

Written evidence submitted by Mohamed Shauq

The impact of COVID19 on education and children's services

Written evidence submitted by Mohamed Shauq – 30/08/2020

Executive Summary

Since Friday 20th March 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic has caused significant disruption education. Through action researched I have evaluated the impact of the education provision that has been utilised and investigated the actions which may be taken to enhance education in the future. In order prepare for potential future disruptions to education a commitment to more innovative and resilient approaches to education is essential.

The following points have been debated in this submission:

- **Background of Author**
- **Actions for the future of Education Provision**
- **Strategic Action Plan**
- **Examinations**
- **Summary**
- **Appendices**

Background

1. I am passionate about education and have had the privilege of serving future generations of students for the past 26 years. I have taught in Secondary Schools (11-16) and Secondary/Post-16 Schools/Colleges (11-18). In the north-east I have taught at schools with a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. My roles in education included:
 - (i) Science Technician
 - (ii) ICT Network Co-ordinator
 - (iii) Science Teacher
 - (iv) Assistant Head of Science
 - (v) Assistant Headteacher

2. From a scientific background I graduated with a degree in Chemistry. I have grasped the opportunities to continue with my professional development throughout my career and successfully completed my NPQH (National Professional Qualification for Headship) in 2012. A significant aspect of my portfolio as an Assistant Headteacher encompassed the development of ICT to enhance Teaching & Learning and I have led in this field to further augment student progress.

3. I vehemently believe in equal opportunities and that poverty should not be barrier to success. I have been honoured to enable students that I have taught to become graduates at Oxbridge Universities. Serving on the Senior Leadership Team in a secondary school in Hartlepool – IDACI (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index) – Hartlepool ranked 8th nationally with an IDACI score of 28.3 in 2019 – [*The English Indices of Deprivation 2019 \(IoD2019\)*](#) ^[1] has enabled me to develop and deploy effective learning strategies for students that face substantial socio-economic challenges.

Actions for the future of Education Provision

4. All stages of education globally have been significantly disrupted following the Covid-19 pandemic. The effects upon students and their learning have been unparalleled and there must be substantial research and effective measures put into place to alleviate potential future disruption for education establishments that are scheduled to commence from September 2020.
5. The Office of National Statistics report – [Coronavirus and home-schooling in Great Britain: April to June 2020](#)^[2] indicates:
 - (i) 87% of parents said a child in their household had been home-schooled
 - (ii) Real-time interactive learning resources utilised by 44% of children aged 16 – 18 and 13% of children aged 5 – 10
 - (iii) Over half (52%) of parents with school-aged children said a child in their household was struggling to continue their education while at home
 - (iv) Less than 1 in 10 (9%) parents with a child who was struggling gave a lack of devices as a reason for struggling to carry out schoolwork at home
 - (v) Most older children aged 16 to 18 years in full-time education (64%) thought that continuing their education at home would negatively affect their future life plans
6. There are several key issues from this report that require addressing including:
 - (i) Providing the optimum environments to enable home-schooling more accessible for all students. Perhaps utilising local business partners, community centres, public libraries etc
 - (ii) Ensuring that all students have access to portable devices and a fast internet connection. Other countries are also exploring how to enhance on-line provision – [India coronavirus: Online classes expose extent of digital divide - BBC News](#)^[3]
 - (iii) Facilitating appropriate support mechanisms to ensure that students are supported educationally, emotionally and mentally whilst working from home
7. The [Balancing the Risks of Pupils Returning to Schools](#)^[4] report published by the [Royal Society DELVE \(Data Evaluation and Learning for Viral Epidemics\) initiative](#)^[5] highlights that education from attendance in school equates in a reduction in skills which has direct implications on earnings potential for the future.

8. One of the consequences of lost skills from closed schools is greater risk of poverty: earlier research from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) shows that “those with a low level of educational attainment are almost five times as likely to be in poverty now as those with a high level of education.”
9. The report also highlighted that schools using a virtual learning environment (VLE) to inform students about learning activities – rather than the school website, and those delivering learning content to students through online conversations or activities that involve consolidating previous learning or revising, had higher student engagement levels and an increased probability of having highly engaged disadvantaged students . 60% of private schools already had an online platform of some description prior to lockdown whereas only 37% of state schools had one. [**Social Mobility and Covid-19 – Impact Brief #1: School Shutdown**](#) ^[6].
10. The Organisation for Economic Co-ordination & Developments (OECD) report [**Supporting the continuation of teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic**](#) ^[7] is an excellent resource linking on-line curriculum resources to the following taxonomy for professional development and curricula:
- (i) Cognitive skills – processing & cognitive strategies, knowledge and creativity
 - (ii) Interpersonal skills – collaborative group skills and leadership
 - (iii) Intrapersonal skills – intellectual openness, work ethic & responsibility and self-efficacy
11. [**Education continuity during the Coronavirus crisis – BBC Bitesize UK**](#) ^[8] is also an extensive platform that is constantly evolving and utilising the latest innovative approaches that technology has to offer to increase student engagement via:
- (i) Multimodal access, brevity and diversity of materials
 - (ii) Diversity of teaching on-line to deliver/support learning including utilising celebrities
 - (iii) Engaging and age-appropriate resources
 - (iv) Visibility – resources are easily accessible
 - (v) Parental support – available for academic subjects and non-academic areas, for example mental health
12. [**National Tutoring Programme**](#) ^[9] – (04/08/2020) website launched. A Government initiative to enable students to ‘catch-up’ lost curriculum time caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Providing subject specific tutoring available to schools to help disadvantaged students whose education has been adversely affected by school closures. The role-out of the programme:
- (i) 31/08/2020 – Funding round for Tuition Partners opens
 - (ii) 18/09/2020 – Fund round for Tuition Partners closes
 - (iii) 31/10/2020 – List of approved Tuition Partners announced
13. This initiative is still in progress and its quality and impact will require monitoring and evaluation once it has been launched in schools.
14. [**Making the vulnerable visible: Narrowing the attainment gap after COVID-19**](#) ^[10] – (27/08/2020) report published via The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) recommends the following actions to address the growing vulnerability gap:
- (i) Formalise a process by which vulnerable children are identified

- (ii) Commit to providing schools with extra financial support for the most vulnerable learners (on Child Protection Plans) through a new 'Vulnerability Premium'
- (iii) Enable schools and wider public services to address the root causes of vulnerability

▪ Strategic Action Plan

15. For schools to function more effectively and efficiently in the future stemming from any enforced closures then it is crucial that a Strategic Action Plan is actioned. There are many different proposed models available that contain the essential components for successful action planning. Including the following:

- (i) The World Bank – [Guidance Note: Remote Learning & COVID-19](#) ^[11]
- (ii) The World Bank – [Remote Learning and COVID-19](#) ^[12]
- (iii) The Organisation for Economic Co-ordination & Developments (OECD) – [A framework to guide an education response to the Covid-19 Pandemic of 2020](#) ^[13]
- (iv) The Organisation for Economic Co-ordination & Developments (OECD) – [Schooling disrupted, schooling rethought How the Covid-19 pandemic is changing education](#) ^[14]
- (v) The Organisation for Economic Co-ordination & Developments (OECD) – [Education responses to COVID-19: an implementation strategy toolkit](#) ^[15]
- (vi) United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) – [Global education monitoring report, 2020: Inclusion and education: all means all](#) ^[16]
- (vii) Department for Education (DFE) – [Guidance for full opening: schools Section 5: Contingency planning for outbreaks](#) ^[17]
- (viii) The Children's Commissioner for England – [Putting children first in future lockdowns](#) ^[18]

16. All the reports listed above (i) – (viii) contain extremely useful and important elements for leadership teams to integrate into their plans. However, the guidance that has been issued from the Department of Education (DFE) – [Guidance for full opening: schools Section 5: Contingency planning for outbreaks](#) ^[17] is the key document that all schools have been advised to follow to effectively plan for future education provision in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

17. Remote education support is also vital aspect for schools contingency planning and although there has been significant development with Virtual Learning Environments (VLE's) by individual schools and Academy Trusts. The [Oak National Academy](#) ^[19] backed by the Department of Education and funded via Government Grant Funding have indicated that they will produce video lessons that cover the entire curriculum that will be freely available to all school from the Autumn Term 2020. However, these resources are still under development and may not be fully prepared for the start of the academic year – September 2020. The following additional aspects to remote learning ought also to be considered:

- (i) Ensure all teachers have been provided with the necessary CPD to support student engagement and development effectively
- (ii) Accessibility to printed resources for students with limited on-line access
- (iii) Provision of appropriate on-line and face-to-face support for SEND students
- (iv) Providing mechanisms for to provide daily support from teachers

▪ Examinations

18. The most highlighted aspect of education in the news has been summer examinations procedures for 2020. The most prominent news articles are included below – in chronological date order as they were published:

- 19. [**Ofqual Summer Symposium**](#) ^[20] – (21/07/2020) – indicated that outcomes from ‘Calculated Grades’ (CG) for good grades will be 2% higher at A-level and 1% at GCSE from 2019. However, these would be much lower than ‘Centre Assessed Grades’ (CAG) which would have seen a 12% rise for A Levels and 9% rise for GCSE’s compared to the previous years.
- 20. [**Flexibility this year over staying-on for A-Level – BBC**](#) ^[21] – (27/07/2020) – Ofqual requested greater flexibility from Post-16 providers to enable students to study even if they had not fulfilled the offer requirements for courses.
- 21. [**Summer 2020 grades for GCSE, AS and A Level Extended Project Qualification and Advanced Extension Award in Maths**](#) ^[22] – (30/07/2020) – Ofqual guidance for procedures regarding ‘Calculated Grades’ (CG) and exam schedules for Autumn 2020 and January 2021. Requested clarity from Ofqual via email (30/07/2020)– Would candidate papers in the Autumn 2020 Examination Series or January 2021 Examination Series be classed as ‘Resits’ (‘R’) for students who have been awarded Calculated Grades (CG) as this was not clear in the above documentation?

Emailed response received from Christianah Ogunnowo, Interim Support Officer - Media and Public Enquiries, Ofqual on (30/07/2020) indicating that the Autumn Examination Series will not classed as ‘resits’ for students that have been provided with a ‘calculated grade’ for the Summer Examination 2020 Series. For these students, the Autumn 2020 Examination Series or January 2021 Examination Series would be a ‘first sitting’ and therefore an ‘R’ would not appear next to their grades on the results sheets. If a student sat the same subject examination in both the Examination Series then an ‘R’ would appear on the grades result sheet in January 2020 as the would be deemed to have resat. Confirmation was provided that the better of the two grades would be applied and replacement certificates would be made available.

- 22. [**Centre responsibility for autumn GCSE, AS and A level exam series**](#) ^[23] – (01/08/2020) – indicated that Centre that entered them for the Summer 2020 Examination Series is to enter them in the Autumn 2020 Examination

Series and take overall responsibility for ensuring that they have somewhere appropriate to sit their exams. The following issues require further consideration:

- (i) How and where will schools/Colleges support students in preparing for these examinations?
 - (ii) What measures will Colleges/Universities put in place to support these students including potential loss of learning of their current course during examination preparation time?
 - (iii) If examinations are to be held in their original Centres how may disruption to students' education be minimised to accommodate students who have moved to different locations in the UK and overseas without further disadvantaging them?
 - (iv) Is there any consideration(s) being made to support the most disadvantaged students as they are liable for full cost of these examinations?
23. [Coronavirus: GCSE students allowed to drop topics in 2021 exams - BBC News](#) ^[24] – (04/08/2020) – GCSE students in England will be able to drop subject areas in English literature and history exams next year.
24. [Proposed changes to the assessment of GCSE's, AS and A levels in 2021](#) ^[25] – (04/08/2020) – changes made to various curriculum areas due to 'lost' curriculum time caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.
25. [A-level and GCSE results: 'Improved' schools can challenge grades](#) ^[26] – (07/08/2020) – Ofqual – Schools in England can appeal if they can show this year's GCSE and A-level results do not reflect recent improvements.
26. [Appeal arrangements for AS, A levels and GCSEs](#) ^[27] – (07/08/2020) – Ofqual – Criterion required to make appeals for the Summer 2020 Examination Series outcomes.
27. [Student guide to post-16 qualifications results – Summer 2020](#) ^[28] – (07/08/2020) – Ofqual guide for students regarding 'Calculated Grades'(CG), results day and the appeals process.
28. [Minister Donelan MP \(Minister of State for Universities\) – Summer Admissions Letter](#) ^[29] – (11/08/2020) – Students are to be accepted onto University courses if their appeal is successful and they meet the conditions of University undergraduate course offer.
29. [Triple lock for students ahead of A level and GCSE results](#) ^[30] – (12/08/2020) – Gavin Williamson CBE MP (Secretary of State for Education) announces the 'triple lock' for student grades due to be released on Thursday 13th August 2020 (A levels) and Thursday 20th August 2020 (GCSE's). The 'triple lock' indicates that students could receive the higher result of the following:
- (i) Calculated Grade (CG)
 - (ii) 'Valid Mock' Examination Grade – via the Appeals Process
 - (iii) Autumn Exam Grade (October 2020 for A Levels and November 2020 for GCSE's)
30. The following points require serious consideration in order to make the whole process fair and equitable:
- (i) Under what criteria will a 'valid mock' be determined and why were 'mock examination' papers not requested for a validation process when – [Further details on exams and grades](#) ^[31] – (20/03/2020) guidance was initially issued via the Department of Education (DFE)?
 - (ii) How will 'valid mock' grades be standardised?
 - (iii) Consideration should be given to students where their schools/Colleges have released papers to students in preparation for their Summer 2020 examination and without this evidence is this possible?
 - (iv) Mock examinations may not have occurred under the same conditions for all candidates at all Centres
 - (v) Absenteeism from mock examinations – where no 'valid mock' is available

31. A comprehensive and thorough process ought to be executed to prevent students being disadvantaged. If 'valid mock' papers are to be standardised via Ofqual consideration should be given to the timescale for this process and not to disadvantage students for their future education. This announcement is extremely late and was publicised following the decision that SQA Results – Downgraded results are to be scrapped: qualifications to be based on teacher assessment from John Swinney MSP (Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education)– [Deputy First Minister – SQA 2020 Results](#) ^[32] – (11/08/2020) and following the release of downgraded results via the Department for Education (DFE) – [Results Day](#) ^[33]– (04/08/2020).
32. Although the Department for Education (DFE) has pledged to support schools in the running of the Autumn 2020 Examination Series in the following ways:
- (i) Funding for administrating the examinations
 - (ii) Booking venues
 - (iii) Sourcing invigilators
 - (iv) Meeting any additional costs of Autumn Examination 2020 fees that exceed summer fee rebates
33. Disadvantaged students and families are still required to overcome the financial barrier for the fees of Autumn 2020 Examination Series papers and it is essential that appropriate funding opportunities are explored to elevate funding disadvantages.
34. [Schools and College responsibility for autumn exams: guidance](#) ^[34] – (12/08/2020) – students and/or their families should not have to meet the cost of fees if they want to enter. Schools and Colleges should not face additional costs for fees, over and above what they would have paid had summer exams gone ahead.
35. [A-levels: Growing anger over 'unfair' results this year](#) ^[35]– (13/08/2020) – England, the moderation means that 35.6% of results have been lowered from teachers' predictions by one grade, 3% by two grades, 2% have increased.
36. The appeals process is prohibitive for disadvantaged students and their families as they are, they have been asked to meet the financial burden for unsuccessful appeals. The following Examination Boards (AQA, OCR, Edexcel and WJEC) have all confirmed that fees will apply for all failed appeals. [Exams 2020: Schools WILL face charges for unsuccessful appeals](#) ^[36] – (13/08/2020).
37. [What's next in the argument over exam results?](#) ^[37] – (13/08/2020) – In terms of deprivation Independent Schools increased their A*/A grades by 5% compared to 3% for Comprehensive School and 0.3% for Further Education Colleges. The largest drop between Centre Assessment Grades (CAG) and Calculated Grades (CA) was amongst the most disadvantaged students.
38. [A-levels and GCSEs: Free exam appeals for schools in England](#) ^[38] – (15/08/2020) – The government will cover the cost of schools in England appealing against exam grades after 280,000 A-level students had their marks downgraded.
39. [Appeals based on mock examination](#) ^[39] – (15/08/2020) – Criteria set via Ofqual for the constituents of a 'valid mock' that may be used for appeals against 'Calculated Grades' (CG).

40. **Statement on our earlier announcement, 15th August 2020** ^[40] – (15/08/2020) – Earlier today Ofqual published information about mock exam results in appeals. This policy is being reviewed by the Ofqual Board and further information will be published in due course.
41. **A Level results: ‘Huge mess’ as exams appeal guidance withdrawn** ^[41] – (16/08/2020) – The Conservative chairman of the Education Select Committee, Robert Halfon, said the decision to review appeals guidance only announced on Saturday left students and schools in confusion.
42. **A level grades ‘drop below three year average’, new analysis suggests** ^[42] – (17/08/2020) – A-level grades awarded in Sixth Form Colleges this year fell below the average of the last three years in England, new analysis suggests. The Sixth Form & Colleges Association (SFCA) said its analysis of 41 subjects had not found a single one where the results were above the three-year average.
43. The statistical model used by Ofqual faces two legal challenges, with students arguing they were unfairly judged on the school they attend.
44. **A statement from Roger Taylor (Chair of Ofqual) on how GCSE, AS and A level grades will be awarded this summer** ^[43] – (17/08/2020) – Students are now to be awarded their Centre Assessment Grade (CAG) for this summer – that is, the grade their school or College estimated was the grade they would most likely have achieved in their exam or the moderated grade, whichever is higher.
45. This followed the news that the devolved Governments of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales have awarded Centre Assessment Grades to their students prior to the Ofqual announcement.
46. The examinations process has been utterly risible situation that the Department of Education (DFE) has managed to create. A significant proportion of students and parents and have lost confidence in the education system. There were plethora of opportunities available from 20th March 2020 (when schools closed for Covid-19) to create a coherent plan of action to support, accurately assess student outcomes and to afford the appropriate life opportunities for students. However, there have been significant shortcomings with many decisions being made in a reactionary manner. Students and their families have been left agitated and in there have been legal challenges mounted in the manner the Department of Education (DFE) decided to allow an algorithm to decide the future of students’ education.
47. There are still many issues concerning the examinations procedures that remain unresolved:
- Since evidence of assessed work was not requested at any stage of this process can the Government, schools, students and families be convinced that this is an equitable process and that all students have been awarded the outcomes that reflect their abilities across all Centres which has cumulated with grade inflation of 12% for A Levels and 9% for GCSE’s from the previous year?
 - Will all Post-16 Providers and Universities be confident that the grades awarded are an accurate reflection of the students’ abilities starting courses in their establishments and if additional ‘catch-up’ sessions are required how will this provision be supported?
 - Drop-out rates are likely to rise substantially this year if appropriate support is not provided and therefore how will allotted places be justified when some students are being asked to defer for a year with a ‘guaranteed’ offer?
 - Will these Centre Assessed Grades (CAG) carry the same weighting as previous years and how will they be viewed by prospective employers in the future?
 - Are these Centre Assessed Grades (CAG) comparable to previous years and how will these grades be used in School Performance Tables, OFSTED, RAISEonline and other educational bodies to grade the performance of schools?

(f) Will consideration be given to grade inflation that will result some universities with lower entry requirements to face a drop in course uptake and consequently may require financial support?

48. [A-levels: Gavin Williamson 'incredibly sorry' for exams distress](#) ^[44] – (18/08/2020) – Gavin Williamson says he is "incredibly sorry for the distress" caused to thousands of students after a U-turn in how A-levels and GCSEs are graded.

The government has said that students who accepted offers based on their downgraded results would be able to release themselves if another offer is reinstated based on their updated grades.

49. [ASCL call for review into gradings fiasco](#) ^[45] – (18/08/2020) – General Secretary of the Association of School and College (ASCL) - Geoff Barton said: "There is an urgent need for the Department for Education to commission an immediate independent review which will rapidly establish exactly what went wrong with the process for awarding grades to A-level and GCSE students this summer, and to publish its findings and recommendations.

50. [Durham University students offered money to defer after exams U-turn](#) ^[46] – (19/08/2020) – Durham University has promised a bursary and guarantee of accommodation for everyone who defers until 2021.

51. [Pupils get GCSE Grades as BTec results are pulled](#) ^[47] – (20/08/2020) – Exam board Pearson announced it would re-grade BTecs in line with GCSEs and A-levels.

52. [OSR review of approach to developing statistical models designed for awarding 2020 exam results](#) ^[48] – (20/08/2020) – The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) will conduct a review of the approach taken to developing statistical models designed for awarding 2020 exam results.

53. [Students to be offered first choice places, says minister](#) ^[49] – (20/08/2020) – Universities in England will offer all students with the grades places on their first-choice courses, but many will have to start next year.

"Universities and their admissions teams are doing everything they can to accommodate students on their first choice course and where this is not practically possible, to advise on and offer other opportunities, such as a deferred place for next year or a suitable alternative course, Alistair Jarvis, chief executive of Universities UK stated.

54. As the Autumn 2020 Examination Series have been scheduled for students who are dissatisfied with their Centre Assessment Grades (CAG) – deadline for entries 04/09/2020 (for A/AS Levels), 18/09/2020 for GCSE's except English Language and Mathematics (04/10/2020). The A/AS examinations are to be sat 05/10/2020 – 23/10/2020 and the GCSE's 02/11/2020 – 23/11/2020. What provision/considerations have been made for preparing students for these examinations if any by:

- (i) The students' previous school – if they have left and moved onto Sixth Form in a different location to study 'A' Levels?
- (ii) The University – if students have travelled to a different part of the UK or abroad for their undergraduate courses

55. These students have missed a considerable amount of teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic and are already face significant disadvantages through missed learning opportunities.

56. Some Universities have offered incentives for students to defer for a year with a 'guarantee' of course place - [Durham University students offered money to defer after exams U-turn](#) ^[46] – (19/08/2020) – Whilst this may seem attractive to some students this year and alleviate some of the tensions caused in terms of meeting

capacity for University Admissions it will inevitably have a detrimental effect on the Y13 students (from September 2020) seeking University places for next year. Serious consideration should be given to this matter and the following options may be form part of a strategy:

- (i) Increasing the capacity for undergraduate courses where ‘guarantees’ have been allocated for next year’s admissions (2021/2022)
- (ii) Explore the options for blended learning opportunities – face-to-face and on-line lecturers
- (iii) Request that ‘guaranteed’ places are confirmed early to enable capacity issues to be resolved more efficiently

57. ***Ofqual announces interim leadership arrangements*** ^[50] – (25/08/2020) – Ofqual Chief Regulator, Sally Collier, has decided that the next stage of the awarding process would be better overseen by new leadership. Dame Glenys Stacey to assume a temporary leadership role as acting Chief Regulator until December 2020.

58. ***Susan Acland-Hood made Acting Permanent Secretary at the Department for Education*** ^[51] – (26/08/2020) – Jonathon Slater (Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education) has agreed to stand down from 1st September 2020. Susan Acland-Hood (Second Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education) will take over as Acting Permanent Secretary.

▪ Summary

59. There has been a considerable change to education since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and a plethora of documentation has been produced to guide schools from September 2020. In order to effectively implement the policies and strategies that have been suggested school leaders have been tasked with substantial increase in their workloads. However, the full impact of this work will only become apparent once staff and students have re-started work in September 2020. Therefore, it is essential that all changes to education systems are efficiently communicated to all stakeholders to maximise learning and minimise disruption. School leadership should also be held accountable though a designated governor or member of the Board of Trustees to ensure that contingency plans are rigorous and actioned according within the schools’ context.

60. Although on-line resources are becoming increasingly accessible. The ***Oak National Academy*** ^[19] a Government funded initiative to produce on-line learning materials to support students that have missed significant proportion of their curriculum from Year 10 (Y11 from September 2020) and Year 12 (Y13 from September 2020) is to be made freely available to all schools. The ***National Tutoring Programme*** ^[9] a Government program to enable students to ‘catch-up’ lost curriculum time caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. These are still under development and will not be fully operational for the beginning of the academic year – September 2020 and it is forecast that they will not be accessible for at least another half-term.

61. ***Regional Schools Commissioners*** ^[52] – Following the Covid-19 outbreak there has been limited coverage concerning the roles and responsibilities of the Regional Commissioners:

- (i) Dominic Herrington (National Schools Commissioner)
- (ii) Katherine Cowell (Interim Regional Schools Commissioner for North of England)
- (iii) Vicky Beer (Regional Schools Commissioner for Lancashire and West Yorkshire)
- (iv) John Edwards (Regional Schools Commissioner for East Midlands and the Humber)
- (v) Andrew Warren (Regional Schools Commissioner for West Midlands)
- (vi) Dame Kate Dethridge (Interim Regional Schools Commissioner for North-West London and South-Central England)
- (vii) Sue Baldwin CB (Regional Schools Commissioner for East of England and North-East London)
- (viii) Hannah Woodhouse (Regional Schools Commissioner for South-West England)
- (ix) Claire Burton (Regional Schools Commissioner for South-East England and South London)

62. As part of the on-going improvement strategies to develop education standards during the Covid-19 pandemic it is vital that the Regional Schools Commissioners are empowered to and are pro-active in:

- (i) Monitoring and evaluating the action of implementation of Strategic Action Plans to facilitate on and off-site education from September 2020 – as directed from the Department for Education – [Guidance for full opening: schools Section 5: Contingency planning for outbreaks](#) ^[17]
- (ii) Offering support to further enhance the development of Strategic Action Plans
- (iii) Communicating and disseminating good practices within their region and collaborating nationally
- (iv) Providing regional co-ordination/support and leading effective communications with Local Authorities and Public Health Authorities

63. Emailed Katherine Cowell (Interim Regional Schools Commissioner for North of England) – 28/08/2020 requesting clarification within her portfolio role(s) in respect of the Covid-19 pandemic. Automated response received on 15/08/2020 indicating that a reply is scheduled for within 15 working days. Awaiting response.

64. [All possible measures to be taken before school and colleges close](#) ^[53] – (28/08/2020) – guidance published via the Department of Education (DFE) concerning the measures to be actioned for schools with local area lockdowns. The documentation encompasses a four-tier approach:

- (i) Tier 1 - fully open to all pupils full time, with face coverings required in corridors and communal areas for pupils in Year 7 and above
- (ii) Tier 2 - secondary schools and colleges in a restricted area to use rotas to help break chains of transmission of coronavirus, while primary schools remain open to all pupils. Further guidance – [How schools can plan for Tier 2 local restrictions](#) ^[54] – (28/08/2020)
- (iii) Tiers 3 & 4 - remote learning full time for wider groups of pupils, with vulnerable children and children of critical workers continuing to attend

65. This guidance was issued exceedingly late – (28/08/2020) as schools are scheduled to open – (01/09/2020) leaving extremely limited time to incorporate any additional measures into schools' contingency plans prior to the start of the Autumn Term 2020.

66. The Examinations procedure this year has been unparalleled in terms of decision making and appropriateness. There were ample opportunities to refine the process to enable greater degrees of coherency and equitability since 20th March 2020. A thorough independent review of the process is to be recommended and conducted as a matter of urgency. Educational leadership at the highest levels should take responsibility for their actions and is accountable. The review ought to culminate in the production of an applicable strategic document to ensure the necessary clarity required for the future.

- **Appendices**

[1] – ***The English Indices of Deprivation 2019 (IoD2019)***

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/835115/IoD2019_Statistical_Release.pdf

[2] – ***Coronavirus and home-schooling in Great Britain: April to June 2020***

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/educationandchildcare/articles/coronavirusandhomeschoolinggreatbritain/apriltojune2020/pdf>

[3] – ***India coronavirus: Online classes expose extent of digital divide - BBC News***

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-53471749>

[4] – ***Balancing the Risks of Pupils Returning to Schools***

<https://rs-delve.github.io/reports/2020/07/24/balancing-the-risk-of-pupils-returning-to-schools.html>

[5] – **Royal Society DELVE (Data Evaluation and Learning for Viral Epidemics) initiative**

<https://rs-delve.github.io/about.html>

[6] – **Social Mobility and Covid-19 – Impact Brief #1: School Shutdown**

<https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/COVID-19-Impact-Brief-School-Shutdown.pdf>

[7] – **Supporting the continuation of teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic**

<http://www.oecd.org/education/Supporting-the-continuation-of-teaching-and-learning-during-the-COVID-19-pandemic.pdf>

[8] – **Education continuity during the Coronavirus crisis – BBC Bitesize UK**

<https://oecdeditoday.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/UK-BBC-Bitesize.pdf>

[9] – **National Tutoring Programme**

<https://nationaltutoring.org.uk>

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