the quality threshold so that we know the tutoring is effective. There are charities out there who use paid tutors and who use volunteers, and both are effective. Some of the costs of those models are very similar, so I think the guiding principle should be followed based on who they are, but you are absolutely right, Robert: we need to look at those other groups to make sure there is a good supply.

Susannah Hardyman: I would advocate for diversity of the tutor pool, but I think James is spot on: it all comes back to the quality. There is definitely scope for both paid and volunteers, and different groups will have different motivations—

Q438 **Chair:** Do you pay your tutors or not?

Susannah Hardyman: We don't. All our tutors are volunteers.

Q439 **Chair:** Do they get expenses?

Susannah Hardyman: We cover their travel expenses and all their training costs and so on. We attract corporates, retired and students. Those are our three main groups.

Professor Becky Francis: I would reiterate that it is the quality bar that's important. What of course we mustn't have is low-quality provision going to the kids that most need support. It is that that we need to hold in line, irrespective of the other factors.

Chair: Thank you. Jonathan, have you finished your questions?

Jonathan Gullis: Yes.

Q440 **Chair:** We now go to Tom's question on exams. If you could answer Tom's question on the exam issue, and then I'll go to you, Kim. James, you might like to go first.

James Turner: Our research has picked up a real worry among young people about the current system and whether it is going to be less fair than the traditional system and whether it will in some way disadvantage them. As was mentioned in the previous session, other Sutton Trust research has also shown that most predicted grades are wrong, and that tends to disadvantage poorer students, particularly bright poorer students. It is really important that, at school and Ofqual level, we monitor to see whether any gaps open up. If some gaps open up, we then need to have a long, hard think about what we do about them. Monitoring to make sure that there aren't these big discrepancies is really important, because we need to make sure that everyone has confidence in the system.

Susannah Hardyman: We have certainly heard real concern about this from our headteachers. Disadvantaged pupils are a classic group to be



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under-predicted. We have certainly seen some of our pupils make remarkable progress over the course of the year, which might not be reflected in their initial predicted grades. James's point that we shouldn't see the attainment gap widen further this year is a really important one. If that happens, questions need to be asked.

Q441 **Chair:** Becky, how do you ensure that someone who may not have worked in the late winter and spring, but has aptitude and could have got a very good mark, because they would have knuckled down for the final exam, will not be disadvantaged?

Professor Becky Francis: In the circumstances, Ofqual has done a good job. In a difficult situation, there is no perfect answer. As colleagues have already said, it will be important to monitor for unconscious bias and recognise some of these trends and risks.

It is also important to think ahead. Already, kids currently in year 12 are looking towards their return and potential exams next year. There are a series of opportunities there, for example, using comparable outcomes and perhaps additional options for questions to answer. We are at the stage where we need to urgently think about and plan how we can do this with greater effect next year.

Chair: Thank you. I am going to bring in Kim and then Jonathan at the end.

Q442 **Kim Johnson:** Thanks, Robert. I have two questions for James from the Sutton Trust. There are concerns about the system for calculating grades, as you have mentioned. Your report from the Sutton Trust states that disadvantaged students may lose out under a system of awarding grades that relies on teacher assessment and this would particularly apply to black pupils. What are the issues with relying on teacher assessments and unconscious bias, and what should be done to ensure that disadvantaged students are not adversely affected?

James Turner: The mechanism by which lower-income pupils and certain groups are disadvantaged in predictions is complex. It has something to do with the perception of those students' abilities and, potentially, the pace at which they work. That doesn't necessarily accurately predict their grades. Again, it comes back to being laser-like in monitoring this group of students to ensure the gaps don't emerge and if they do, we can do something about it.

I think it also comes through re-sits. If people feel that the grades that they have been awarded are unfair, are we confident that lower-income students are in the same position as their better-off peers to be able to re-sit those exams in the autumn? Bearing in mind everything we have said about access to technology and problems with online learning, will they be in a good position to do so, and will they have good information, advice and guidance about those options?

Q443 **Kim Johnson:** That was my second question. I would like to hear your thoughts about the role that unconscious bias plays in terms of these



predicted grades for disadvantaged and black pupils.

James Turner: Research conducted by us and others has picked up that issue over the years. We really need to unpick it more. I think the urgency to do so is here now, because we are seeing it play out in the system. I am keen that we look at that more, but I am afraid that at present we do not have all the answers we would like.

Q444 **Kim Johnson:** Okay. We have talked throughout the debate this morning about new and emerging vulnerable children. What barriers are disadvantaged students likely to face, if they do wish to improve their grades by re-sitting exams in the autumn? What should the Department do to remove barriers, to ensure that they can do that well?

Chair: Becky, I think you are well placed to answer this. How on earth will they be looked after by the school to do those re-takes over the summer months?

Professor Becky Francis: I am worried about being monotonous here, but we have already presented the ideas around tuition support. The benefit of that is that it can be very individualised and targeted. I would have thought that that is one of the obvious answers to your question, in terms of the relatively narrow range of things that we have on offer to be able to support these kids. It is really important. Targeted, individualised provision will be fundamental here.

Q445 **Kim Johnson:** Thanks, Becky. I want to ask you one question, Susannah, in terms of the work you do in deprived communities. Particularly in areas like my Liverpool, Riverside constituency, we have a major issue of employing black staff in our schools. We have one black headteacher. My question is, how well have you done in terms of recruiting diverse tutors to work with kids in those schools? You mentioned retired people, ex-teachers and students. I would be interested to know how well you do in terms of recruiting black and non-white volunteers to your scheme.

Susannah Hardyman: The honest answer is that for GDPR reasons, we do not collect ethnicity data on our tutors, so what I share is much more anecdotal than statistical, but it is something that we are very conscious of. If we can provide really good role models from within people's communities, it is obviously incredibly valuable to bring in people with similar backgrounds and experiences. We work in some very multicultural cities, so our marketing is certainly targeted to those broad groups, but it is a big challenge of how we bring in people from those backgrounds to work with the communities that we do.

Q446 **Chair:** You must be able to give a general percentage figure without identifying individuals. GDPR is only about individuals. There is nothing to stop you saying, "X percentage are from deprived communities," or are BAME or whatever it may be.

Susannah Hardyman: We would probably say that about 10% are from those deprived or BAME backgrounds who tutor on our programmes. That would be my rough guess.



Kim Johnson: That is all my questions, thank you.

Chair: Before I bring in Jonathan, I want to bring in David Johnston, because he has not had a question in this session.

Q447 **David Johnston:** Can I change tack slightly and talk about destinations? This is about loss of learning in schools, but I wonder how far down the age range you think this might affect the destinations of children when they leave school and, as a result, what you think colleges, universities and employers ought to be doing regarding the generation that has gone through this?

James Turner: I think the implications are going to be enduring. Even if there is a student at the end of primary school now who is facing a learning loss because of school closures, that is not suddenly going to be rectified over a year or two, even if we put in place the best patch of mechanisms. It will wash through in terms of access to FE, apprenticeships and university. We need to make sure that, of course, we look at catch-up and what can be done at school level, but there are also real concerns around those areas that I talked about. Not losing sight of this generation and making sure that we monitor them as they go through the education system and into the labour market is really important. Some of the implications will be found in 10 years' time when they are entering university, for example, not just in the next couple of years.

Professor Becky Francis: I do not have much to add to that, except to say that it is really important and right that the university sector are taking steps, I know, and other sectors as well, to recognise that, to broaden their widening participation categories and to think about flexibility. That will be needed in the medium to long term, rather than just in the next year and the years to come.

Susannah Hardyman: It is really important that intervention starts early and is not just seen as last-ditch catch-up support, but is sustained. It is important not to take our eyes off the current year 11 and the support that is needed for re-sits that was raised earlier. Without those crucial grades in English and maths, those pupils will experience significant barriers to further education, employment or training.

Q448 **Jonathan Gullis:** I am carrying on from what Kim said about disadvantaged groups. I know, as someone who has been a teacher, that boys normally bloom very late in the year. I am terrified about what the predicted grades and data that have been submitted to Ofqual will mean for boys, in particular white working-class boys. That is something that the Chair of this Committee is passionate about, and he has been a long-term advocate about the disadvantage gap growing in that community, and the potential disenfranchising from higher education and apprenticeships, which I think will be a big economic driver. What can we do for white working-class boys and to narrow the gender gap, which will inevitably widen because of the predictions?

Professor Becky Francis: Shall I say something on gender? The prior research on engaging boys in their education is very much that it needs a



whole school, holistic approach that is focused on quality and, for example, on not highlighting gender difference but encouraging all girls and boys to feel that reading is for them and is important and appropriate, and making sure that all pupils feel engaged and have access to high-quality provision.

You're absolutely right, Jonathan, of course: some groups, including white working-class boys and indeed boys from Afro-Caribbean backgrounds, we anticipate will be hit particularly hard. Those challenges in relation to engagement will be fundamental. Again, we will need real creativity in the thinking around it in the months to come.

James Turner: In our own programmes, this issue of white working-class boys particularly is one that we struggle with, in terms of making sure that students who have the potential make it in programmes like ours so that they can go on to higher education and other opportunities. That is why, when we think about a national approach to capture, it is so important that there is room for local flexibility. Teachers know the particular groups in their communities or schools they are worried about, and we may want to orientate more of the effort on those groups, whether that is white working-class boys or other groups. It goes back to this point of having a national impetus behind this, but with room for local flexibility.

Susannah Hardyman: The only thing to add is that, whenever we talk to a new partner school, they always tell us that white working-class boys are the group that they are most concerned about, so I am really glad that this is an area that is being addressed and recognised more widely.

Q449 **Chair:** Just to clarify, that is white working-class boys and girls, because although boys do worse than girls, the girls are not that great either in many of the stats.

Becky, may I come back to one of my questions from before, about the finance? You said that the Department needed to be creative. That is what I call a politician's answer. If there was money in the Department and you could use an existing budget—as we know, the pupil premium is not necessarily ring fenced and it is spent on a whole different range of things—where would you advise that the money should come from?

Professor Becky Francis: Again, I don't want to be repetitive, Robert, but you can see that the EEF has focused on evidence on best bets. You can see, again, that we have driven things forward on high-quality tuition as an obvious offer. I have also mentioned literacy and numeracy provision. We have evidence, and we at the EEF have a list of promising subjects, areas of research, that have been strongly evidence-based. Going forward, building on that, what has proven to be effective and thinking about how it can be mobilised in the present situation will help us to make an argument to the Treasury by showing that this is based on rigorous and robust evidence.

Q450 **Chair:** James or Susannah, do you want to comment on that?



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James Turner: On the tutoring programme that we are thinking about—I don't know the DfE budget well enough to know where there is potential money, but just to look at tutoring—a low-cost option would be to fund it through schools, but with weak capacity funding to ensure that tutors and great organisations can get into new areas. That could go all the way through to a much more ambitious scheme that is wholly funded by Government. We can cut our cloth accordingly, but tutoring—because of the evidence behind it—is an effective approach on whatever scale.

Q451 **Chair:** The reason for my question is that everyone is going to be going to the Treasury to say that their individual project has wonderful results. You know that I am a big supporter of this, but I think that the case could be made that it would be a help to identify, if possible, pots that are spent on one thing that could perhaps be spent better on tutoring or the catch-up premium.

I thank you all again for your remarkable work in your respective areas. I do not open a newspaper without reading the latest survey from the Sutton Trust, or about the work that the EEF is doing or the incredible tutoring work you are doing, Susannah. On behalf of all of us, we really appreciate your time and the work that you do—it is fantastic, and really good.

Professor Becky Francis: Thank you. It was a great opportunity to talk to you. Thanks very much.