

Written evidence submitted by Education and Employer Charity

Dear Members of the Education Select Committee,

Submission of evidence on the impact of Covid-19 on education and children's services

In responding to Covid-19 much of the focus has rightly been on teaching and learning and the disproportionate effect on the most disadvantaged especially at the at the key transition points in secondary and tertiary education and those not in (or at risk of not being in) Education, Employment or Training (NEET). The recent announcement of funding to provide tuition to those at greatest risk is a very welcome development.

Our experience tells us that equally important is supporting schools and colleges address the massive challenge to re-motivate children, re-socialise and support children in overcoming their anxieties, whilst re-energising them about the importance of learning, education and exams/assessment. And this is particularly so for those from more disadvantaged and challenging backgrounds who (during lockdown) are most likely to have lost the long-term purpose of education.

We believe that providing children and young people with opportunity to interact in a safe and engaging way with role models from the world of work has an important role to play in the response to Covid-19.

Our research¹ proves that interactions with volunteers from the world of work make a significant difference to pupil's aspirations, behaviours and attainment. Based on a Randomised Control Trial methodology, the 2019 '*Motivated to Achieve*'² study showed an improved attitude to learning and increased motivation to study harder, which together led to improved academic attainment. Over the last ten years our research on employer engagement in education has shown that it helps:

1. Broaden young peoples' horizons and raise their aspirations
2. Excite children about subjects, increasing motivation, confidence and attitude to learning
3. Challenge gender and social stereotypes
4. Improve academic attainment at GCSE
5. Increase young people's earning potential
6. Reduce the likelihood of young people becoming NEET (*4 or more encounters with employers*)

We believe that this needs to start early in primary schools as life-limiting attitudes to their future career start at this age. That is why in partnership with the NAHT we developed Primary Futures to connect volunteers from a wide range of employers, from apprentices to CEOs, architects to zoologists with children. Over the last 12 months we have undertaken a national pilot which through evaluation, demonstrates that the programme drives up aspiration and achievement.

The biggest impact has been on children from disadvantaged backgrounds with over 80% gaining an improved understanding of how maths, English and science can be used in future work roles and

¹ <https://www.educationandemployers.org/research-main/key-findings-from-our-research/>

² <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-48268267>

87% better understanding the link between school achievement and their future success. This is vital when so many children are at risk of being left behind with the attainment gap widening.

Our research has shown that young people's career aspirations have little in common with the UK's projected workforce demands post Brexit and that the career aspirations of 7 years olds are similar to those of 17 years olds³. Early intervention to raise aspirations and broaden horizons is vital in ensuring we have the future workforce our country needs. Most children's career aspirations are currently based on family, friends and the media, with less than 1% knowing about a job from someone visiting their school.

Over 55,000 people have registered as volunteers, many from major employers including the NHS, government departments, multi-national companies and a variety of smaller employers. Many volunteers are from diverse backgrounds with 23% identifying as Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic. These role models can help challenge some of the ingrained stereotypes young people often have about the jobs people do and the backgrounds they come from.

The Primary Futures programme which has been developed over 5 years gets particularly strong results among communities most affected by Covid-19. Over the last 12 weeks we have developed exciting and interactive virtual ways ([clip here](#) of how they work) to enable children and young people to connect with role models from the world of work, enabling them to ask questions in a safe and secure way. It has also enabled schools to involve and engage parents/ carers with their children's progress in a way that hasn't been possible before, delivering a blended learning solution that has young people in school and at home taking part at the same time in lessons.

Our state-of-the-art technology platform⁴ (*Inspiring the Future*) means we are able to move rapidly to roll out the virtual interactive sessions nationally and respond to very high demand from schools. The platform, which other countries⁵ are replicating, can also handle tens of thousands more people who might want to volunteer and support schools. It is a low cost, high reach, technological solution able to reach students in their homes at a time when the intervention is needed most. This [clip](#) made by the BBC shows the impact such interventions have.

In conclusion I would urge the Committee to consider the importance of early interventions which can be harnessed immediately and are very low cost but achieve high impact.

Best wishes.

June 2020

³ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/01/childrens-career-aspirations-jobs-of-future/>

⁴ <https://www.educationandemployers.org/our-technology/>

⁵ <https://tec.govt.nz/focus/our-focus/inspiring-the-future/>