

Education Recovery

Purpose

For discussion and direction.

Summary

Sir Alan Wood, who has been appointed to work alongside Sir Kevan Collins, the Government's Education Recovery Commissioner, will attend today's meeting of the Children and Young People Board to discuss education recovery and the role of councils in supporting this work. This paper sets out key issues around the re-opening of all schools and plans for a programme of education recovery to support children and young people.

Recommendation

Members are asked to comment on emerging issues around the re-opening of all schools and also on the focus of a planned programme of education recovery.

Action

Officers to take action as directed by members.

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Education Recovery

Background

1. Schools re-opened to all pupils on the 8th March as part of the Government's step-by-step plan to lift restrictions related to Covid-19. This paper sets out a number of challenges that have been raised with us by councils relating to the re-opening, as well as key issues that will need consideration as the Government develops plans for an education recovery programme.

Re-opening of schools to all pupils

2. Board members are asked to feedback on school re-opening arrangements in their areas and to share details of arrangements that are working well and where more support is needed.

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3. The Government has appointed Sir Kevan Collins, former Chief Executive of the Education Endowment Foundation and Director of Children's Services and Chief Executive of Tower Hamlets councils, has been appointed to "oversee a comprehensive programme of catch-up aimed at young people who have lost out on learning due to the pandemic".
4. On the 24th February the Department for Education announced further details of the education recovery support package. This includes:
 - 4.1 A new one-off £302 million Recovery Premium for state primary and secondary schools, building on the Pupil Premium, to further support pupils who need it most. The average primary school will receive around £6,000 extra, and the average secondary school around £22,000 extra. This will help schools to bolster summer provision for their students, for example laying on additional clubs and activities, or for evidence-based approaches for supporting the most disadvantaged pupils from September.
 - 4.2 £200 million (from the £300 million announced by the Prime Minister in January to expand our successful tutoring programmes). This will fund an £83 million expansion of the National Tutoring Programme for primary and secondary schools; a £102 million extension of the 16-19 Tuition Fund for a further year to support more students in English, maths and other vocational and academic subjects; and £18 million funding to support language development in the early years.
 - 4.3 £200 million (including the final £100 million from the Prime Minister's announcement) will be available to secondary schools to deliver face-to-face summer schools. Schools will be able to target provision based on pupils' needs but the government is suggesting they may want to initially target incoming year 7 pupils. This is alongside wider support funded through our Holiday Activities and Food Programme across the country.
 - 4.4 A range of high-quality online resources, provided by the Oak National Academy, will be available for all teachers and pupils, starting from the summer term and throughout summer holidays.

5. It is clear that it must be a long-term endeavour and go beyond academic achievement to include measures to support children and young people's socialisation, communication and mental health and well-being. While recovery support should be made available to all children and young people, it is vital that vulnerable children, who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, are the focus of this programme of work.
6. Other recovery issues raised with us by councils include:
 - 6.1 The Department for Education (DfE) will need to undertake extensive engagement and communications work to ensure schools, councils, parents/carers and young people have a clear picture of how these arrangements will work in practise.
 - 6.2 Extending the school term into the summer will clearly have resource implications for both schools and councils, for example an extension to home-to-school transport and these will need to be funded by the Department. We are also concerned that teachers have been working incredibly hard for the last twelve months and must be able to have time off over the summer to rest and recover.

Children's social care

7. We anticipate a need for additional support for children, young people and their families over the coming months and possibly years as a result of pressures introduced or exacerbated by the pandemic. This includes issues around financial hardship, mental health and wellbeing issues (including stress and grief), domestic abuse and drug and alcohol misuse. Much of this will not be at the higher end of need – rather, it will require short term interventions to support people through a difficult period. However, many early interventions have been scaled back or withdrawn altogether as funding challenges and increasing need for urgent child protection services have diverted funding towards more intensive services. To ensure families can get the support they need, when they need it, and to prevent needs from escalating, we are calling for the £1.7 billion lost from the Early Intervention Grant since 2010 to be restored, and the reinstatement of the £700 million removed from the public health grant since 2015.
8. Schools are one of the main referrers into children's social care, thanks to the unique relationships of teachers and support staff with their pupils and the ability to spot if something isn't right. These relationships and opportunities for disclosures will be challenged if school staff continue to have additional expectations placed upon them in terms of infection control and education catch up.
9. The See, Hear, Respond programme (funded by DfE and coordinated by Barnardo's) has provided significant levels of support for children and families where they need help to cope with the challenges of the pandemic but fall below social care thresholds. This programme will end in March, and we have concerns about support for some of the children and young people in the programme when this happens. In particular, Barnardo's reports that their delivery partners have supported significant numbers of children to return to school where this has been a challenge, and worked with thousands of teenagers through their outreach youth work. In the absence of the programme from April, we are keen to work with the DfE to identify alternative funding that will enable councils to commission early help support to meet ongoing need.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

10. We are concerned that as schools re-open and lockdown measures ease there will be an increase in requests for support from children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans where the support set out in their plan has not been provided, particularly due to pressures on the health service. We are keen to work with the DfE and Department for Health and Social Care and NHS England to ensure that the support needs of children with SEND can be met as soon as possible. The on-going review of the SEND system should also consider learning from the pandemic, for example that some children and young people with SEND benefited from being away from the classroom and being taught at home.

Mental Health

11. Mental health support needs to be on an equitable footing as education and the drive to 'catch up'. It is clear that children won't engage in education if they have poor mental health, thus widening the learning gap further. Any proposals set out for catch up need to include emotional and social needs of young people, not purely academic.
12. Councils have a clear role in providing a strategic oversight role in co-ordinating different partners (mental health specialists but also youth groups and the voluntary sector) to support schools, children and young people, as well as using their expertise to facilitate conversations locally and bringing schools nurses, educational psychologists and others together.
13. We would encourage Government to consider extending the Wellbeing for Education Return funding, as it is currently due to end in March 2021. We know this has been well received and would welcome consideration on how this could be bolstered. For example, embedding pastoral support for children in schools.
14. We recognise that currently the majority of funding comes through the NHS so would wish to see a national expectation that each ICS prioritises children and young people's emotional health and well-being.
15. We want to see a greater investment in early intervention to support preventative and universal services to support young people's emotional wellbeing. This includes the £1.7 billion removed from the Early Intervention Grant since 2010 to be reinstated and the £700 million of public health funding reductions to be reversed.

Early Years

16. Councils have been asked to prioritise early years settings for testing and whilst councils want to work closely with government when rolling out testing for different sectors, and recognise the importance of this, it is vital that the Government considers the range of pressures on testing and vaccination programmes and provides the resources needed to deliver them.
17. The current approach of funding early years providers at up to 85% of their January 2020 amount is causing significant concern for the sector and for local authorities.

18. Councils are anticipating budget deficits after last year's funding arrangements. We are working closely with local authorities to understand the impact that this may have on them.
19. We would wish to see a return to the 2020 funding arrangements, and emergency funding injected into the sector to ensure there is sufficient childcare available when we emerge from lockdown.

Children's health

20. Local authority public health teams continue to work closely with schools and have provided an enormous amount of support throughout the pandemic. Public health teams provide schools with advice on infection control, contact tracing and vaccination, as well as keeping health and wellbeing services running such as school nurses and emotional wellbeing support.
21. Public health funding for councils has reduced by £700 million over the last five years, yet the value of local public health services has never been clearer. Councils need the right funding now to ensure they can continue to support schools, as well as delivering preventative programmes to tackle health inequalities and give children and young people a healthier start in life.
22. Local authority public health teams and the services they commission, such as school nursing, have done an enormous amount to support schools, parents and vulnerable children during the pandemic. School nurses provide a holistic service, offering advice and support on long term conditions such as asthma, healthy weight, sexual health and emotional and mental health issues. They identify problems early and can signpost to specialist services such as mental health support teams.
23. The Government should invest in the school nursing workforce and ensure every secondary school has access to a school nurse, who can support them in meeting the increased health and wellbeing needs of their pupils during the recovery and catch up period. Public health teams would be best placed to coordinate and commission additional support for schools through the Healthy Child Programme, linking it to wider child health outcomes and tackling child health inequalities.
24. From the academic year 2020/21, the law has required schools to provide some relationships, sex and health education to all secondary age pupils in the academic year 2020/21, and to provide some relationships and health education to all primary age pupils. Many schools have flagged their inability to deliver a comprehensive RSHE package this year given the unique pressures they face. The Department has been flexible with this requirement.
25. However, we would encourage government to communicate clearly with all schools and to reassure them around the expectations for delivering RSHE in 20/21 and to reissue support and training offers in RSHE implementation. Many local authorities are supporting schools with the implementation of RSHE and would appreciate the space and time to ensure public health teams and schools can work together to identify local needs resulting from the pandemic and tailor RSHE appropriately.

26. Due to a combination of redeployment, Covid restrictions and an already depleted workforce, health visiting services have had to make difficult decisions on limiting the number of contacts they have with new parents and babies over the last 12 months.
27. Over the last 12 months we have seen an increase in reports of perinatal mental health issues and safeguarding incidents in 0-2s. It is essential that Government recognises the impact of the pandemic on this age group.
28. We would be keen to work with government, Public Health England and Health Education England to undertake workforce analysis in order to deliver a properly resourced catch-up programme, including additional recruitment of specialist perinatal mental health nurses and expansion of parenting support programmes.

Youth employment and skills issues (including youth participation)

29. The continued COVID-19 crisis and national restrictions has had an adverse effect on youth participation in education and employment and training (EET) as well as a disproportionate impact on young people's employment and skills more widely. The latest [Labour Market Statistics](#) show a steep rise in youth unemployment.
30. While the overall unemployment rate currently is 5 per cent, it is 13.2 per cent for 18 to 24-year-old and 25.6 per cent for those aged 16-17. Even when national restrictions are lifted young people will find it tough to compete in a crowded job market against the newly unemployed with more experience and relevant skills. The youth participation in education and training rates for 16-18-year olds has held around the 86.1 per cent mark, with the number of those not in education, employment or training (NEET) young people (aged 16 to 24 years) the UK remaining high at 757,000 on the last count in November 2020.
31. Councils/combined authorities as leaders of place have a key role in driving economic recovery. With rising youth unemployment and high number of NEETs, it's vital that local government is given the appropriate powers and resources to fulfil their statutory duties for young people to ensure relevant programmes and support offer is in place.
32. We are calling for a you minister to be appointed to work across Whitehall and have oversight of a new Youth Employment and Skills Taskforce (YES), which should include representative of government departments, LGA, business and other representative organisations. This will provide a more co-ordinated and cross-departmental approach with a rapid and focussed response to address the issues. The LGA will work in partnership with the Government and the YES Taskforce members to share insights, ensure initiatives land well in local areas and support the delivery the Government's Opportunity Guarantee measures at pace.

Careers, advice, and guidance reforms

33. There is an ideal opportunity for radical reforms in the careers space by giving local government a key role. DfE and DWP commissioned provision should make it a contractual requirement for providers to work with local areas. Councils should have additional resources to co-design and co-commission a local careers offer to ensure that every young person is well informed about national and local labour market opportunities.

As we move towards a green economic recovery, we need a clear line of sight of where and when jobs will be created.

Support for young people, NEETs, and vulnerable groups

34. Data sharing between school and councils and providers should be improved by providing further clarification and enabling the sharing the data with DWP for tracking and identification of NEETs. A targeted approach is more effective and can deliver value for money.
35. A multi-year flexible funding pot is needed to respond to local challenges, scaling-up successful projects or provide wrap-around support for young people to secure or sustain education, employment or training. The funding should be allocated to councils or combined authorities as a 'single pot' with the same criteria to spend in their respective areas.
36. DfE and DWP commissioned programmes should make it a contractual requirement for providers to work with local authorities more cohesively to avoid unnecessary competition and duplication of provision.

Apprenticeships flexibilities

37. To improve the apprenticeship starts for young people further apprenticeship flexibilities should be introduced to enable local pooling of public levy funds, so that councils could strategically plan provision across the area to address supply/ demand side issues, target sectors to support the local economy, and widen participation to disadvantaged groups and specific cohorts. A proportion could be spent on pre-apprenticeship training or administration of programmes. This local activity would support the Opportunity Guarantee measures and a green recovery.

Financial implications

38. The priorities will be delivered within existing resources.