

Written evidence submitted by the Northern Powerhouse Partnership

The Northern Powerhouse Partnership (NPP) represents the voice of business and civic leaders across the North. Chaired by George Osborne, who first outlined the Northern Powerhouse concept in 2014, it has a business-led Board which features influential business figures from across the North of England. Prominent city leaders across the region are also represented on the Board, in addition to our Vice- Chair Jim O'Neill, former Commercial Secretary to the Treasury, Dame Prof Nancy Rothwell, Vice Chancellor of University of Manchester and John Cridland, Chair of Transport for the North (TfN). It works on a cross-party basis, also including representation from significant political figures from major political parties.

Submission

Our evidence will focus on the following areas of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference.

- *The effect on disadvantaged groups, including the Department's approach to free school meals and the long-term impact on the most vulnerable groups (such as pupils with special educational needs and disabilities and children in need) and*
- *Support for pupils and families during closures.*

Introduction

Currently, all schools, colleges and early years providers have been forced to close due the coronavirus pandemic. It is unclear, at the moment, when they will be able to reopen. The vast majority of children and young people are being educated and cared for at home. Schools are giving great attention to ensuring children and young people are kept safe during this period by regularly contacting families by telephone, email and in some cases visiting homes (but not entering them). Children of key workers have also had access to childcare provided by schools nationally. Many schools have been trying to support learning by providing a host of materials, including online, for parents to use with their children.

Significant attention is given by national media to children educated in secure and settled environments. We know that this is the case for the majority of children nationally but for some vulnerable and disadvantaged children this is far from the day to day reality. There is also a general concern that some of the poorest children and young people will fall further behind when they return to full-time schooling. Without addressing this urgently the impact of the school layoff could be felt for their entire lives.

Impact of COVID-19 on widening disadvantage gap

Northern Powerhouse Partnership's previous work focusing on the most disadvantaged children, many of whom are in the North, include:

- [Educating the North: Driving Ambition Across the Powerhouse \(February 2018\)](http://www.northernpowerhousepartnership.co.uk/media/1208/npp-educating-the-north.pdf)¹
- [Next Steps for the Northern Powerhouse: A Challenge for the North, and by the North \(February 2019\)](http://www.northernpowerhousepartnership.co.uk/media/1217/next-steps-for-the-northern-powerhouse-digital.pdf)²

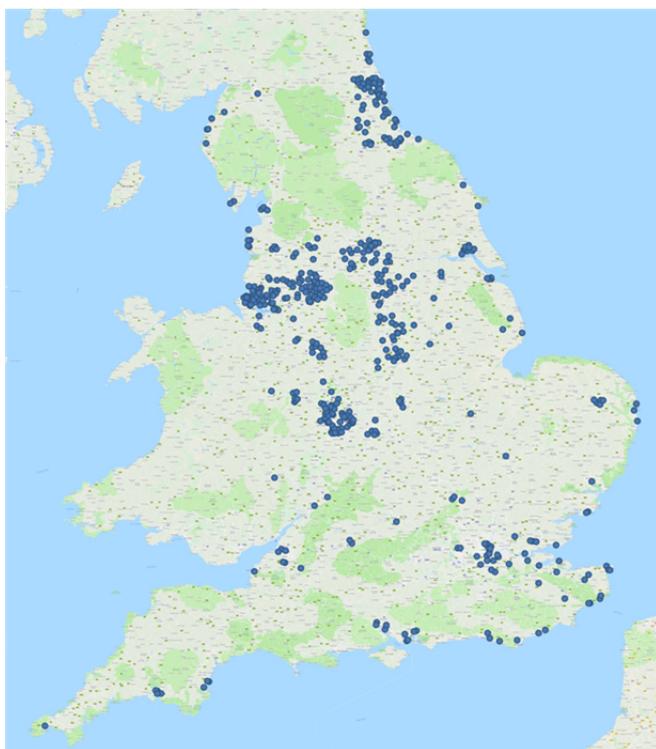
This research base helps us to interrogate the evidence behind the fact that nationally children from disadvantaged backgrounds leave school on average 18 months behind their

¹ <http://www.northernpowerhousepartnership.co.uk/media/1208/npp-educating-the-north.pdf>

² <http://www.northernpowerhousepartnership.co.uk/media/1217/next-steps-for-the-northern-powerhouse-digital.pdf>

non-disadvantaged peers. The impact of school closures will only make this worse, in the way that even a long summer holiday can do. We need great teachers now more than ever.

Previous work by Education DataLab has shown that the *length* of time a pupil is eligible for Pupil Premium has a much greater impact on attainment than having been eligible for free school meals (FSM) at some point during their school career. They concluded: “for pupils who were FSM-eligible on almost every occasion the school census is taken (90% or more of the time), their attainment, relative to the national average, has actually been *falling*”. If we



are to narrow the disadvantage gap, then clearly this group needs to be increasing its performance relative to the national average. There is a strong correlation between long-term disadvantage, certain pupil characteristics including those from white ethnic groups and their attainment throughout school but particularly at KS4 across the North.³

As illustrated by Figure 1, two-thirds of secondary schools teaching concentrations of long-term disadvantaged pupils in the country which make the slowest educational progress are in the North. Schools facing these challenges also exist across the rest of England, from Cornwall to East Anglia, with significant numbers proportionately in the West Midlands.⁴

Work to mitigate the widening of the disadvantage gap is important, and our initial focus during the Covid 19 Crisis has been focused on two clear phases; the immediate response and the work to catch up once schools re-open. It is clear that the most important phase is what can be achieved when schools re-open.

Figure 1: Distribution of higher proportion of long term disadvantage pupils secondary schools (+ 10%).

Response Phase

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work has focused on the need to assist pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds access online learning, particularly through addressing gaps in connectivity and hardware.

Some individual schools and multi academy trusts have tried to bridge the hardware and connectivity disadvantage faced by some of the poorest families. For example:

- Coop Academies Trust (sponsored by The Co-op) purchased 1000 chromebooks and dongles for children on free school meals to assist families without suitable hardware to access online learning packages.
- Academies Enterprise Trust (AET) has invested £1m to supply hardware and broadband connectivity.

³ [Next Steps for the Northern Powerhouse: A Challenge for the North, and by the North \(February 2019\), Section 3: Educating the North, page 6.](#)

⁴ [Next Steps for the Northern Powerhouse: A Challenge for the North, and by the North \(February 2019\), Section 3: Educating the North, page 7.](#)

We have seen local efforts, for example in Hull, and have sought donations across the Northern Powerhouse from businesses to support both the provision of laptops and connectivity where there is no access to home broadband. Businesses making a contribution include Drax, Northern Gas Networks, Sabic and Astra Zeneca. Key connectivity experts such as aql have worked on the issue of mobile data roll out.

This has been mirrored by the government, who have offered additional support to those sitting exams in 2021, but this still leaves significant gaps such as primary school children approaching their transition to secondary school. There are too many children in many homes trying to learn without access to a computer or broadband, and in some cases not even pens or paper.

Business in the Community has a Business Emergency Response Network through which asks and offers of technology have been made – but need is significantly outstripping supply.

There has been significant partnership work done on how to support tutoring provision, such as the Tutor Trust, who need to take their previous offline provision online. In addition, scoping has been undertaken on large-scale tutoring by university students volunteering. We will be bringing forward a number of these projects in the coming weeks, which will help build momentum towards the catch-up phase response when this is ready to begin, with Sheffield Hallam University one of the institutions focusing on this challenge.

Catch Up Phase

A catch-up premium for the return to school

- A fund for England, a cost of £700-per-pupil, for timely interventions which would require around 30 minutes of tuition, three to five times a week over a six-12 week period. This would require approximately four days of teacher time.
- Funding allocated to schools based on the Free School Meal component of Pupil Premium, with enhancements for those secondary schools with the highest levels of long-term disadvantaged children. If focused on secondary schools, initial budget estimate is around £300 million for England.

Tutor scheme (Developed by Frank Norris, Co-op Group & Northern Powerhouse Education & Skills Committee)

- Establish a group of trained tutors who can be deployed in all secondary, special, pupil referral and alternative provision settings nationally (if those institutions want to take advantage) under the direction of the institutions' leadership teams during September and early October 2020 (assuming schools have returned to normality by beginning of September). It is possible to deploy the trained tutors in August if schools return in advance of September.

We must assume that some children and young people will require considerable support to enable them to work effectively and collaboratively when they return to school. It is also assumed that some may have fallen back from where they were before the lockdown.

Without a high level of support there is a risk that some children will lose further ground in the first few months when they return to school and could be further switched off education. By introducing short-term additional trained personnel, it is hoped that the additional resource will support personal and educational improvement that some may need.

Where will the tutors come from and how many would be required?

It is heartening to see so many citizens volunteering to support the NHS recently. This programme of volunteering is very flexible for the volunteers with some support being offered from within their own home. The requirements of school learning tutors are quite different because we would expect them to commit for between 4-6 weeks around the start of the academic year and be available during the day.

It is therefore proposed that we target university students about to enter their second, third or fourth year and/or retired teachers and youth related workers. The university students will generally be young people and with the right support and training could act as credible tutors for other young people. Having more experienced volunteers would strengthen the workforce and utilise existing skills in a similar way to the re-employment of retired medical staff.

There are approximately 3.5m secondary students in Year 7-Year 11 in England educated in about 7,500 schools (secondaries, special, pupil referral units and other provision). There are approximately 1.8m undergraduates in total, and an uncertain number of retired teachers/youth workers. For the purposes of this paper we have assumed there is potentially 2.4m adults available. Obviously, not all undergraduates would be suitable for tutoring roles and some retired colleagues may not want to return, but it is conceivable that approximately a quarter of both groups would be both suitable and available. This would mean around 600,000 could be available for deployment.

It is unlikely all schools would want or need to participate in a national learning tutor programme either because they do not believe in the approach or have their own staff available to do the work. If we assume that say 3,250 schools/institutions would either want or require tutor support (half of those eligible) then an estimation of 10 per school would mean 32,500 learning tutors would be required.

What duties would a learning tutor undertake?

It is expected that learning tutors undertake the following range of duties, led by the school's requirements

- Be assigned up to three students who they regularly meet individually or in groups of a maximum of three.
- Set learning targets and goals in association with the school staff.
- Work as a teaching assistant in a range of classrooms as allocated by the school.
- Engage in after-school activities.
- Provide additional support for break and lunch duties.
- Support students' homework and other activities.

What training would the tutors receive and how would it be provided?

Some major national charities such as the Business in the Community, Princes' Trust and EveryChildNeedsaMentor and regionally focused providers such as Tutor Trust already have well established and successful tutoring programmes as well as wider mentoring propositions. Some of these charities include online training and have established safeguarding policies and procedures.

We propose that we discuss the programme's requirements with prospective learning tutor charities to draw on best practice in the sector. It is also proposed that we engage the Education Endowment Fund as a key advisory group. They have undertaken research into the effectiveness of tutoring as a vehicle for improving student outcomes.

A national advertising campaign could be launched through the daily No10 Briefing. Schools would be asked to identify early whether they are wanting to engage in the programme and how many tutors they would require.

All prospective tutors would complete an online assessment to check their suitability and then they would be interviewed by telephone or video conferencing before gaining access to the online training programmes. DBS checks would be commenced at this stage so that this element doesn't delay the allocation/appointment process. It is proposed that the government covers the training costs and the DBS process, with delivery via partners including universities as well as existing providers.

Regional leads for the programme would be drawn from regional HMI or the RSC office. These colleagues would receive intensive three days of training where they would work through the training materials and develop a clear understanding of their role and establish close links with a designated senior leader in the schools they are working with on coordinating the programme.

Once the tutors have successfully completed their training a list will be published, schools will confirm their requirements and the regional leader will allocate tutors to schools. Schools would be expected to offer a three-day induction programme explaining the safeguarding arrangements, the school's philosophy and day to day procedures. As well as giving a deeper insight into the curriculum for subjects where the tutor is likely to be allocated.

We want to stress that the tutor resource is not a straitjacket. It is not a top down solution but a way of providing helpful and trained support to enable schools to manage the catch-up process. The success of the tutor programme will hinge largely on the relationships between the tutor and the school and the tutor and the students they are supporting.

Costs

All training costs and DBS clearance would be borne by the DfE. Once appointed to a school, tutors would be paid at the lowest teaching assistant grade (important that these colleagues align appropriately in terms of pay with permanent staff employed by the school) based on national terms and conditions with the cost borne by the school.

All tutors who successfully complete the training programme (including those not eventually allocated to a school) will have £1,000 deducted from their student loan, if they have one.

Additional benefits

- Support can be advantageous for parents/carers in reducing conflict
- Identifies potential future teachers who can be supported by the schools where they are allocated

The importance of teacher development

- In line with EEF guidance on Pupil Premium, teacher development should be a priority for schools' strategies to help close the gap when schools re-open. Schools will need to select programmes that are informed by evidence and give them the best value for money, and this can be best achieved by offering a whole-school approach to improving teacher quality. This will support schools to achieve sustainable change, rather than delivering quick fixes, and will build

expertise across their teams, so that all pupils benefit from improvements across subjects and phases.

- Whilst schools remain closed, the gap will widen. To close that gap as quickly and effectively as possible when schools re-open, schools and the government need to invest in their teachers. This will help in the short-term, to reverse the educational impact of this pandemic, but also lays strong foundations for the future such as through significant extension of the Early Career Framework in September 2020 beyond the original plans.

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