Luke Hall MP
Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education

Sanctuary Buildings 20 Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT
tel: 0370 000 2288 www.education.gov.uk/contactus/dfe

Lord Gardiner of Kimble
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

14th May 2024

Dear John,

Thank you for your letter of 26th February 2024 to Robert Halfon asking for an update and further questions in respect of the Government response to the House of Lords Select Committee on Youth Unemployment, published on 17th March 2022.

I am responding as the new Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Education

As our original Government response set out, we are committed to working across government to ensure that all young people are supported into education, employment or training, and are equipped with the skills they need to get good jobs, which was the key focus of the inquiry.

I am happy to update you on the specific areas you have requested and respond to the additional points you have raised in the annex to this response.

Th majority of the questions raised were on education and skills matters, but some were in relation to polices for which DWP and DCMS are responsible. I can confirm that those departments have provided the input to this response in the areas for which they are responsible.

I have set out the responses under the same headings you set out in your letter.

I hope you find the answers and information helpful.

With very best wishes,

Luke Hall MP
Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education

ANNEX: response to questions.

Shortages of Skills and their Impact on Young People

It was welcome that the Government recognised the importance of collecting and publishing definitive data on skills gaps and shortages; moreover, as promised in the Government's response to the Committee's report, the Skills and Productivity Board did publish some studies on this issue in May 2022, ahead of its disbandment. More recently, however, the Unit for Future Skills has not made public any findings. When is it planning to publish its "research projects on future skills demand forecasting"? Will data be published on an annual basis, as the Committee suggested?

The Unit for Future Skills was set up to improve the quality of jobs and skills data in order to support a better understanding of current skill mismatches and future demand. The Unit has published a range of data and products each year since its inception:

- Last year, the Unit, in cooperation with the National Fund for Education Research and Nuffield Foundation, published detailed job projections up to 2035. The data is available at UK, Devolved Administration, and subnational levels including Local Skills Improvement Plans areas, Local Enterprise Partnerships and Mayoral Combined Authorities.
- The Unit has also funded the Office for National Statistics' development of data on online job advert volumes, giving insight into skills demand at a local level. Data was published in March 2024 and February 2023 and the ONS is working on delivering statistics on a regular basis, with the next release planned by June 2024.
- Both the aforementioned job projections up to 2035 and online job advert data can be found in the Local Skills Dashboard, which displays up-to-date local skills and employment data in an easy to navigate format. The dashboard was originally developed to underpin work on Local Skills Improvement Plans but has also been used by Local Enterprise Partnerships and Mayoral Combined Authorities.

In November 2023, the Unit published two reports on the impact of AI on the labour market:

- The first was a report showing the occupations, sectors, and geographic areas expected to be most affected by AI as well as the training routes that typically lead to these highly affected jobs.
- The second report discussed the results of a pilot project to use AI extraction and generation techniques to summarise key skills needs from across the 38 Local Skills Improvement Plans.

Upcoming work to be published by the Unit aims to continue to improve the quality of skills and jobs data:

- To ensure that the Unit is the centre of expertise on future skills, we will publish research findings by Frontier on new methodologies for future job projections, which will provide insights on current best practice and considerations for producing skills forecasts. The first published findings are expected in the Spring.

- The Unit for Future Skills will shortly publish a report on Science and Technology Skills Pathways, which tells us the education pathways for STEM learners, and the occupations most relevant to critical technologies. An accompanying dashboard allows users to explore this data and identify pathways across HMG's critical technologies, including AI and quantum.
- To better understand the typical education pathways into jobs facing skills shortages, the Unit has linked the Longitudinal Educational Outcomes (LEO) dataset with the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE). This enables us to follow a sample of the population through their education and know what job they are doing afterwards. Analysis based on this data will enable an estimate of the occupational impact of future investment in different types of training.
- To highlight which occupations are growing and require more workers and which are in decline, the Unit is creating a list of the most in demand occupations based on current indicators such as wage growth, online job adverts, and skill-shortage vacancies. This work updates and expands previous work by the Skills and Productivity Board.
- The Unit is also working with IfATE and Warwick Institute of Employment Research on Phase 2 of the Standard Skills Classification, delivering a prototype by Autumn 2024. The delivery of the classification will allow better linking of skills with jobs and qualifications, supporting improved recruitment and training by business and better careers guidance for young people.

How effective has the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022 been in transforming the skills system and helping the young workforce to adapt and live up to the Government's 'levelling up' ambitions? What plans has the Government to address at a systemic level the structural nature of youth unemployment?

The Skills and Post-16 Education Act and the Skills for Jobs White Paper set the foundation for system reform to make it employer-led, high quality, and fit for the future and we have delivered on those objectives.

We are increasing opportunities for people to develop higher technical skills through T Levels, Apprenticeships, Skills Bootcamps, and Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs), supporting the development of technical skills across the country. From 2025, the Lifelong Learning Entitlement will transform access to further and higher education 2025, offering all adults the equivalent of four years' worth of student loans to use flexibly on quality education and skills training over their lifetime. We also have 38 Local Skills Improvement Plans, led by Employer Representative Bodies, in place across the country.

It is good news that the figures in the Participation Statistical Release published in October for the end of 2022 show there has been a rise in the combined proportion of 16 and 17 years old participating in education and apprenticeships (89.6%). This an increase of 0.5ppts on the previous year.

To support more young people to progress we are working with employers to create more apprenticeships, roll out more, transformative T Levels, and we have launched a new Skills for Life campaign, 'It all starts with skills', aiming to encourage and motivate young people, adults and businesses to find out more about government skills and technical education offers.

We are also investing in a range of support programmes for young people, including Youth Hubs and Supported Internships together with the DWP Youth Offer, ensuring that individuals aged 16 to 24 receive personalised work coach support.

For young people already looking for work, DWP ensures work coaches and other Jobcentre Plus staff are equipped with the best knowledge about their local labour markets, including in-demand sectors. Guidance and learning products made available to work coaches and service delivery leaders reinforce the importance of focussing on how best to support jobseekers and employers to overcome the barriers to recruitment, retention, and progression for available roles.

Government works directly with industry to identify key roles with shortages, to ensure that the right skills and wider employment support are in place to support people to fill them. This includes work coach interventions and targeted provision including Sector-based Work Academy Programmes, and by referring people to Skills Bootcamps, apprenticeships, and other skills provision. This will ensure jobseekers are able to develop skills to match the needs of the changing labour market.

We are also looking to the future. The Green Jobs Delivery Group is a joint government and industry effort to ensure we have the skilled workforce needed to meet our ambitions for a net zero economy and the environment, in the short and medium term. The Government will publish a Green Jobs Action Plan in 2024, which will detail the steps being taken across the green economy to ensure we have skilled candidates and good jobs. DWP and JCP will play a significant part in this, alongside others in DfE, DESNZ and Defra, by ensuring the support we provide to jobseekers and employers evolves as the green transition unfolds.

The NHS Long Term Workforce Plan (LTWP) sets out the steps the NHS and its partners need to take to deliver an NHS workforce that meets the changing needs of the population over the next 15 years. It will put the workforce on a sustainable footing for the long term. The government is backing the plan with over £2.4 billion over the next five years to fund additional education and training places. This is on top of increases to education and training investment, reaching a record £6.1 billion over the next two years.

One of the Committee's key recommendations focused on ensuring that skills development in the green economy were embedded in the education and training system. In its response, the Government refers to "a number of steps to ensure the Further Education (FE) teacher workforce supports the transition to net zero". What actions have been implemented and has any assessment been carried out of their efficacy? As proposed by the Government, when will all FE teachers training via an apprenticeship be required to integrate sustainability into their teaching?

We have introduced a range of steps to ensure a robust further education (FE) workforce, which includes a focus on sustainability:

- We are supporting the recruitment and retention of FE teachers including in subjects that address green skills needs. This includes support in STEM and technical subjects through the Levelling Up Premium for early career teachers in eligible subjects; Taking Teaching Further (TTF); and FE Teaching Bursaries in STEM subjects.
- Since 2018, the TTF programme has supported approximately 1,400 business and industry professionals to start FE teaching careers. This has allowed FE providers across all of the 15 technical teaching routes, including

in green and sustainable industries, to get technical expertise into the classroom.
- The revised occupational standard for Learning and Skills Teachers underpins the FE teaching apprenticeship. From academic year 2024/25, we expect that all publicly funded teacher training qualifications at level 5 and above will also be based on the that standard. One of the core duties required by the standard is that all teachers should "model sustainable practices", including through the promotion of "sustainable development principles, values, and goals" in relation to their subject specialism.
- Providers are also using the Local Skills Improvement Fund to support ongoing FE provider quality improvement through FE workforce training, and by developing sector-led approaches to peer-to-peer support and sharing good practice (including two-way industry exchanges with FE providers). Much of this activity to date relates to the green skills agenda, including but not limited to subject electric and hybrid vehicle maintenance and repair; modern construction methods; and green energy and retrofit.

Developing DfE's green skills offer is crucial to ensuring the UK can meet our statutory Net Zero Strategy and Environment Act targets. The DfE green skills offer is being developed across DfE, including:

- IfATE is seeking to encourage consideration of green skills in all occupational standards, and has recently published the Green Toolkit to help with this. Occupational standards underpin the training delivered through programmes including apprenticeships, T Levels, and HTQs.

- Additionally, IfATE has written to 180 employer trailblazer groups to share advice on how relevant occupational standards link to green skills, and has asked them to consider whether they need to make any changes to further embed and highlight green content. This resulted in over 100 occupational standards being reviewed to add green content, with the remainder due to be reviewed by the end of 2024.
- Skills Bootcamps, designed with employers in mind, are meeting short- to medium-term skills shortages and boosting productivity. Skills Bootcamps are delivering flexible training for sectors including green construction, renewable energy, natural resources, and sustainable transport.
- Through its Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy, DfE is helping create a sustainable future through education, developing the skills needed for a green economy, and supporting net zero targets. DfE is seeking to ensure that young people are inspired and equipped to choose career paths that support the transition to net zero, the restoration of biodiversity, and a sustainable future.

The Government response listed a series of measures aimed at strengthening the teaching of digital skills. Has the Government received any feedback on the impact of these measures on the improvement of teaching of digital skills? Particularly, what impact have bursaries and salary uplifts had on attracting computer science teachers?

To date, over 13,000 teachers have engaged with subject specific CPD provided by the National Centre of Computing Education (NCCE), helping to create more confident teachers of computing. Based on a survey of c5,800 teachers accessing NCCE CPD between 2019 and 2022, 96% reported improved subject knowledge and 73% said that it had impacted their students.

We are offering increased bursaries worth £28,000 tax-free and increased scholarships worth £30,000 tax-free for trainee computing teachers. In 2021, NFER published independent research which corroborates DfE analysis that a £1,000 increase in bursary value results in approximately a 3% increase in applicants on average, all other things being equal. A recent NFER report in November 2023 also concludes that ITT bursary increases have a sustained impact on long-term teacher supply as teachers who enter the profession due to bursary increases are just as likely to stay in teaching.

From academic year 2024/25, we are also doubling the Levelling Up Premium for computing teachers in the first five years of their career to up to £6,000 per year after tax. It is too early to fully evaluate the Levelling Up Premium, but it is possible to draw on evidence from the predecessor pilots which informed it, as these demonstrate the link between salary uplifts and improved teacher retention. For example, a recent evaluation found the Early Career Payments that DfE offered to maths teachers reduced the likelihood of teachers leaving by 37% for the £5,000 payments, and 58% for the £7,500 payments.

The Government committed to taking into account the Committee's recommendation to close the digital divide when developing the DfE's approach to the issue. Has this commitment been fulfilled and, if so, can the Government provide further details on the progress made?

The Department for Education (DfE) is building on our significant investment in devices, platforms, training and digital services with a strategic approach for digital technology in education to take advantage of the opportunities digital technology presents.

This includes investing to fix the basics of technology infrastructure, which are fundamental to the effective use of technology in education. The committee noted the importance of connectivity, and we are working with commercial providers to accelerate gigabit capable broadband rollout to schools, to enable all schools to have access to a high-speed connection by 2025. Through the Connect the Classroom programme we are investing up to £200m to upgrade schools that fall below our Wi-Fi connectivity standards in 55 Education Investment areas.

Regarding access to laptops, during the pandemic, we provided 1.95m devices to support access to remote education and online social care. This was on top of an estimated 2.9 million already owned by schools before the start of the pandemic. Schools, trusts, local authorities and further education providers make decisions about how to use technology for learning and manage their own technology budgets. Where devices are required for learning, they are best placed to know which children and young people need access to a device. 91% of primary schools and 93% of secondary schools have laptops available for pupils. The median ratio of laptops for pupils was 1:4 in primary schools and 1:8 in secondary schools (Technology in Schools Survey 2022-23, Department for Education)

Oak National Academy was established as an Arm's Length Body in September 2022. Oak supports teachers and pupils by providing resources that improve curriculum delivery, reduce workload and support improved pupil outcomes. Operators may choose on a commercial basis to zero rate websites.

The Department does not mandate particular tools or products because educational establishments are best placed to decide what technology they need to meet their requirements in relation to their educational contexts and circumstances. We are supporting schools and colleges by setting standards for digital and technology. These include standards for devices, connectivity and leadership and governance of the use of technology.

We are developing a digital service to support senior leadership in schools to plan for technology. The tool will enable them to benchmark their technology against the digital standards, suggest areas of improvement and provide actionable steps and resources to implement these recommendations. From September 2023, we have been working with Blackpool and Portsmouth to expand testing of this tool.

We are also working to establish a strong evidence base for effective use of technology and embed this evidence across our world-class school system, so that it is easy for schools and families to use the best products at the right time.

Does the Government plan to clarify which skills should be prioritised within the national curriculum? Besides Ofsted's inspections, what are the control mechanisms to ensure schools that are not local authority maintained offer the development of essential skills from key stages 1 to 4?

Every state-funded school has a duty to offer a curriculum which is broad and balanced, and which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

All schools, regardless of category and phase, are inspected against their ability to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum which is designed to give all pupils the knowledge they need to achieve well and succeed in life. As part of Ofsted’s assessment of both the quality of education and a school’s support for pupils' personal development, inspectors will consider how a school prepares its pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in modern Britain.

Essential skills to prepare pupils for the future already feature in the curriculum, notably statutory Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE); the national curriculum for citizenship and computing; and through the requirement for state-funded schools to secure careers advice and guidance.

The Department does not tell schools how to teach the curriculum or what resources to use as teachers are best placed to assess and meet the needs of their pupils. Schools therefore have considerable flexibility, within the statutory framework of the national curriculum, to reinforce personal development and essential skills throughout the curriculum.

To support schools to realise the potential of all pupils, the Oak National Academy, which became an independent Arm’s Length Body in September 2022, will provide adaptable, optional and free support for schools, reducing teacher workload and enabling pupils to access a high-quality curriculum.

In order to promote avenues for developing skills outside mandatory education, the Government cited the National Youth Guarantee, announced in the White Paper *Levelling Up the United* Kingdom (2022) that aimed to offer "every young person in England [...] access to regular clubs and activities, adventures away from home, and , volunteering opportunities by 2025." As the Youth Investment Fund Phase I closed on 31 March 2022, what assessment has been made of its success?

We committed in 2022 that every young person in England should have access to regular clubs and activities, adventures away from home and volunteering opportunities by 2025.

For the Youth Investment Fund (YIF) phase 1, a process evaluation was undertaken exploring who applied to the fund, how the fund was delivered and perceived initial impact of the fund. The key findings show:

- Demand was high, with 1,270 organisations applying to the fund and 418 funded. The vast majority of applicants and recipients were charitable organisations.
- More than two-thirds of successful applicants (69%) said they found the overall application process easy and most were satisfied with their experience of the Fund (94%).
- Funding was used in multiple ways, for example 305 organisations used funding to invest in technology, 172 for building projects and 112 grants were for vehicles like minibuses.
- Findings show that most grantees expect to increase the number of activities they deliver (80%) and improve the quality of the services they provide (76%) as a result of the funding.
- Two thirds (66%) of survey respondents said that following receipt of the grant, they can reach a greater number of young people and thus improve access to their organisation.

The full published report can be found on gov.uk

Due to the scale of the Youth Investment Fund (YIF) phase 2 and the need for more robust evidence in the youth sector, DCMS have committed to undertaking a large-scale evaluation of YIF. The evaluation will explore if the fund was delivered as intended, provided value for money and achieved the expected outcomes and impact for the youth sector, young people and wider society. The evaluation will run to December 2026 with interim reports being provided in 2024 and 2025. Alongside this, we have also commissioned a range of evaluations and pieces of research, which will add to the available evidence.

Has any reform been made to progress indicators for scholastic performance measures as recommended by the Committee? As the DfE keeps the suite of headline secondary school performance measures under review, has any adjustment been carried out so that schools focusing on practical, technical, cultural, business and work-related skills are not downgraded on performance measures?

Our suite of headline accountability measures is designed to encourage schools to offer a broad and balanced curriculum, with a focus on an academic core, giving pupils a strong foundation for future study.

Progress 8 measures success in 8 subjects, including English and maths (double weighted to reflect their importance), 3 other EBacc subjects and 3 'open' subjects. This allows scope for schools to ensure pupils pursue other qualifications by including up to 3 further GCSEs or other approved qualifications. These include GCSEs in non-EBacc subjects such as citizenship, design and technology, and music. They also include a wide range of technical awards from an approved list, such as level 1 and 2 qualifications in digital information technology, that equip pupils with applied knowledge and practical skills not usually acquired through general education. It is designed to ensure pupils keep their options open to follow any path post-16.

While we do not consider the Progress 8 measure to require updating at this time, we will continue to consider opportunities to review the current set of headline measures.

The report underlined the existence of skills gaps and shortages, particularly in the digital and green economy. In its 2023 bulletin, the Edge Foundation echoed the Committee's concerns, registering a constant increase in skill shortages. [2] The need is now more pressing than ever for the Government to recalibrate the compulsory components of the national curriculum and performance measures. Since the report was published, how has the Government acted to put not only skills development, but also the monitoring of emerging skills at the centre of young people's education.

We are committed to delivering a world-leading skills system through high quality on 16-19 education, apprenticeships, and adult training. This is driving productivity and growth by growing talent across the country, addressing skills shortages, responding to evolving skills needs in key growth sectors and equipping people of all ages with the skills that they and employers need.

We are increasing opportunities for people to develop the in-demand higher technical skills through T Levels, Apprenticeships, Skills Bootcamps, and Higher Technical Qualifications, supporting the development of technical skills across the country.

On 4 October 2023, the Prime Minister announced plans to introduce the Advanced British Standard (ABS) for 16–19 year-olds in England over the next decade. The ABS is a new baccalaureate-style qualification framework that takes the best of A levels and T Levels and brings them together into a single, unified structure, ensuring technical and academic education are placed on an equal footing. The new qualification framework will mean that students will be able to study a broader curriculum, have more hours in the classroom and will all continue to study maths and English to 18.

We are taking steps now to realise these ambitions, investing over £600 million across the next two years to improve the recruitment and retention of teachers in key STEM and technical shortage subjects, support students who do not achieve a standard pass in maths and English GCSE at 16, and improve the quality of maths teaching.

It is welcome that the eligibility for Free Courses for Jobs offer has been extended (since April 2022) to adults in England who earn under the National Living Wage or are unemployed. Does the Government have figures on the uptake of the scheme?

The Free Courses for Jobs offer, which was launched in April 2021, gives eligible adults the chance to access high value Level 3 qualification for free, which can support them to gain higher wages or a better job.

The cumulative number of enrolments on the offer, reported between April 2021 and January 2024, stands at 67,240, with 18,020 of these reported in the 2023/24 academic year so far. This includes those taking up free courses for jobs under the extended offer from April 2022.

It is welcome that the Government is still committed to putting student finance for HTQs on a par with degrees. However, it would be useful to know whether the Government intends to undertake a wider study of barriers to the take up of level 4 and 5 qualifications?

The government is currently implementing reforms to higher technical education (HTE) as announced in June 2020 following an evidence led review and consultation. The review found no single reason to explain the low uptake of HTE, but identified varying quality, low awareness, understanding and prestige, and a lack of national assurance that qualifications meet employer needs as important factors. The reforms are designed to address these barriers and to improve the profile, prestige and uptake of HTE.

Central to these reforms is the introduction of Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs). HTQs are level 4/5 qualifications (such as HNCs and Foundation Degrees) that have been approved against employer-developed standard and quality marked by the Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education (IfATE). This means students and employers can have confidence that HTQs provide skills employers need. HTQs were taught for the first time in 2022, and from September 2024, there will be 172 HTQs approved to provide the skills needed in a wide-range of in-demand specialist occupations. HTQs are being taught in universities, colleges, Institutes of Technology and independent training providers across the country.

The government has provided up to £115m in funding to providers to help grow provision of high-quality HTE across the country, on top of up to £300m to create a network of 21 Institutes of Technology that specialise in higher technical education. Students starting HTQs since September 2023 have been able to access the same student finance package as those who are studying a degree. This means that full-time and part-time students starting an HTQ that is a minimum of a year will be able to apply for both tuition fee and maintenance loans. HTQs will be among the first courses eligible for modular funding (and before degree level modules) when the Lifelong Learning Entitlement launches in AY2025/26.

We are promoting HTQs as part of the ‘Skills for Life’ cross-government communications and engagement campaign for young people, adults and employers.

This campaign aims to raise awareness of the various skills offers, help them decide which one is right for them (or their workforce) and drive take-up. We are also working with stakeholders, including the National Careers Service, Careers & Enterprise Company and UCAS to improve the information, advice and guidance that is available to young people and adults.

In responding to the recommendation on support for retraining, the Government cited the Multiply Programme, as a way to support adults to upskill and retrain. Has the Government conducted any assessment of its uptake of this programme.

Multiply is helping people improve their basic numeracy skills through free flexible courses that fit around their lives.

Up to £270m is directly available for local areas in England to deliver innovative interventions to improve adult numeracy.
£81.2m of Multiply funding was allocated to 81 local areas in England for FY2022/23 and a further £94.3m for FY2023/24.

Delivery is now well underway. Multiply provision is available in all 81 local areas, with over 90,000 course starts since the programme began (to October 2023).

A core component of the Multiply programme is to improve the evidence base on "what works" in tackling low adult numeracy. This includes a programme evaluation which will assess the impact on learner outcomes.

We are also developing a programme of Randomised Control Trials, to strengthen the evidence base on approaches engaging learners and improving adult numeracy and/or to fill evidence gaps.

Does the Government plan to carry out any review of the reasons why workplace training has been in decline in recent decades? If not, why?

The 2022 employer skills survey shows a decline in employers offering training from 65% in 2015 to 60% in 2022. This decline is a long-term structural problem.

Employers report lack of time and money as the key barriers to providing further training. The lack of join up in the qualification landscape also likely impacts employers ability to provide training. We are working with employers to simplify the skills system aligning technical qualifications to employer led standards.

DfE are actively working across government to look at why business investment in training has fallen over time and to develop policy options to drive up business investment in skills.

The Gatsby Benchmarks are a useful instrument for supporting careers provision in schools. Moreover, the measures within the Education (Careers Guidance in Schools) Act 2022, which require all state-funded schools in England to provide careers guidance for children for the entirety of their secondary education, are welcome. However, another of the Committee's key recommendations was to make Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) a compulsory element of the curriculum in all schools from key stage I to 4. The Government responded that "formal careers guidance is not appropriate for primary-aged children". Does it stand by this assertion and on what evidence is it based?

Yes, the government's reference to 'formal careers guidance' in this context recognises that careers provision in primary schools is very different to the structured programmes that we expect to see in secondary schools featuring, for example, personal guidance interviews with suitably trained careers advisers. The focus during the primary phase of education should be on expanding children's horizons, raising their aspirations and challenging stereotypes which might limit their futures. This is based on evidence that children begin to form ideas about their futures from as young as five or six, and in particular that they place limits on their future career options based on the examples around them. The non-statutory citizenship programme of study states that pupils should be taught during key stage 2 about the range of jobs carried out by people they know, and to understand how they can develop skills to make their own contribution in the future.

The Department for Education funded a 'What Works' report to provide evidence of the benefits of career-related learning for children in primary school and to offer guidance on evidence-based practice.[1] This led to the development and testing of six principles of career-related learning in primary schools: start early; involve employers and parents; personalise and differentiate; embed careers into the curriculum; adopt a whole school approach; open to all.

The Primary Platform[2] is a digital hub of tools, guidance and a wide range of resources, mapped to the six principles and the Skills Builder Framework.[3] The Platform currently enables self-assessment through the completion of an audit tool, allowing educators to track and evaluate their school's provision against the six principles.

The Department for Education is funding a careers programme for primary schools focused on areas of disadvantage. The three-year pilot programme, delivered by the Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC), brings together primary schools and provides teachers with training, delivered by Teach First.

The Teach First professional training will help primary school teachers to deliver a strategic careers programme focused on careers in the curriculum and employer encounters. The programme aims to reach 2,250 primary schools and around 600,000 pupils. We are focussing on the most disadvantaged children, predominantly in the 55 Education Investment Areas.

The pilot aims to increase the awareness that primary-aged children have of the world of work, increase their aspirations and reduce their stereotypical thinking. The

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1 1145_What works Primary_digital version_07_01_2019.pdf (careersandenterprise.co.uk)
2 Home page | Primary Schools Toolkit (careersandenterprise.co.uk)
3 The Universal Framework (skillsbuilder.org)

first interim evaluation, due in 2024, and the final evaluation report, due in summer 2025, will inform future policy.

The main aim of the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022 is "strengthening the statutory requirement for schools to provide opportunities for providers of technical education and apprenticeships to talk to pupils in years 8 to 13". Are there any initial data on the Act's impact?

The provider access legislation in the Skills and Post-16 Education, brought into force in January 2023, requires schools to offer at least six opportunities for young people to meet providers of technical education or apprenticeships, during years 8 to 13.

Data published by The Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) provides encouraging early evidence that young people's awareness of the benefits of technical options is increasing. In the 2022/23 academic year, 92% of schools said that they gave almost all students information about the full range of apprenticeships (up 8 percentage points in two years). 86% of schools reported that most students had meaningful encounters with FE colleges (up 17 percentage points in two years). 69% of schools reported that most students had meaningful encounters with Independent Training Providers (up 24 percentage points in two years).[4] Understanding of apprenticeships doubles from year 7 (39%) to year 11 (79%) as a result of careers education and this is nearly on a par with A Levels.[5]

Evidence from other sources points to similar progress. Ofsted's thematic review, published in September 2023, found that, in general, leaders understood their statutory responsibilities for careers, including those under the provider access legislation and they were making progress towards fully implementing the required changes.[6] The most recent Youth Employment UK Youth Voice Census found more young people than are having apprenticeships discussed with them at school (84% - the same as going to university).[7]

Does the Government intend to consult on the feasibility of the London Councils' proposal, endorsed by the Committee, that young people should have taken 100 hours of work experience by the age of 16[3]? What is its stance on this proposal?

We agree with the underlying principle that every young person should have multiple, varied and targeted workplace experiences and employer encounters throughout their education. The department's careers statutory guidance[8] is structured around the Gatsby Benchmarks, our careers framework for secondary schools and colleges. The benchmarks make it clear that schools and colleges should offer every young person at least one experience of a workplace by age 16 and a further experience by age 18. In addition, every year, from the age of 11, young people should participate in at least one meaningful encounter with an employer.

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[4] Insight briefing - Gatsby Benchmark results 2022 / 2023 | The Careers and Enterprise Company
[5] fsq-insight-briefing-2022-2023.pdf (careersandenterprise.co.uk)
[6] Independent review of careers guidance in schools and further education and skills providers - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
[7] youth-voice-census-2023-report.pdf (youthemployment.org.uk)
[8] Careers guidance and access for education and training providers - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Our national careers system has scaled significantly over the last five years. Our continued investment, including up to £29 million for the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) in 2024-25, is helping to improve the quality and consistency of careers programmes for young people. Schools are supported through a network of Careers Hubs and employer volunteers (Enterprise Advisers) to strengthen employer engagement plans. Young people are having more touchpoints with employers than ever before. 96% of young people in secondary education had at least one employer encounter in the 2022/23 academic year. Work experience is continuing to bounce back after the pandemic. Overall performance on experiences of workplaces improved by 12 percentage points from 2021/22, to 64% on average for all schools and colleges in 2022/23.[9]

We want to go further. We have provided £2 million to the Careers & Enterprise Company to deliver a pilot programme in 2023/24, testing new approaches to workplace experiences across three distinct strands of activity:

- High-quality work experience for up to 15,000 young people with the greatest economic disadvantage.
- Experiences with 20 employers from key growth sectors for up to 5,000 young people with a guarantee of a high-quality mock interview.
- Virtual experiences for year 7-9 pupils in up to 600 institutions in coastal and rural areas.

The goal is to use the evidence of what works best from the programme to re-invent high-quality workplace experiences for young people in the context of modern work practices and the need to prepare young people for jobs of the future. We want schools to provide multiple and meaningful interactions with employers. This can be achieved by broadening our understanding of work experience to include a more diverse range of workplace experiences, such as industry visits, job shadowing and employer-led projects. The key is to make sure each experience builds on the last one – and looks to the next one – building a coherent set of experiences into a progressive careers programme.

We also agree with London Councils that experiences of workplaces can begin in primary school. Our current pilot careers programme for primary schools seeks to inspire pupils about the world of work, drawing on positive role models from a range of industries and sectors to help raise aspirations, open opportunity, challenge stereotypes and help children link their learning to future jobs and careers. Specific examples of job areas include the green economy, technology, engineering, construction, STEM jobs, creative industries, aerospace, hospitality and healthcare.

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[9] Insight briefing - Gatsby Benchmark results 2022 / 2023 | The Careers and Enterprise Company

What are the Government's plans to tackle barriers to work experience? Has any assessment been conducted of the challenges schools and employers face in offering placements? Have the specific difficulties of SMEs been considered?

The Department for Education recently responded to the Education Select Committee’s inquiry into careers education, information, advice and guidance confirming that we will look at what more we can do to address barriers to organising work experience.[10]

Careers Hubs have an important role to play in facilitating and coordinating activity between schools, colleges and employers that is needed to deliver effective work experience placements. As set out in our response to the Education Select Committee, we have asked The Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) to work through the Careers Hubs to help to identify and remove barriers. Careers Hubs are supporting schools by clarifying expectations and enhancing local signposting. They are providing practical guidance to help streamline and simplify requirements. This includes the provision of standardised templates and procedures to meet safeguarding, health and safety and duty of care requirements more easily and efficiently whilst maintaining necessary protective standards.

There is ongoing work to identify and tackle barriers for employers, for example the sequencing of work experience placements. CEC is working with key growth sector bodies to ensure placements are aligned with skills gaps and future skills needs.

On T level industry placements, we listen carefully to feedback from employers and providers and in January 2023, we updated the T level industry placement delivery approaches to ensure students can access high-quality and meaningful placements. We continue to engage with the sector to understand the challenges around industry placements and also have our dedicated employer and provider websites to support the delivery of industry placements.

We know SMEs account for 99% of the total business population in the UK and have the potential to unlock a high capacity of industry placements. This is why we awarded contracts to 3 growth partners in the Construction, Digital and Business Operations sectors to test the best approaches for brokering T Level Industry Placements with SMEs. These contracts come to an end on 31 March 2024, and in Spring 2024 we will launch a new campaign to reach SMEs on industry placements.

Will the Government review the industrial placement requirement within T Levels, to ensure that employers have the capacity to offer the required hours of training?

After extensive engagement, we updated our published T Level industry placements delivery guidance in January 2023 to set clear guidelines on how to ensure that the 315 hour placement is high quality and relevant.

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[10] Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance: Government response to the Committee’s Fourth Report - Education Committee (parliament.uk)

There are currently no further plans to amend them, however we continue to engage with the sector to raise awareness of these approaches and understand how they can best be applied to each T level.

Our T Levels and industry placement support for employers website also provides resources to support employers – this includes guidance, webinars and 1-2-1 support on how to deliver successful industry placements.
Feedback

More information can be found on our website for employers. The website includes published employer testimonials and case studies of best practice to support employers hosting placements.

Further Education

One of the Committee's central recommendations related to the necessity of devising a new method of funding for FE. The Committee welcomes the Government's commitment to reforming the funding system, specifically its simplification (as announced in July 2023 in the Government's response to the Skills for jobs: implementing a new further education funding and accountability system consultation). Who is overseeing over the proposed timeline for these reforms? What mechanisms are in place to ensure these reforms are delivered?

The Department for Education is implementing reforms to funding and accountability and from academic year 24/25, the Department will remove the achievement funding factor for grant funded providers for adult skills funding, simplifying funding and giving colleges more certainty over their budgets without the risk of being penalised for supporting learners onto more challenging courses. We will also remove duplicative data collection; take steps to simplify and improve audit; and minimise Lifelong Learning Entitlement regulation.

More broadly we will take a holistic approach to how we administer skills funding. We are working with a small group of colleges to pilot further innovative options for making the system more efficient and less bureaucratic. We will give these colleges more flexibility by reducing FE funding rules, simplifying funding calculations, and removing some individual ringfences within adult skills funding and 16-19 funding.

We will capitalise on these funding freedoms by testing how we can make audit and assurance processes simpler, as well as looking at how we can make it easier for colleges to deliver Skills Bootcamps. We will also explore options for improving apprentice onboarding and the operation of end point assessment. Testing and refining these proposals with a small group of colleges in the first instance will mean that colleges can be confident that further changes implemented more widely will make a substantial difference.

The Government did not endorse the Committee's recommendation to reintroduce the Education Maintenance Allowance. However, it declared its commitment to further reforms that will promote genuine social mobility and drive up the quality of FE. What reforms has the Government planned or implemented since its response?

We have introduced and implemented a number of components of our FE reforms such as Local Skills Improvement Plans, Accountability Agreements, Local Needs Duty, Termly and Annual Strategic Conversations. We have designed and built a new outcomes dashboard (the Performance Dashboard) which will be live (in private beta) from Summer 2024.

We are on track to launch the Lifelong Learning Entitlement from 2025 that will provide people aged 18 – 60 with more flexible access to courses, helping them get the skills they need for jobs now and for the future. It will make it easier for people to study flexibly and train part-time – to acquire the skills that can transform their lives.

The LLE means people will have a wider choice in how and when they study to acquire new life-changing skills at higher qualification levels, alongside the excellent opportunities afforded through apprenticeships and work-based training.

The Committee shared the Government's desire that T Levels prove successful both for employers (with appropriate industry placements) and within universities. What feedback has the Government received on the package of support which the DfE offers to employers? As per higher education providers, since the Government's response, how many universities who offer STEM subjects have joined the list of higher education providers who accept T Levels as an entry qualification? How will the progress made and lessons learned from implementing T Levels be utilised in the anticipated change to the new Advanced British Standard qualification?

We know that there are challenges associated with delivering industry placements. This is why we have responded to feedback from employers and have a package of support available, including webinars and 1-2-1 support – more information can be found on our website for employers. The website includes published employer testimonials and case studies of best practice to support employers hosting placements.

T Levels offer students the opportunity to progress to a range of options including Higher Education. Last year 97% of T Level students who applied to Higher Education received at least one offer, and were placed in a range of courses including in STEM subjects. Currently 160 Higher Education providers have confirmed they accept T Levels on at least one course, and the vast majority offer STEM courses. Seven universities have joined our T Level ambassador network and we are supporting 12 universities to grow their industry placement programme.

The Advanced British Standard (ABS) will take the best of A levels and T Levels into a single baccalaureate style qualification that will ensure parity between technical and academic qualifications. T Levels will be the backbone of the new elements within the ABS. The technical parts of the ABS are much closer to the T Level than any other qualification, meaning that T Levels will be the most future proof qualification for students at 16-19.

<u>Apprenticeships</u>

The Government disagreed with the Committee's proposal to reform the apprenticeship levy, but offered to update the Committee on new plans to engage with young people, employers, training providers and other stakeholder groups. We kindly invite the Government to share any available updates on those plans.

The Department has been working with UCAS to promote apprenticeship opportunities to young people and to make it easier for employers to find apprentices. Since August 2023 all students can see apprenticeship opportunities at all levels on their UCAS Hub, alongside undergraduate courses. We know that over 1.5 million students already use the UCAS Hub and that more than 40% of all UCAS applicants are interested in apprenticeships. This ensures that more young people are informed about the apprenticeships options available.

In October 2023 the Department, in collaboration with UCAS, launched a year-long pilot to connect students to apprenticeships in three regions: Lancashire, the North East and Greater London. Students are provided with enhanced support to find and apply for apprenticeships, alongside other options. The pilot service includes free access for students to a new matching service, connecting them with relevant apprenticeship opportunities in their local area. We are also working with employers to increase their apprenticeship offer to young people and are providing support to school staff in the pilot regions to increase their knowledge and confidence in talking to students and parents about apprenticeships. The pilot will provide evidence about the most effective ways to match young people to apprenticeship opportunities.

The Department has worked with the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) to identify standards most suitable for those starting their careers. In September 2022 we launched our Career Starter Apprenticeships campaign which promoted a range of apprenticeships suitable for those seeking their first role after leaving full-time education, including Software Technician, Teaching Assistant and Electrician. Career Starter Apprenticeships are being promoted in schools and colleges through our Apprenticeships Support and Knowledge (ASK) programme, as well as the Careers and Enterprise Company and Careers Hubs. The Department is also collaborating with the Department for Work and Pensions and Jobcentre Plus advisers to target promotion of these specific standards where there are vacancies.

The Department continues to invest around £3.2 million annually in the ASK programme for schools and FE colleges to increase awareness of apprenticeships and T Levels amongst students, parents, carers, teachers and career advisers. Since 2016/17, the programme has worked with over 5,000 schools and reached over 2.5 million students.

The Committee agreed with the Government that "age should not be a barrier to opportunities to learn". However, given the barriers some young people experience when taking up apprenticeships, if not by reserving a share of the apprenticeship levy, how is the Government planning to support young people who begin apprenticeships between levels 2 and 3 before the age of 25?

Having disagreed with Committee's recommendation on the distribution of apprenticeship levy funding and measures to encourage employers to hire young people as apprentices, the Government listed several measures intended to deliver apprenticeship system improvements. Which have proved most effective?

Apprenticeship starts for the first half of the 2023/24 academic year are 3% higher than the same period last year and we've also seen growth in starts by young people. 57% of all apprenticeship starts were by young people under the age of 25 and there has been a 4% increase in starts by those aged under 19 to around 58,000 starts. The vast majority of apprenticeship starts remain at levels 2 and 3 – accounting for 65% of all starts – with level 3 apprenticeships now the most popular level.

Young people should not be restricted only to opportunities at entry level, apprenticeships can provide a route into almost 700 skilled occupations, right up to degree-level. In 2022/23 around 20,000 young people under the age of 25 started a degree-level apprenticeship, a 7% increase on 2021/22. There was also a 47% increase in the number of 16-18 years olds undertaking level 6 apprenticeships with over 3,200 starts. To help more people access this provision, we are providing an additional £40 million over the next two years to support degree apprenticeship providers to expand their offers.

Smaller employers across the country are vital in creating apprenticeship opportunities for young people; in 2022/23, almost 70% of apprentice starts with smaller employers that do not pay the levy were by young people aged under 25, compared to 45% with levy paying employers. A range of actions have been taken to support SMEs to offer apprenticeships and boost opportunities for young people.

Since 1 April the Government is removing the need for small and medium-sized businesses to contribute to cost of training apprentices aged under 22. This will reduce costs and burdens for businesses and deliver more opportunities for young people to kickstart their careers. In addition, from April the Government has increased the amount of funding that levy payers can transfer to other employers, including SMEs, from 25% to 50%. These measures are underpinned by an additional £60 million of new government funding for 2024-25, taking total investment in apprenticeships to over £2.7 billion in 2024-25. Additionally, in April the apprentice minimum wage increased by 21.2% to £6.40 per hour, benefitting an estimated 40,000 apprentices, including those under 19 and those in the first year of their apprenticeship. This will help to make apprenticeships more attractive to young people.

Improving access to apprenticeships and cutting red tape for SMEs is a key priority for the Department. In April 2023, the limit on the number of apprentices that non-levy payers can take on was removed. Since April 2023, around 350 SMEs have had ten or more apprenticeship starts. The number of steps needed to register to take on an apprentice has been cut by a third and our simplified registration process saw first-time employer registration jump from 70% to over 90%.

Flexi-job apprenticeship agencies were introduced in 2022 which allow apprentices to work with different host employers over the course of their apprenticeship and enable smaller employers that could not otherwise support apprenticeships to do so. The number of starts is growing with 640 starts with Flexi Job Apprenticeship Agencies in 2022/23, up from 120 starts in 2021/22.

To further build on the recent progress we have made, the Department is currently running a pilot with a small number of 'expert training providers' to look at further measures which could be introduced to support SME access to apprenticeships. As a result of the pilot we are developing a new, simple one-step approval for SMEs engaging with apprenticeships for the first time. This new flexibility is being developed with colleges and training providers and will be available later this year. It will significantly reduce the bureaucratic burden on SMEs and providers giving them time back to focus on the overall quality of the apprentice experience.

The Committee underlined the urgency for a renewed focus on local solutions to challenges of supply and demand of apprenticeships. The Government mentioned the Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs), which, starting with eight trailblazer areas in 2021-22, were extended in Autumn 2022 to all areas of the country. A year after its implementation, how well have different areas engaged with the plan?

Since autumn 2022, the designated employer representative bodies (ERBs) leading the Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) have galvanised and brought together local businesses, providers, and leaders everywhere to collaboratively align skills provision with local labour market needs.

Strong stakeholder engagement with the Plans resulted in all 38 areas of the country publishing their Secretary of State approved LSIP in summer 2023, with the Plans drawn up for a 3-year period.

The next development phase for each LSIP will commence following completion of the Spending Review in 2025, and, in the meantime, the designated ERBs are continuing to work with local employers, providers and stakeholders, to ensure the Plans are implemented effectively and remain relevant and up to date.

To help demonstrate how well individual areas are engaging with the Plans, each designated ERB will provide an annual progress report in June 2024 and 2025. This will provide a single, clearly articulated and publicly available document which sets out the achievements and progress made since the publication of the LSIP.

Through our internal monitoring and evaluation of the programme we are already beginning to see how the Plans are improving the supply and demand of skills provision, by making it easier for employers to navigate the system, supporting employers to forge new, dynamic relationships with local providers and stakeholders, and helping to ensure employers are more actively involved in the planning, design and delivery of post-16 technical education and training, including apprenticeships.

Where relevant, the actionable priorities set out in the plans are also helping to specifically improve apprenticeships by encouraging apprenticeship levy transfers, supporting large employers to make greater use of their levy, and guiding small and medium sized employers to take on apprentices.

In November 2023, we announced allocations of the £165 million Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF), which was made available across all 38 areas covered by the LSIPs and which will support providers to respond collaboratively to the skills needs identified in the Plans.

Provider uptake has been excellent and projects we are funding under the LSIF include training to plug key skills gaps in Artificial Intelligence, digital, net zero and green, construction, and health and social care, all of which were identified by employers through the LSIPs as priorities.

Together, LSIPs and LSIF are uniquely placed to ensure that in all areas of the country, skills contribute to economic growth, increase productivity and employment, and support businesses with the talent they need for them, and the economy to thrive.

The Committee recommended a national campaign to change attitudes towards technical routes and apprenticeships. The Government highlighted its January 2022 "Get the Jump" campaign. Has any evaluation of its effectiveness been conducted?

From January 2022 until December 2023, the Get the Jump campaign reached significant numbers of young people, raised awareness of the different education and training options available to young people and increased visitors to the National Careers Service for more information about apprenticeships, T Levels and other education pathways. The campaign was evaluated in accordance with government communications best practice.

In January 2024, the Department launched a new campaign titled "It all starts with skills," uniting young people, adults, and businesses around the powerful idea that skills, including technical routes and qualifications, allow people to fulfil their potential. A dedicated strand targets young people promoting apprenticeships, T Levels and Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs), as well as advice and guidance from the National Careers Service. Using a range of traditional and digital media channels – including innovative digital partnerships – the campaign directs people to our Skills for Careers webpage, https://www.skillsforcareers.education.gov.uk/pages/skills-for-life, a new gateway where they can access the National Careers Service and find out more about the full range of skills, education and training options.

Tackling Disadvantage

In answering the recommendation regarding wraparound health and wellbeing support for the most vulnerable, the Government listed several plans and measures (from the 16-19 Tuition Fund to school breakfast clubs). While welcome in principle, it would be helpful to receive an assessment of the impact of these measures.

A multi-year programme of almost £5bn has been made available for education recovery in England. We deliberately focussed our education recovery support on those that needed it most, while giving education providers as much flexibility as possible to tailor help to their own circumstances. Recovery programmes, such as the recovery premium, the National Tutoring Programme, and the 16-19 Tuition Fund were especially focused on helping the most disadvantaged.

We have a good understanding of the impact of our programmes. School leaders have reported the recovery premium funding as being the most useful type of support (68% said this was 'very useful'), when asked about the different forms of support for education recovery. Through the National Tutoring Programme (NTP) 5 million courses have been started since the NTP was launched in November 2020, and 46% of the pupils receiving tutoring last year academic year have been eligible for free school meals in the previous 6 years. Tutoring is no longer a preserve of the wealthy – but something that we have worked to embed in schools long term because we know the positive impact it can have on pupils.

On the impact of the 16-19 Tuition Fund, we commissioned a process evaluation in order to understand how the 16-19 Tuition Fund has been used by institutions, how it is supporting learners and how it can be improved for future years. The evaluation aimed to understand providers' decisions, as well as identifying enablers, barriers, and potential areas for improvement.

The Implementation and Process Evaluation report[11] (published in July 2023) identifies seven recommendations to inform how the Tuition Fund, or small group tuition in 16-19 educational settings more generally, could be further improved in future.

The 16-19 Tuition Fund was found to have been well received and highly valued by senior leaders, teachers/tutors, and students. The evaluation found high levels of student satisfaction (81%) and most found the tutoring helpful (89%) and relevant (88%). Both staff and students perceived benefits for students' confidence, study and exam preparation skills, and engagement in classes. The evaluation identified some areas for improvement including greater flexibility in eligibility criteria such as including students with mental health needs or other vulnerable students, including non-staff costs in funding, disbursing funds earlier in the academic year and disseminating good practice in delivering tuition.

The 16-19 Tuition Fund has funding in place until the end of AY2023/24. A package of Education Recovery support, which includes the 16-19 Tuition Fund programme, was put in place as a direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Tuition Fund was intended as a temporary measure to support students to recover learning loss caused by disruption to education during the pandemic.

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[11] Evaluation of the 16-19 Tuition Fund (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Following our long-term education recovery plan, we remain committed to improving outcomes for this student demographic, as demonstrated through our plans to introduce the Advanced British Standard for 16-19 year olds over the next decade.

All 16-19 students continue to receive the equivalent of an extra hour of support per week as they have from September 2022 so that they can catch up on skills and knowledge. The universal uplift of 40 hours is helping to mitigate learning loss for all 16-19 students. For disadvantaged students, DfE continues to expect the cumulative effect of additional hours on top of existing interventions to be particularly significant.

We are using learning from our recovery programmes to build a better future post-pandemic, especially in narrowing the attainment gap for disadvantaged students.

As we referred to our earlier response, wider support for disadvantage children is available through several different programmes, including the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme which provides heathy meals, enriching activities, and free childcare places to children from low-income families. Since 2022, the HAF programme has provided 10.7 million HAF days to children and young people in England. The expansion of the programme year-on-year has meant a total of 5.4 million HAF days provided between Christmas 2022, Easter and summer 2023. An independent evaluation of the programme was published in 2022.

The National School Breakfast Programme (NSBP) has been operating since 2018 to set up or improve breakfast clubs in deprived areas. We are currently investing up to £40m until the end of the summer term in 2025. Over 2,690 schools are participating in the programme, and Family Action estimates that over 350,000 children are receiving a breakfast from the NSBP on an average school day.

The Government disagreed with the recommendation to offer incentive payments to employers offering supported internships. However, it committed to strengthening the supported internship programme within the National Disability Strategy. Understandably, due to court proceedings, the latest available updates are dated, respectively, February and January 2022. How is Government planning to achieve this objective? Will it be pursued in the new Disability Action Plan 2023 to 2024?

We are investing c£18 million until March 2025 to build capacity in the Supported Internships Programme and support more young people with EHCPs into employment. The Internships Work consortium has been appointed as the delivery partner for this investment. They will be working closely with local authorities to double the number of supported internships by 2025 and will engage with all partners in the system to level up the quality of internships across the country. Over 700 job coaches will be trained to ensure interns receive high-quality support on their work placements.

As part of this work, up to £10.8 million in grant funding will be available to all local authorities until March 2025, alongside support and training. This will enable all local authorities to access a supported employment forum and strengthen the quality of their Supported Internship offers to improve the transition into sustained, paid employment for interns.

Additionally, in the Spring Budget 2023, the Chancellor announced a pilot to extend Supported Internships to young people with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) without Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) by March 2025.

Through the pilot, we will test using the existing Supported Internship model (as set out in the Supported Internship guidance) with young people aged 16-24 who have complex SEND/LDD but who do not have an EHCP, to see this provides an effective route into employment for this cohort.

These commitments are not included in the Disability Action Plan 2023-24. Our £18m investment was included in the SEND and alternative provision improvement plan and the pilot was announced as part of Spring Budget 2023.

The Government did not endorse a new Education and Workplace Race Equality Strategy, which the Committee judged particularly urgent. Instead, the Government noted several other measures. For example, it established the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities' and responded to its report with the policy paper, Inclusive Britain: government response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, (March 2022), committing to several actions. It also revised the statutory guidance on suspensions and permanent exclusions. How will these plans remove barriers ethnic minority young people face in education and the workplace?

The government's Inclusive Britain action plan, published in March 2022, set out a groundbreaking strategy to tackle unjust racial disparities, promote unity and build a fairer Britain for all. Inclusive Britain was the government's response to the findings from the independent Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, which reported in March 2021.

Inclusive Britain set out 74 bold actions to improve outcomes for ethnic minority groups across education, employment, health and criminal justice. An updated report to Parliament was published on 17 April last year setting out our excellent progress in delivering this strategy. In the updated report, it was announced that 32 of the 74 actions had been delivered, including:

- publication of the ambitious Schools White Paper and providing targeted support for pupils who need it the most
- the appointment of 37 new specialist Progression Champions to deliver specialist support to Jobcentres and develop tailored progression plans to support working claimants to climb the career ladder
- ethnicity pay gap guidance for employers which sets out how to voluntarily measure, report on and address any unfair ethnicity pay gaps within their workforce
- launching an Inclusion at Work Panel aimed at helping employers achieve fairness and inclusion in the workplace

The concrete actions we have delivered are making a real difference to people's lives. A final progress report will soon be published. This will include actions to support effective transitions between all stages of education, and into employment and adult services, and actions taken to support a skilled workforce with excellent leadership.

The Department for Education (DfE) remains committed to providing world class education, training, and care for everyone, whatever their background, and taking the action needed to address disparities:

- We back headteachers in using permanent exclusion as a sanction when required, to maintain calm, safe, and supportive environments for the benefit of all pupils and staff in schools. The Department is clear that permanent exclusion should only be used when absolutely necessary as a last resort and exclusion from school should not mean exclusion from education.
- The DfE is aware that some groups of children have a greater likelihood of suspension and permanent exclusion than others. The updated Suspension and Permanent Exclusion guidance has set out that schools, local authorities, and local partners should work together to understand what lies behind local trends. Local leaders should use this understanding to plan and put in place additional and targeted action based on their own context. If they identify any gaps, they should act to ensure those who work with children have the training, services and support they need to address them.
- This is in line with the commitment the Government made in Inclusive Britain. Action 36 committed to 'consult on and publish new and improved guidance on behaviour in schools and on suspension and permanent exclusion' in 2022. Both sets of guidance will help local leaders identify and address any disparities that might exist within suspension and permanent exclusion rates.
- In addition, information has been provided by the DfE for governing boards through the "*Understanding your data: a guide for school governors and academy trustees*' on carefully considering the level of pupil moves and the characteristics of pupils who have been permanently excluded to ensure the sanction is only used when absolutely necessary as a last resort.
- Schools have a legal duty not to discriminate against pupils under the Equality Act 2010.
- There are safeguards in place to ensure that schools meet the duties described in this guidance. Head teachers' decisions to permanently exclude a pupil can be reviewed by the school governing board. If a parent believes that their child has been permanently excluded from school without regard to the guidance, they should complain through the official school complaint procedure with the governing board.
- This also includes looking at suspensions, pupils taken off roll, those directed to be educated off site in Alternative Provision (AP) and whether there are any patterns to the reasons or timing of such moves.
- All of these actions should help with regard to removing the barriers ethnic minority young people face in education.

Given that care leavers are disproportionately represented in NEET statistics, we would be grateful if the Government shared any assessment on the effectiveness of the cross-Government care leaver strategy Keep on Caring (2016).

Since the Keep on Caring strategy was published in 2016, the Government has taken forward a range of measures to reduce the number of care leavers who are NEET.

In 2018, the Government introduced a bursary for care leavers who start an apprenticeship, and in August 2023 increased the bursary from £1,000 to £3,000. Local Authorities must provide a £2,000 bursary for care leavers who go to university.

We have launched the care leaver covenant. Over 450 businesses have signed up, offering employment opportunities to care leavers including John Lewis, Sky and Amazon.

We established the Civil Service care leaver internship scheme, which has led to nearly 1,000 care leavers taking up paid jobs across government.
Since October 2021, we have committed £8m to run a pilot in 58 LA areas, for Virtual School Heads (VSHs) to use Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) to provide targeted support to looked-after children and care leavers in Further Education. We will provide a further £24m of PP+ funding between 2023-2025 to expand this programme.

We have published guidance for HE providers on how they can ensure care leavers have the support they need to access, and succeed at, university and have committed to introduce a new gold standard accreditation scheme that aims to increase care leaver participation in higher and further education.
However, latest data show that care leavers continue to experience much higher NEET rates than their peers in the general population (38% v 13%) and we are committed to do more. That is why we have established a care leaver Ministerial Board, co-chaired by DfE and DLUHC SoS', to bring together Ministers from 12 Departments to review how they can work together to improve care leavers' outcomes in the round.

Young people with complex needs, such as care leavers, are at greater risk of being NEET for longer. We are supporting local authorities to improve their identification of those at risk of being NEET and to hold them to account through new guidance and tools.

Government Initiatives and Responsibilities

The Committee regrets the Government's refusal to establish an independent Young People's Commissioner. In its response, the Government referred to the Youth Employment Group and its role in providing scrutiny and challenge. While the Committee welcomes the Youth Employment's Group's initiatives (the latest being a paper published in January 2023), a Young People's Commissioner could provide more effective scrutiny and challenge the Government. Will the Government reconsider its position?

We maintain the position we set out in our original response that we do not see the need to establish a Young People's Commissioner.

Work to support the needs of young people is carried out across Government Departments, which work together and with other partners to ensure young people have the most appropriate support, education or training to enable them to enter sustained employment and progress in their careers.

One example of this approach is the cross-Government Forum on Youth Skills for Life and Work which is established in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Education and Department for Culture, Media and Sport. The forum provides an opportunity for departments to identify and act on opportunities to work closer together on cross-cutting youth issues and to equip young people with the skills for life and work that they will need to fulfil their potential.

The forum aims to identify and act on opportunities for departments to work closer together on cross-cutting youth issues and to maximise the benefits of the investment we are making across Government.

The Government rejected the Committee's recommendation to extend or make the Kickstart scheme permanent. However, it is welcome that the Government has updated the scheme's evaluation July 2023. The scheme "has met its objectives", with employers feeling "Kickstart was an attractive (and low risk) proposition for them". [4] Will the Government reconsider the Committee's proposal in light of this positive assessment?

The Kickstart Scheme was a time-limited response to the effects of the pandemic economic downturn on young people. The scheme came to an end in September 2022 with over 163,000 Kickstart jobs started by young people since its launch.

There are no current plans to extend or make the Kickstart scheme permanent. Latest data (for Dec-Feb '24) indicates over 900,000 vacancies in the economy – up on pre-COVID levels. An intervention like Kickstart, intended to create demand and additional roles for young people in the labour market is not appropriate in this economic context.

Throughout the duration of the Kickstart scheme, over 30,000 employers took on a young person, providing them with the opportunity to gain experience that would improve their chances of progressing to find long-term, sustainable work. There continue to be a range of initiatives businesses can get involved in to give opportunities and experience to young people, including apprenticeships, mentoring circles, and work experience. Our National Employer and Partnership Teams (NEPT) continuously work to connect DWP with employers and partners to strengthen working relationships and to build new opportunities to support people back to work.

Learning from the evaluation of the Kickstart scheme is also being utilised in the design of other employment support, such as Universal Support.

The Committee suggested the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Community Renewal Fund be adequately funded to tackle the NEET group as much as the European Social Fund used to. The Government responded that the UK Shared Prosperity Fund is not "a direct replacement for EU structural funds". How is the Government planning to replace EU structural funds to tackle the NEET group specifically?

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) aims to better tailor funding to local needs. The government has devolved decision making to local areas who are best placed to identify their own skills needs and empowered them to deliver interventions they feel will be most beneficial to learners in their area. In April 2023, we removed the restriction on people and skills spending in England. This enables lead local authorities to allocate UKSPF funding to any people and skills intervention during the second and third years of the fund. Some areas will choose to spend their money on NEETs, others will take a view that as there are other skills and employment schemes in their local area, for example Adult Education Budget funded provision, they wish to spend UK Shared Prosperity Fund money on other priorities.

The Committee recognised the challenges of regularly collecting and publishing high quality employment data as well as the importance of sharing detailed data about the uptake and outcomes of employment support schemes'. What is the commitment of the Government in these two

specific regards? What progress has been made with the development of the Labour Market Survey (LMS) since its adoption by the ONS in January 2022?5

The ONS has the primary lead in collecting, analysing, and disseminating high quality statistics including employment data. They publish their "publication scheme" to show all the information that they make public, which includes monthly labour market statistics. Officials from DWP and other Government Departments engage with ONS through governance meetings about Labour Market Data.

ONS plans to introduce a new, larger primarily online Transformed Labour Force Survey (this is the new name for the Labour Market Survey the committee referred to) as the basis of the monthly labour market statistics from September 2024. They have been dual running the original Labour Force Survey (LFS) and the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS) since February 2022. The ONS will independently decide whether the data from its TLFS is of sufficient quality to stop conducting the original LFS in June 2024.

DWP officials and other government departments are engaging with ONS on this work as we need to ensure this important information on the overall performance of the labour market, and on groups like disabled workers, is as robust as it can be.

DWP is continuing to release information about employment support schemes. For example, information on SWAPs, the Youth Offer and Kickstart is in the public domain and we are now publishing regular statistical information on the Restart scheme.

It is welcome that the Government recognises the importance of collecting data about the destinations of pupils in the summer they leave school. Does the Government plan to implement destination data collection, beyond results collected from Compass? As stated in its response, has the Government explored further if they can reduce the lag between collection and publication of destination data?

The destinations measures statistics use data from a range of administrative sources and as such it is only possible to reduce the lag to a certain point as timescales depend on data availability and the need to determine if pupils have sustained a destination for 6 months. Improvements in data processing mean that we have been able to publish data on a student’s longer-term destinations two months earlier than in previous years.

Does the Government plan to give Mayoral Combined Authorities any role in the design and delivery of contracted employment programmes as part of a new devolution deal?

DWP recognises the value of local expertise in supporting claimants and residents, as well as the importance of closer collaboration with Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs). As set out in the Levelling Up White Paper, the Government has committed to consider offering MCAs a role in the design and delivery of future contracted employment programmes (CEP). This formal commitment has been reflected in all new devolution deals with MCAs since 2022. Further to this, for the Trailblazer devolution deals with Greater Manchester Combined Authority and West Midlands Combined Authority, DWP has agreed to work together on the design of future CEP, including co-design and a delegated delivery model, subject to readiness conditions being met. These Trailblazer deals represent a genuinely new and different way of approaching CEP.