

Written evidence submitted by Sutton Trust

Sutton Trust response to the Education Select Committee's inquiry into the impact of Covid-19 on children's services and education

The Sutton Trust

The Sutton Trust champions social mobility through programmes, research and policy influence. Since 1997 and under the leadership of founder Sir Peter Lampl, the Sutton Trust has worked to address low levels of social mobility in the UK. The Trust fights for social mobility from birth to the workplace so that every young person – no matter who their parents are, what school they go to, or where they live – has the chance to succeed in life.

Introduction

Since the Covid-19 lockdown began, the Sutton Trust has been undertaking work to identify the potential impacts of the crisis across all key education stages. The crisis will have far-reaching consequences for education and social mobility, and initial analysis from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) suggests that the attainment gap between disadvantaged young people and their peers will widen. In this response, we have outlined a number of steps that we believe the government can take to help protect the futures of disadvantaged young people, including immediate actions to mitigate against the impacts of lockdown and long-term steps to compensate young people in the future.

A summary of the Sutton Trust's key recommendations can be found in Appendix A.

1. Early years

The early years are a crucial stage for social mobility where the attainment gap first takes hold, with the poorest children already 11 months behind their better-off peers before they start school.¹ High-quality early years provision provides a crucial opportunity to narrow this gap and goes some way to level the playing field before children start school. The Trust is concerned about the considerable challenges currently facing the early years sector as a result of the crisis, in both the immediate and long term, which will likely impact poorest children the most.

1.1 Financial pressures on early year settings

The crisis has exacerbated existing financial difficulties within the sector, with many private, voluntary and independent (PVI) providers now reporting that they are facing permanent closure as they suffer financial difficulties similar to other small businesses.²

There are some immediate steps that the government can take to support providers, including through providing extra financial support to help them to bounce back after the crisis. The Trust also believes that eligibility for the 30 hours childcare policy should be extended below the current salary

¹ J. Waldfogel & K. Stewart (2017) Closing Gaps Early. Sutton Trust. Available at: <https://www.suttontrust.com/ourresearch/closing-gaps-early-parenting-policy-childcare/>

² Early Years Alliance (2020). Available at: <https://www.eyalliance.org.uk/coronavirus-quarter-childcare-providers-fear-permanent-closure-within-year-new-alliance-survey>

threshold, to include those out of work or on very low incomes. As increasing numbers become unemployed or work on reduced hours or pay, far fewer families will be eligible for the free childcare – yet their children stand to benefit most from high quality early education. Extending eligibility would have a range of transformational affects, including a) providing essential support for parents returning to work, b) expanding demand for nurseries and helping them to get back on their feet after the crisis and c) tackling gaps in early learning and improving social mobility. It is vital that this is funded to a sufficient level, and that there is a focus on the quality of provision on offer.

Given that many children will not have attended an early years setting for a number of months, it will be vital to invest in early years provision to mitigate against any gaps in attainment that have arisen from the crisis as early as possible. There should therefore be a renewed focus on ensuring that all children, and particularly disadvantaged children, have access to high quality early years provision. Given the importance of the workforce in delivering high-quality provision, an emphasis should be placed on improving the qualifications of all workers in the sector, through CPD and mentoring. The government should also consider setting up a fund which can be accessed by early years providers to hire graduates (who will be facing a difficult labour market and may be more amenable to a career in early years than otherwise) and qualified staff. This would provide some of the support that the sector needs to rebuild after the crisis.

1.2 Parental engagement and the home learning environment

Previous Sutton Trust research has shown the importance of the home learning environment for children from all socio-economic backgrounds.³ In the short term, having providers temporarily closed is likely to have the biggest impact on the poorest children, who benefit most from structured, high quality provision and are less likely to have the suitable home learning environment needed.⁴ With settings closed, the home learning environment will be more important than ever, and differences in levels of parental engagement will likely have a serious impact on the attainment gap.

Differences in levels of parental engagement and confidence in supporting home learning is an issue for pupils of all ages while schools are closed. Our research has found that 47% of middle-class parents feel confident home-schooling their children compared to 37% of working-class parents.⁵ It is therefore vital that all parents have access to support and resources on building a positive home learning environment during this period.

The Sutton Trust, in partnership with the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, has previously undertaken extensive work on parental engagement through the Parental Engagement Fund, which aimed to increase attainment for disadvantaged children in the early years through the development of more effective parental engagement. Using this expertise, the Trust has put together guidance for parents, including links to high quality online resources, to support them. Our sister organisation, the EEF, has also put together guidance for parents on the home learning environment during this period.⁶ The

³ J. Waldfogel & E. Washbrook (2010) *Low income and early cognitive development in the UK*. Sutton Trust. Available at: <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/low-income-early-cognitive-development-u-k/>

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Sutton Trust (2020) *School closures parent polling*. Available at: <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/school-closures-parent-polling/>

⁶ Education Endowment Foundation (2020) *Support resources to share with parents*. Available at: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/covid-19-resources/support-resources-to-share-with-parents/>

government should support the dissemination of evidence of what works in the home learning environment to reduce gaps widening as early as possible.

As outlined in section 1.1, investment in high quality early years provision is more vital than ever and can help to mitigate against some of the impacts of differences in the home learning environment. Some children may have lost out on early learning during this period. Providing high quality early education for disadvantaged children when they return can help to narrow the gaps that develop from lost learning.

2. Schools

Before the crisis, there was already a significant attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their peers, with those from the least well-off backgrounds twice as likely to leave formal education without GCSEs in English and maths compared to their better-off classmates.⁷ Sutton Trust research has highlighted that school closures have led to greater inequalities in accessing educational resources, and the Trust is very concerned about the impact that these inequalities will have on the attainment gap in the short and long terms.

2.1 Access to devices and the internet

Access to remote learning is a critical issue while schools are closed. The Trust is concerned about inequalities in access to devices and the internet, which are crucial to participating in remote learning. In the most deprived schools, 15% of teachers report that more than a third of their students learning from home would not have adequate access to an electronic device for learning, compared to only 2% in the most affluent state schools.⁸ This is a fundamental issue, as without access to devices and the internet, children are entirely prevented from accessing this crucial online learning and will likely fall even further behind. While teachers are providing paper resources wherever possible to ensure their pupils are able to access some form of learning, the digital divide means that there are significant inequalities in the level and type of learning young people are able to access.

While we welcome the steps taken by many schools to provide their pupils with laptops or other devices, Sutton Trust research has found that 28% of the most advantaged state schools had offered devices to pupils in need, compared to just 15% in the most deprived schools where need is highest.⁹ The Trust would like to see further government intervention to ensure that all pupils are able to access the resources that they need to continue their learning.

The Trust welcomes the government's scheme to provide laptops and internet access for children with social workers, care leavers and disadvantaged pupils in year 10. Given the urgency of the situation, it is understandable that the government initially prioritised pupils sitting important exams. However, the Trust is concerned by reported delays to the scheme. The government should work to ensure the scheme is rolled out quickly and efficiently so that young people are able to use this technology as soon as possible. We would also like to see the scope of the scheme expanded –

⁷ Education Endowment Foundation (2018) *The Attainment Gap*. Available at: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Annual_Reports/EEF_Attainment_Gap_Report_2018.pdf

⁸ C. Cullinane & R. Montacute (2020) *Covid-19 impacts: School shutdown*. Sutton Trust. Available at: <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/covid-19-and-social-mobility-impact-brief/>

⁹ Ibid

ideally to include all disadvantaged children - as we know that the attainment gap opens early and increases throughout school. As we move into a phase where schools may be only open to some pupils, the government must ensure that all children have the resources necessary to access online learning, including a laptop or other suitable device, as well as a stable internet connection. This could be achieved through further collaboration with companies in the technology sector to offer low-cost options.

2.2 Access to tuition

During this period of instability, many parents may turn to private tuition to supplement their child's learning, which may widen the attainment gap between those who can afford extra tuition and those who can't. Previous Sutton Trust research has shown these inequalities in accessing private tuition, with 34% of children from richer homes receiving private tuition, compared to 20% from poorer homes.¹⁰ Recent Sutton Trust polling has shown that while the numbers of overall children receiving private tuition had gone down in the initial period after lockdown, use of online tuition is growing among better off households.¹¹ Even when disadvantaged young people do have access to a tutor, research by the Institute for Fiscal Studies has highlighted that the time spent with a tutor differs substantially by socioeconomic background. Of children in the poorest families who have a tutor, two-thirds spend 1–4 hours a week with them. For children in the richest fifth of families with tutors, more than two-thirds of students spend over 5 hours a week with their tutor.¹²

There is strong evidence that one-to-one and small group tuition improves academic outcomes for children. The estimated positive impact of a 6-12 week course of tuition is equivalent to four or five months' learning.¹³ The Trust, together with the EEF, believes that disadvantaged pupils should have access to additional one-to-one or small group tuition to reduce the impact of school closures. This additional tuition could be provided online while schools are closed, and face to face when restrictions have loosened. The government should support an ambitious national programme which will significantly expand access to tuition for the most disadvantaged students. This can be achieved by harnessing the capacity of existing high-quality tutoring providers, as well as finding new ways to access new pools of tutor talent – for example graduates, those with teacher training qualifications or retired people.

There are also other steps that can be taken once schools re-open to mitigate against some of the impacts on the attainment gap. Schools should consider running 'catch up classes' for children from poorer backgrounds over the summer or when schools return. Disadvantaged students will be most likely to have fallen behind during closures, with those entering Year 7 at particular risk as they face loss of learning at a crucial transition phase, along with pupils entering exam years in autumn. Schools should put in place additional support for these students when it is safe for schools to return, either before other students are back, or alongside the resumption of normal lessons. If the government decides to support activity over the summer, careful consideration must be given to the

¹⁰ Sutton Trust (2019) *Private tuition polling*. Available at: <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/private-tuition-polling-2019/>

¹¹ Sutton Trust (2020) *School closures parent polling*. Available at: <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/school-closures-parent-polling/>

¹² Institute for Fiscal Studies (2020) *Learning during the lockdown: real-time data on children's experiences during home learning*. Available at: <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14848>

¹³ Education Endowment Foundation (2020) *Teaching and Learning Toolkit*. Available at: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/teaching-learning-toolkit/>

content of the programme, who runs it and how it can attract and retain children from the poorest homes.

2.3 The capacity of schools to set and receive remote work

There is substantial variation in the capacity of schools to set and receive remote work. Sutton Trust research has found that pupils in private schools are twice as likely to take part in online lessons every day compared to their state school counterparts.¹⁴ This gap in provision is explained largely by access to resources. Just before schools shut down on 23 March, three-fifths of teachers in independent schools and over a third of those in state schools in the most affluent areas already had access to a platform to receive work, compared to under a quarter of those in the most deprived schools.¹⁵

While it will be some time before the impact on attainment from the current crisis is reflected in official statistics, it is already being seen in the amount and quality of work being received by teachers. Sutton Trust research has found that 50% of teachers in private schools report they're receiving more than three quarters of work back, compared with 27% in the most advantaged state schools, and just 8% in the least advantaged state schools.¹⁶ Teachers in the most deprived schools are also more than twice as likely to say that work their students are sending in is of a much lower quality than normal.

To help and support teachers during this period of upheaval (and possible future incidences), training should be provided to enable them to deliver content to students online and clearer guidance on expectation issued, allowing for head teacher discretion and adaptation. Online teaching being provided to children is currently highly variable, with poorer students less likely to have access to some types of provision. Ensuring all pupils have access to high quality content is vital, so guidance and training for teachers could help to make provision more consistent between schools. The Trust is also concerned that online provision for pupils still at home may stop once other pupils have returned to school. Provision should remain in place for all pupils while they are at home, and there should be extra support provided for teachers to develop and deliver this content. It is vital that a phased return to school doesn't risk making the situation worse for some pupils.

3. University applicants and students

The Covid-19 crisis is likely to have a serious impact on both this year's applicants to university and current students. Exam cancellations have led to much uncertainty for young people, who now face a new system of grade calculations and are missing out on face-to-face support and guidance on their next steps. For students, assessments have moved online, but inequalities in access to devices, the internet and a suitable working environment mean that not all students are able to access content equally. Many students are also facing financial difficulties, impacting on their ability to afford to study.

3.1 Fairness of grade calculations

¹⁴ C. Cullinane & R. Montacute (2020) *Covid-19 impacts: School shutdown*. Sutton Trust. Available at: <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/covid-19-and-social-mobility-impact-brief/>

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid

The Trust welcomed the decision to introduce a combination of methods to award qualifications in the face of exam cancellations. However, despite the adjustment process, the system is still fundamentally based on teacher assessment, which potentially has structural biases. Research has shown that teacher assessments can underestimate the abilities of students from low-income backgrounds.¹⁷ Previous Sutton Trust research has also highlighted that high-attaining, disadvantaged pupils are more likely to have their grades under-predicted.¹⁸ We welcome that Ofqual has taken some measures to mitigate against potential unfairness, including through adding safeguards to manage differences in pupil characteristics at centre level and providing additional guidance to Heads of Centres on bias. However, without being prepared to take action in terms of pupil-level adjustments there is a risk that the attainment gap could widen. The Trust believes that exam regulators should closely monitor attainment gaps in the new grading system and consider how best to respond if substantial gaps open up. If gaps were to widen, this would have significant knock on consequences for social mobility, as well as the credibility of this year's grades.

The Trust also raised issues around trajectory and the appeals process in our response to Ofqual's consultation on awarding grades.¹⁹ 'Turnaround' schools who have improved rapidly may be disadvantaged by the linking of results to previous years. The Trust is concerned by the decision to not consider trajectory in the statistical standardisation process, as this may lead to some schools – which are likely to disproportionately serve poorer communities - being disadvantaged.

To ensure fairness, we also believe that all learners who feel their grades do not accurately reflect the grade they would have received through exams, should have the ability to appeal. The Trust therefore disagrees with Ofqual's decision to only allow appeals from centres rather than students. We are also concerned by the decision to allow exam boards to charge for appeals if they wish. Given the exceptional circumstances we believe normal fees should be waived so that there are no financial barriers to the process of appeals.

The Trust also believes that there should be no financial barriers to accessing the autumn exam series for those who feel their calculated grades do not accurately reflect their potential. Our research has found that students from independent school pupils are already more likely than state school pupils to be considering sitting autumn exams if they do not get the grades they hope for in the summer.²⁰ If additional financial barriers are not removed, they may prevent disadvantaged students from sitting exams and widen inequalities within the system between students. It is also vital that all pupils have access to impartial, high-quality advice and guidance about their next steps.

The Trust has long advocated for the introduction of Post Qualification Applications. The introduction of Ofqual's adjustment process has signified a recognition that predicted grades, in themselves, are not a reliable indicator of student performance. In the future, the Trust would like to

¹⁷ More detail on this issue can be found in the Sutton Trust's recent blog - *Examination cancellation: the impact of covid-19 on students*. Available here: <https://www.suttontrust.com/news-opinion/all-news-opinion/examination-cancellation/>

¹⁸ G. Wyness (2017) *Rules of the Game*. Sutton Trust. Available at: <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/rules-of-the-game-university-admissions/>

¹⁹ Available at: <https://www.suttontrust.com/news-opinion/all-news-opinion/response-to-the-ofqual-consultation/>

²⁰ E. Holt-White & R. Montacute (2020) *Covid-19 Impacts: University Access*. Available at: <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/covid-19-impacts-university-access/>

see a move towards a system of Post Qualification Applications, to ensure that young people are not unfairly denied places based on underpredictions and can make informed choices based on actual results.

3.2 Progression to higher education

The cancellation of exams could impact progression to higher education for many young people. Recent Sutton Trust polling found that 43% of university applicants studying for A levels feel that the new assessment procedure will have a negative impact on their grades.²¹ While most feel that the impact will be small, 72% felt that the new grading system is less fair than in a normal year. The Trust also found that the crisis is affecting young people's decisions on their next steps, with a fifth of university applicants saying that they have changed their mind about their university attendance this autumn or have yet to decide.²² Almost half of applicants surveyed feel that the crisis will have a negative impact on their chances of getting into their first-choice university, with applicants from lower socioeconomic backgrounds more likely to be worried about this negative impact.²³

Given the uncertainty caused by these changes, university applicants are likely to need more support than ever to navigate the university admissions process. Sutton Trust research has highlighted that university applicants were less satisfied with support from their school on the university applications process than they were with their day-to-day learning.²⁴ It is vital that schools and universities offer additional support and advice to students making decisions about their future, particularly around the final UCAS deadline and A Level results day. This support is crucial for those from disadvantaged backgrounds and particularly those who are the first in their family to attend university, who are less likely to have access to help from other channels.

The Trust has long advocated for the use of contextual admissions, which place grades achieved in context of student's background in recognition that the playing field is not level at the point of entry to university. Contextualising the grades achieved by students will be more important than ever for this application cycle, as there is a risk that the grading system may disadvantage students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, who may then potentially miss out on their offer grades. The Trust would like the same contextual principles usually applied to offers to be applied to final decisions on places, with universities giving additional consideration to applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds who have narrowly missed their offer grades.

The impact of formal exams being cancelled may also have consequences for levels of preparedness for university. Sutton Trust research has found that Year 13 university applicants from working class backgrounds were twice as likely to have insufficient access to the internet, devices for learning or a suitable place to study, compared to those from middle class homes.²⁵ There are also inequalities in the content being taught, with independent schools almost twice as likely to be still teaching A Level content as state schools.²⁶ For disadvantaged students about to enter higher education, this could leave them with gaps in their knowledge, putting them behind their peers before they have begun at

²¹ E. Holt-White & R. Montacute (2020) *Covid-19 impacts: University access*. Sutton Trust. Available at: <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/covid-19-impacts-university-access/>

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Ibid

university. Differences in access to A-Level content may also impact how prepared young people are to sit autumn exams, if they do not get the grade they had hoped for in the summer.

3.3 Impact on students

The cancellation of university exams and the move to online assessments is an issue for some students, particularly the 23% reporting lack of access to suitable study space.²⁷ 5% of students also report that they do not have sufficient internet access,²⁸ a figure which is likely to be an underestimation, as the survey itself was conducted online. Universities should ensure that students, particularly those in final year, are not disadvantaged due to changes in assessment.

Many students are now facing financial difficulties as the crisis impedes their ability to undertake part-time work. 30% of students report that they are less able to afford study because of the pandemic, with 34% of students reporting that they have lost a job, had reduced hours, or not been paid for work completed.²⁹ The Trust would like to see additional financial support for students to ensure current students can continue their courses, and access is not harmed for next year's students from families suffering from financial pressures. Where possible, universities should bolster hardship funds and work to increase awareness of funds and support available. The Office for Students' decision to allow universities to use widening participation funds on hardship payments is an acceptable short-term measure, but students from disadvantaged backgrounds will likely need more support than usual in the next few years, so there needs to be additional, separate funding available for this. The Trust would also like to see the government consider stepping in to offer emergency maintenance grants.

Financial problems facing some providers at risk of collapse has led to the government introducing a cap on student numbers. The Trust believes that this should be carefully calibrated to minimise the impact on disadvantaged students and the widening participation agenda. Any temporary re-introduction of number caps should not undermine the efforts of selective universities in particular to meet their Access and Participation Plan targets.

4. Apprenticeships

The unique position of apprenticeships at the intersection of education and the labour market has made the sector particularly vulnerable to the current crisis. Companies are furloughing or making staff redundant, off the job learning has been disrupted, and many apprentices have faced additional financial strains. The pandemic is having serious immediate impacts on current apprentices, and will have long term implications as fewer opportunities are available in the future. Apprenticeships have the potential to play an important role in economic recovery, and so it is vital that these routes are protected.

4.1 Impact on training providers and employers

The labour market is being placed under severe strain by the crisis, which will have consequences for future recruitment and job opportunities. Sutton Trust research has highlighted that employers will likely not be recruiting apprentices in the numbers seen recently, with around a third of employers

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Ibid

reporting that they are likely to hire fewer apprentices over the coming year, or none at all.³⁰ Firms worried about their ability to survive the crisis were more likely to say their apprentices were unlikely to resume, and more likely to cut future apprenticeship recruitment.³¹ Training providers are also facing serious financial pressures, with many reporting risk of collapse.³² A quarter of apprentice employers surveyed by the Sutton Trust reported that a learning provider had closed.³³

The Trust believes that apprenticeships will form a vital part of economic recovery as the ability to reskill becomes increasingly important. We therefore would like to see the government invest in apprenticeships to protect this valuable route into work. Investment to protect training providers in the short term could have a significant longer-term economic payoff. The Trust welcomes the introduction of the supplier relief fund, but the measures for providers do not go far enough. The scheme should also cover levy-funded apprenticeships to ensure that all providers survive the crisis, allowing apprenticeships to continue and to be a driving force of economic recovery.

In order for apprenticeships to deliver on the levelling up agenda as we come out of the coronavirus crisis, social mobility and widening opportunity should be an explicit criterion in a review of the apprenticeships levy. The balance of apprenticeships across age groups, levels, those with equivalent or lower qualifications (ELQ) and existing versus new starters should be examined. In a period of tighter budgets, the government should ensure that the levy is focused on those who will benefit most. The government should consider a maximum salary ceiling for levy-funded apprentices, ensuring that levy funding is not being spent on highly paid and well-qualified senior staff.

4.2 Financial impacts on apprentices

Many young people from disadvantaged backgrounds undertake apprenticeships. They are more likely to be concentrated in the lower levels, be paid lower salaries and work for companies and sectors more vulnerable to furloughing and redundancies. As of early April, employers surveyed by the Sutton Trust reported that just 39% of apprenticeships were continuing as normal, with 36% having been furloughed and 8% made redundant.³⁴ 17% of apprentices had their off-the-job learning suspended.³⁵ Furloughs and redundancies have the potential to have serious impacts on apprentices, with many on low wages already.

The priority for current apprentices should be to continue training wherever possible, even when on furlough or if redeployed within a company. This can create a virtuous circle for the apprentice, provider and employer. To protect apprentices, the government should require employers to cover the full cost for furloughed apprentices up to the appropriate minimum wage for all hours including both training and work. Where employers can, they should top up the 80% of furlough funding to

³⁰ C. Cullinane & K. Doherty (2020) *Covid-19 impacts: Apprenticeships*. Sutton Trust. Available at: <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/covid-19-impacts-apprenticeships/>

³¹ Ibid

³² AELP (2020) *Covid-19 Impact on Provision for Apprentices and Learners*. Available at: <https://www.aelp.org.uk/news/news/press-releases/apprenticeships-on-the-brink-of-collapse-after-education-department-refuses-to-implement-cabinet-office-covid-19-guidelines/>

³³ C. Cullinane & K. Doherty (2020) *Covid-19 impacts: Apprenticeships*. Sutton Trust. Available at: <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/covid-19-impacts-apprenticeships/>

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Ibid

100% for apprentices on low wages to secure the finances of the lowest paid apprentices. This can help to protect the financial situation of many disadvantaged apprentices.

4.3 Access to online learning

The crisis has led many apprenticeships to move to distance learning. However, as identified across schools and higher education, there are inequalities in accessing remote learning. Some apprenticeships are also simply unsuitable for distance learning: 37% of surveyed employers reported that some of their apprentices were not able to work from home due to a lack of equipment, or because their role was not suitable for such work.³⁶ A further 14% said some apprentices could not access learning from home due to a lack of internet or devices.³⁷ Wherever possible, employers should ensure that apprentices are able to access the resources they need to continue their learning.

4.4 Access to information and support

The Trust is also concerned that disadvantaged students will not have access to high-quality information and advice on the apprenticeship route. The system for applying to apprenticeships is complex and fragmented, and young people are now unable to access face-to-face careers guidance, networking events or work experience opportunities. It may therefore be harder for disadvantaged young people to access high-quality information and develop the skills needed to secure an apprenticeship. The Trust would like to see support for young people continue and for it to be moved online wherever possible.

Conclusion

The Covid-19 crisis will have far-reaching consequences across the whole of society and will have serious ramifications for education and social mobility, as the attainment gap inevitably widens and opportunities become scarcer. There are a range of actions set out in Appendix A that can be taken both immediately and in the longer-term to best position the country for recovery whilst ensuring that disadvantaged young people don't lose out.

APPENDIX A: KEY SUTTON TRUST RECOMMENDATIONS

Early years

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Ibid

1. The government should provide additional financial support for early years provider to aid the transition to reopening.
2. Eligibility for the 30 hours childcare policy should be extended below the current salary threshold, to include those out of work or on very low incomes.
3. There should be emphasis placed on improving the qualifications of all workers in the sector, through CPD and mentoring, to provide high-quality early provision which can help those who have lost out on provision during nursery closures. In a different economic climate, new graduates are also a potential source of high-quality early years talent.

Schools

4. The government should ensure that all children have the resources necessary to access online learning, including a laptop or other suitable device, as well as a stable internet connection.
5. The government should facilitate or fund an ambitious national programme which significantly expands access to tuition.
6. Schools should consider running 'catch up classes' for children from poorer backgrounds over the summer or when schools return, ensuring they reach the most disadvantaged children.
7. To help and support teachers during this period of upheaval, training should be provided to enable them to deliver content to students online.

University applicants and students

8. Exam regulators, including Ofqual, should closely monitor attainment gaps in the new grading system and consider appropriate adjustments if substantial gaps open up.
9. In the future, there should be a move towards a system of Post Qualification Applications, to ensure that young people are not unfairly denied places based on underpredictions.
10. Schools should offer additional support and advice to students making decisions about their future, particularly around the final UCAS deadline and A Level results day.
11. Universities should give additional consideration to applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds who have narrowly missed their offer grades through contextual offers.
12. Universities should bolster hardship funds for students and the government should consider providing emergency maintenance grants.

Apprenticeships

13. The government should provide support for all training providers, expanding the supplier relief scheme to include levy-funded apprenticeships.
14. The review of the levy should consider social mobility and widening opportunity, and ensure that the levy is focused on young people and those who will benefit most from reskilling. This could be achieved by a maximum salary ceiling for levy-funded apprenticeships.
15. The government should require employers to cover the full cost for furloughed apprentices up to the appropriate minimum wage for all hours including both training and work.
16. Where employers can, they should top up the 80% of furlough funding to 100% for apprentices on low wages to secure the finances of the lowest paid apprentices.
17. Wherever possible, employers should ensure that apprentices are able to access the resources they need to continue their learning.

18. High-quality careers guidance and support for young people on their next steps should continue and be moved online wherever possible.

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