



OFFICIAL SUBMISSION

Comprehensive Spending Review

September 2020

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LEFT BEHIND**

#NoChildLeftBehind

Comprehensive Spending Review 2020 Submission by the National Education Union

Introduction

This submission is made at a time when the coronavirus crisis continues to create significant challenges for schools and colleges.

The Government has, after years of pressure, finally recognised the scale of the funding problems facing education and begun to address them in its funding allocations for 2020/21 to 2022/23. This additional funding has not, however, been allocated equally to all sectors of education; and higher funding increases have been received, sometimes inappropriately, by some categories of school to the disadvantage of others.

This NEU submission sets out proposals to address three equally important priority areas for increased public spending on education:

- To pursue further the restoration of education spending, in particular by addressing the unequal distribution of the recent funding increases and the continuing needs and under-funding of some sectors of education and some categories of school.**
- To take some important steps towards addressing child poverty and its impact on the educational achievement of the poorest children in society.**
- To allow the implementation of a national recovery plan for education which tackles the legacy of the disruption to education suffered by so many students this year.**

Overall education funding – the current position

The 2010s was a 'lost decade' for the education system. Recent research by the Institute of Fiscal Studies¹ confirms what the education sector already knew. School spending per pupil in England fell by nine per cent in real terms between 2009/10 and 2019/20. This represents the largest cut in more than 40 years.

Education is essential to improving social mobility and equality. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has noted that "the highest performing education systems... give all children opportunities for a good quality education."² UK spending on educational institutions as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) from public sources was lower in 2016 than in Belgium, Finland, Germany and Norway.³ Cuts since 2016 are likely to have worsened the relative position of the UK.

From 2015 onward, the inadequate annual increases in school funding cut the level of funding by billions of pounds after the impact of inflation and additional costs was taken into account. The impact on individual schools has been highlighted by the School Cuts [website](#)

¹ 2020 Annual report on education spending in England, Institute for Fiscal Studies

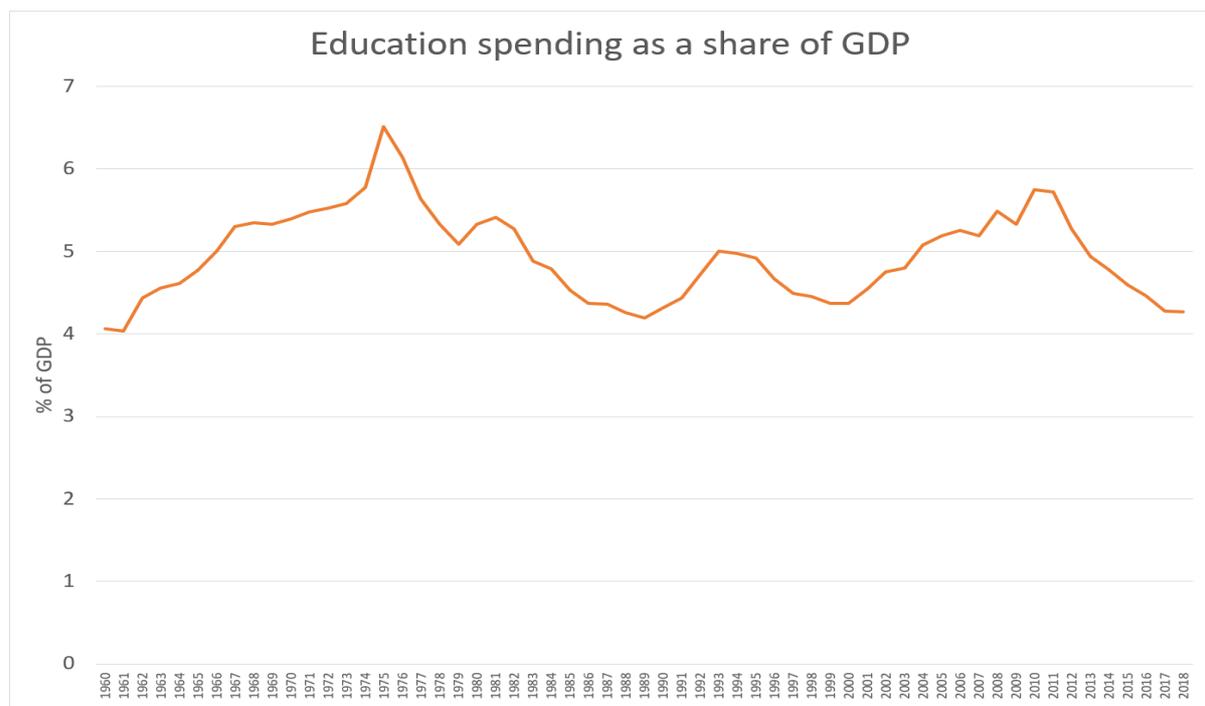
² www.oecd.org/education/school/50293148.pdf

³ OECD Education at a Glance 2019, Figure C1.2. Total expenditure on educational institutions per full-time equivalent student, by type of service (2016), p267

(schoolcuts.org.uk), designed and maintained by the National Education Union. It shows that the overwhelming majority of schools have faced real-terms cuts in their funding over the period since 2015/16.⁴

The Government for years sought to deflect criticism by consistently arguing that more money than ever before was going into the education system. In pure cash terms, this was of course correct. But cost increases were outstripping funding increases and this led both to cuts and to a crisis in planning and stability. Schools and colleges were forced to firefight instead of being able to plan with confidence. The evidence of those working in schools and colleges, as well as from the National Audit Office and the Institute for Fiscal Studies,⁵ showed the impact in terms of bigger class sizes, reduced curriculum options, cuts in educator jobs and lack of money for learning materials which ended up being purchased instead by school staff and parents.⁶

The stark legacy of these years of underfunding can be best seen by looking at education funding as a percentage of GDP. Unsurprisingly, spending on education as a proportion of GDP has dropped sharply since 2010 and is at almost its lowest level since 1960.



As with previous troughs in the late 1980s and late 1990s, the Government was finally forced by political pressure to respond with significant increases in funding. The Department for Education (DfE) secured a three-year settlement in the 2019 Spending Round which

⁴ <https://schoolcuts.org.uk/#/>

⁵ www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Financial-sustainability-of-schools.pdf; <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/9818>; <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/school-funding-england-fall-5-per-cent-by-2019-ifs-fiscal-studies-education-justine-greening-a7846381.html>

⁶ <https://neu.org.uk/funding>

increased core schools funding in cash terms by £2.6 billion in 2020/21, £4.8bn in 2021/22 and £7.1bn in 2022/23, plus an amount of around £1.5bn a year to cover the increase to employer pension contributions in the Teachers' Pension Scheme. This represents an increase of around £8.6bn a year by 2022/23.

NEU analysis indicated at the time that £12.6bn a year was needed by 2022/23 to restore per pupil funding to 2015/16 levels and pay for the increase in school costs. This £8.6bn figure has, therefore, undeniably represented a good start at reversing the reducing share of education spending as a share of GDP, but it can only be seen as a first instalment of a long-term plan. The Government must accept, after years of underfunding, that even after this funding injection those years of underfunding will have a legacy.

The Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) covers the period to 2023/24 for revenue funding, and 2024/25 for capital funding. Two years therefore of the 2019 Spending Round settlement are included in the CSR term. The NEU would oppose any attempt to re-open the 2019 Spending Round settlement in a downward direction. The Spending Round settlement was not a long-term solution, but it was necessary to halt the downward drift of education spending as a percentage of GDP. The DfE has already confirmed provisional funding allocations for 2021/22 (year 2 of the Spending Round) through the schools, high needs and central school services national funding formulae (NFF) based on the Spending Round allocation. The education sector is now planning on that basis and it would be unfair for the CSR to damage these plans through the imposition of a lower settlement. The NEU would be looking for at least a continuation of the Spending Round increases in 2023/24. It would be counter-productive to row back on the direction of travel started by the Spending Round.

Current NEU analysis indicates that there is still a shortfall. A further £2.2bn is needed to restore per pupil funding even to 2015/16 levels in 2020/21 and £1.9bn in 2021/22. While the Spending Round was a good start, there is still work to do. The 2015/16 per pupil levels of funding should not be seen as an endpoint but as a start in making education a renewed priority of Government and in pushing education spending back towards the percentage of GDP seen in 2010.

Productivity remains a key issue for the UK economy. UK productivity lags significantly behind other leading western economies such as Germany and the USA. This gap can only be addressed by investment in our economic infrastructure and in our skills base. That means investing more in education, and not allowing the trend in cutting education funding from 2010 to 2019 as a percentage of GDP to resume.

The Government ultimately has to decide what type of country it wishes us to be – a low-wage, low-skill, low-investment economy, or a high-investment, high-skill, high-productivity economy, leading to high wages for its citizens.

Priority area one:

Further measures to restore education funding

This section summarises the investment the Government needs to make in the CSR to put this right. The calculations are drawn from NEU analysis.

Distribution of schools block funding

The NEU is, as stated above, concerned about the distribution of the increased levels of school funding. The interaction of the national funding formula and minimum per pupil levels means that even though more money is going into education, most schools are still losing out compared with 2015/16 levels.

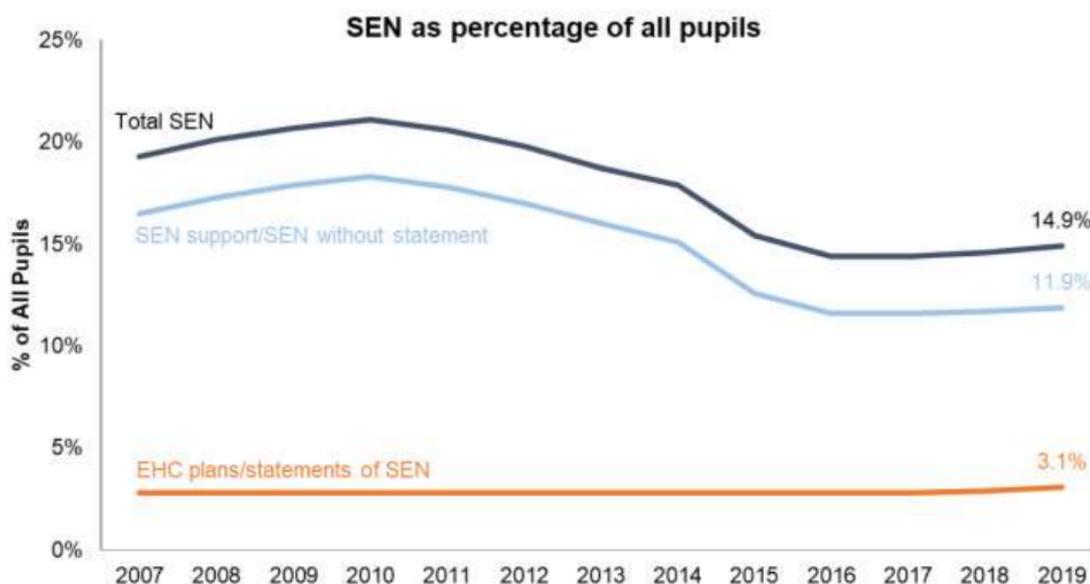
NEU analysis indicates that 75 per cent of schools are still losing out compared to 2015/16 and that this will rise to 78 per cent in 2021/22, despite the lower overall shortfall.

There is a stark correlation between schools with continuing funding shortfalls and the percentage of pupils on free school meals (FSM). In 2020/21, 78 per cent of primary schools in the highest FSM decile (an average of 45 per cent FSM) are on course to be worse off on a per-pupil basis compared to 2015/16. This is set to rise to 88 per cent in 2021/22. Meanwhile only 64 per cent of secondaries in the lowest FSM decile (with an average four per cent FSM) are set to be worse off on a per pupil basis compared with 2015/16 in both 2020/21 and 2021/22. The unequal distribution of the additional funding can also be observed by disaggregation in other ways.

There is an important issue here. Money is being funneled to proportionately more well off areas and schools. The NEU is not arguing that these areas and schools do not need extra money, but this should not be achieved at the expense of schools in the most disadvantaged areas. In remedying the £2.2bn shortfall in 2020/21 and the £1.9bn shortfall in 2021/22, the Government needs to ensure that money is received in those areas in greatest need.

Funding for special education needs and disability (SEND)

Inadequate funding for children and young people with SEND means that we are failing some of the most vulnerable students in our schools and colleges.



The number of pupils recognised as having a special educational need has fallen from a high of 21 per cent in 2010 to 14.9 per cent in 2019. However, Government policy of

reducing the number of pupils on the SEN register has resulted in a dramatic rise in the number of pupils with an education, health and care plan (EHCP). This shift from high incidence/low cost provision to low incidence/high cost provision is set to drive up the cost of high needs provision for the foreseeable future. Should the Government try to reverse this expensive policy, it will take some years before costs start to fall again.

There are now 390,109 pupils and students with an EHCP, an increase of ten per cent on 2019 and 62 per cent on 2015. This is far more than anyone anticipated. Increasing numbers are being educated in inappropriate settings because the system cannot cope with the increased number of pupils with EHCPs. In the past year there has been a 15 per cent rise in the number of pupils with EHCPs attending independent schools, which are not non-maintained special schools. There has also been a 17 per cent rise in the number of pupils with EHCPs in pupil referral units (PRUs). In the worst case, children are not receiving any provision at all – 1,260 pupils of compulsory school age are not in education.

National Education Union analysis indicates that, in order to address these shortfalls, the high needs block should be £2.1bn a year higher, assuming the 2020/21 number of EHCPs were funded at the 2015/16 rate.

The Government has acknowledged that there are shortfalls in high needs funding, with £350 million in extra funding delivered for 2019/20, £780m for 2020/21 as part of year 1 of the Spending Round and the announcement of £730m for 2021/22 as part of year 2. Ultimately this funding is vastly insufficient given the scale of need. More funding is needed for the three-year period covered by this Comprehensive Spending Review.

Post-16 funding

Sixth form colleges and further education (FE) colleges have seen large reductions in funding since 2010, of some 22 per cent in real terms in sixth form colleges and 30 per cent in FE colleges. These institutions also have to pay VAT on goods and services, from which schools and academies are exempt. The consequences are predictable. A National Audit Office (NAO) report⁷ from September 2020 indicates that almost half of FE and sixth form colleges in England have required Government intervention because of financial difficulties after years of funding cuts. More than £700m in emergency funding has been provided to tackle financial problems in the sector and keep individual colleges afloat.

Staffing costs have been reduced from 70 to 65 per cent in FE colleges and there now appears to be a general informal target of 63 per cent. Sixth form colleges are also seeing similar reductions in staffing costs. These costs are determined by a variety of elements such as the staffing mix of teaching and non-teaching staff; teacher and support staff pay; teaching contact hours; class or group sizes; teaching hours per learner; and continuing professional development (AoC 2018 Report on College Finances). Austerity measures have cut into all of these areas due to pressures put upon colleges by reductions in Government funding to the sector. Ensuring that college budgets have the latitude to respond to learner need and workforce flexibility will mean supporting them to accommodate staff costs at or above 70 per cent of their overall budgets.

⁷ NAO, Financial sustainability of colleges in England, September 2020

Pay levels for teaching staff in FE colleges are now 80 per cent of those in maintained teachers in schools. This has an obvious impact on recruitment, retention and morale. The NEU believes that the Government needs both to ring-fence additional funding for pay and ensure a robust mechanism for pay determination in the post-16 sector, in order to ensure that adequate pay deals can be made and implemented. There are also increasing variations in teacher pay within the sixth form colleges sector, with the fracturing impact of post-16 academies and funding discrepancies such as the payment of the teachers' pay grant to the former and not the latter. The Government must take steps to support the restoration of a coherent institutional and reward framework for all staff in the post-16 sector.

Early years funding

Good quality early years education improves social mobility and reduces the attainment gap between children from deprived backgrounds and their peers. The Government's approach, however, has focused on delivering its childcare initiative rather than on maintaining good quality provision. There are only 389 maintained nursery schools (MNS) left in England and many are facing closure due to increased costs and insufficient Government funding. The additional £60 million for maintained nurseries recently extended to 2020/21, and then £24m to cover the summer term of 2021, is covering the financial cracks, but the absence of guaranteed funding beyond 2021 is putting schools at risk of closure. Meanwhile, the non-maintained sector also faces considerable financial challenges, which drives down the quality of provision through increased use of low-qualified and unqualified staff. This dire situation has worsened during the Covid-19 outbreak. As large numbers of private nurseries temporarily closed, maintained nursery schools have been asked by local authorities to become early years hubs to care for vulnerable children and those of key workers. Approximately 70 per cent of MNS stayed open compared to 35 per cent of other early years providers. MNS have had to pick up the slack while also coping with the financial fallout as a result of the pandemic, despite not being eligible for support such as the business rates holiday and not receiving equivalent financial support to other schools.

MNS educate 40,000 children. Sixty-four per cent of MNS are in 30 per cent of most deprived areas of England and for many families, especially those who have children with SEND, they are the only opportunity for early education. Settings in disadvantaged areas are at greater risk of closure due to limited scope to generate income from parent-paid fees. Every child should be able to access early education and get the best start in life – and nursery schools make this possible.

The lack of funding and uncertainty about the future means that without more money, many maintained nursery schools will become unviable and will be forced to close. The quality of provision in others will inevitably suffer without proper investment and resources jeopardising their ability to support the most vulnerable children.

Whatever mechanism the Government decides to use to determine the early years budget, funding should meet the cost of delivering good, high quality education and care. It cannot be static and must increase over time. The funding formula must recognise that MNS require a different level of funding to the rest of the sector due to their higher costs as schools, and because they play a different role. The NEU endorses and supports the submission of the school leaders' union NAHT and campaign organisation Early Education in this regard. The current approach is failing to improve outcomes for children and will not advance social mobility.

Capital funding

This Comprehensive Spending Review provides the Government with a vital opportunity to tackle its legacy of capital underinvestment.

According to a House of Commons Library briefing paper from September 2019, the real level of capital spending by the DfE fell from £8.8 billion in 2009/10 to a low of £4.6bn in 2013/14. It then increased and reached a real-terms high of £5.9bn in 2015/16 before declining again to £5.3bn in 2018/19⁸.

Between 2009/10 and 2018/19, capital spending declined by 31 per cent in cash terms and by 40 per cent after adjusting for inflation⁹. In 2019/20 the DfE's capital spending was planned to decrease still further to £5bn¹⁰. This included an element of non-school spending but shows that capital funding has been on a journey downwards over the past decade.

The National Audit Office highlighted in its 2017 report Capital Funding for Schools¹¹ that £6.7bn was needed to restore all school buildings to a satisfactory condition and a further £7.1bn to bring parts of school buildings from a satisfactory to good condition. These figures are likely to be an under-estimate as they were formed from the DfE's 2014 Property Data Survey, so parts of the school estate will have deteriorated further since then. In 2009/10 the level of funding to maintain the school estate stood at £4.7bn (source: NAO¹²); however, by 2014/15 this had fallen to £1.9bn and, despite rallying in the following two years, has been less than £2bn since 2018/19.¹³

This 2014 survey did not take asbestos into account, so these figures make no assessment of the cost of asbestos management and removal. Sixty per cent of schools were built before 1976 and around 85 per cent of schools contain asbestos, which not only makes them more difficult and expensive to maintain, but a riskier environment in which to work or learn. A substantial increase in capital funding is needed to ensure the school estate is safe, sustainable and conducive to learning and wellbeing. Within this, earmarked funding is needed for the phased removal of asbestos, starting with the most dangerous cases. If this issue is not addressed as a matter of urgency, lives will continue to be cut short through exposure to asbestos fibres.

Many school buildings are nearing the end of their original design life, and the National Audit Office notes that the DfE does not currently know with certainty how the condition of the school estate is changing over time. The Comprehensive Spending Review will set capital

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/public-expenditure-statistical-analyses-pesa> (Table 1.8); real terms (2019/20 prices)

⁹ Long, R. and Danechi, S. School Buildings and Capital Funding (England) House of Commons Library briefing paper number 07375, 18 September 2019. Available at <https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7375#fullreport>

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ National Audit Office: Capital Funding for Schools – available at <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/capital-funding-for-schools/>

¹² National Audit Office: Capital Funding for Schools – available at <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/capital-funding-for-schools/>

¹³ Forecast figures from 2016/17 to 2020/21.

funding from 2020/21 to 2024/25, a year more than day-to-day spending. It is vital that Government grasps the opportunity to change course.

Funding for teachers' pay

The Government must use the Comprehensive Spending Review to send an unambiguous signal to current and potential teachers that it will invest in education and that it recognises that no education system can exceed the quality of its teachers. Investment in education requires improving pay for teachers. School teachers have suffered real-terms pay cuts of around 15 per cent on average since 2010 and have seen pay and career progression hit by the imposition of performance-related pay (PRP) alongside cuts to school and college funding.

We should be ensuring that pay levels reflect the vital job done by education professionals, not cutting pay in real terms year after year, and blocking incremental progression. As a result, the teaching profession struggles to recruit and retain teachers when it should be the career of choice for graduates.

Teaching must be enabled to compete effectively in the graduate employment market. In order to do this, the entrenched and worsening teacher supply problems must be addressed. The School Teachers' Review Body has partly recognised the nature of the problem, proposing a 5.5 per cent increase for new teachers in 2020/21, but lower increases of 4.95 per cent to 3.3 per cent on pay scales M2-M5 and 2.75 per cent for all other teachers.

The prospect of salaries tapering off as teachers move through the profession means that any progress made in recruiting teachers will not be sustained in retaining them. It is already the case that 22 per cent of teachers leave teaching within two years. This is a waste of talent which impacts most directly on disadvantaged children. Furthermore, concrete plans and resources are needed to tackle teacher workload and improve recruitment and retention. Instead of driving teachers and support staff out of the profession, we should be providing the resources necessary for them to succeed.

For many teachers the pay increases announced in previous years have existed only in theory as they have not been fully funded by the Government. The dismantling of the national pay structure, imposition of PRP and real-terms funding cuts have resulted in many teachers not receiving cost-of-living increases announced in previous years. The NEU called for a fully funded seven per cent across the board increase in September 2020 to make significant inroads into the cuts to teacher pay against inflation since 2010.

The 5.5 per cent increase for new teachers in schools in England, though insufficient, was supposed to be the first step in a three-year programme leading to a minimum salary of £30,000 by 2022/23. It is vital that the Comprehensive Spending Review confirms the funds necessary to meet even this limited goal.

Priority area two: Ending child poverty

Child poverty is a predictor of educational attainment; research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation shows that "children growing up in poorer families emerge from school with

substantially lower levels of educational attainment”.¹⁴ The same research states that this, in turn, impacts social mobility.

The End Child Poverty coalition recently published research showing that 30 per cent of children are currently living in poverty.¹⁵ Government data over four years shows a steady rise in child poverty, which increased by 2.8 per cent between 2014/15 and 2018/19, resulting in 4.2 million children being trapped in poverty prior to the current health crisis.

Furthermore, in areas where child poverty is already at a high level, it is increasing. For example, in Middlesbrough, child poverty has risen 15.6 per cent since 2014/15 to 42.4 per cent. According to the latest research conducted by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), the fallout of the coronavirus pandemic threatens to push 200,000 more children into poverty by the end of this year.¹⁶

A disproportionate number of children growing up in working families are now experiencing poverty. The Social Metrics Commission has found that two thirds of young people living in poverty live with at least one adult who works – this has increased from 45 per cent in 2000/01 to 64 per cent at the start of this year.¹⁷

The impact of the pandemic on families living in and on the brink of poverty has been devastating. Thousands of families have been pushed into poverty – some for the first time – through wage cuts, job losses and the overall increased cost of keeping children at home during the national lockdown.

Teachers have told us of the impact of poverty on children’s learning in the classroom. In a poll carried out in December 2018, 85 per cent of respondents told the NEU that the impact of poverty resulted in behavioural issues, 83 per cent said that there are increased absences from school and 81 per cent stated that children from poor families lack concentration. Teachers tell us that this is because these children arrive at school hungry and inadequately clothed.

The situation outlined above will result in a social and economy calamity in the future. The burgeoning number of children living in poverty are much more likely to become NEET – not in education, employment or training.¹⁸ Being NEET can have a detrimental effect on physical and mental health, and increase the likelihood of unemployment, low wages or low quality of work later. Besides having distressing impact on individuals and their life chances, being NEET has a huge cost to the economy. Research for the Audit Commission shows that at 2008 levels, NEETs cost the public purse £12bn at the lowest estimate and £32.5bn at the highest.¹⁹

¹⁴ Goodman A. and Gregg P. (eds.), *Poorer children’s educational attainment: how important are attitudes and behaviour?*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2010.

¹⁵ Hirsch D. and Stone J., *Local indicators of child poverty, 2017/18: Summary of estimates of child poverty in small areas of Great Britain, 2017/18*, End Child Poverty, 2019.

¹⁶ <https://www.ippr.org/news-and-media/press-releases/1-1-million-more-people-face-poverty-at-end-of-2020-as-a-result-of-coronavirus-pandemic-finds-ippr>

¹⁷ <https://socialmetricscommission.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Measuring-Poverty-2020-Web.pdf>

¹⁸ Powell A., *NEET: Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training*, House of Commons Library, 2018.

¹⁹ Coles B., Godfrey C., Keung A., Parrott S. and Bradshaw J, *Estimating the life-time cost of NEET: 16-18 year olds not in Education, Employment or Training*, Audit Commission, 2010.

Child poverty also puts pressure on school budgets. Teachers tell us that to support children living in poverty, their schools are funding extra breakfast and holiday clubs, providing and washing children's clothing and supplying children with the equipment they need to learn. In recent months Government has responded to urgent calls for action to combat poverty through establishing a scheme to provide much needed digital devices to some children and young people who needed this technology to access online learning from home. The Government has also invested in the expansion of the free school meals (FSM) scheme to cover the Easter and summer school holidays, as well as the May half-term break. Such innovation and investment in the basics of education breaks down the barriers faced by children and young people from disadvantaged and low-income backgrounds, enabling them more equitable access to education and subsequent opportunities for social mobility.

In light of this, the Government must build on its work to reduce child poverty and ensure that no child is left behind. This will require that the DfE works across Government departments, including with the Department for Work and Pensions. A child poverty reduction strategy must include five core actions, the funding of which will support children and young people living in poverty gain greater access to the opportunities an equitable education provides. These five actions are:

1. **Expand the FSM scheme to include every child (up to the age of 16) from a household in receipt of Universal Credit, or equivalent benefits**, in line with the first recommendation of the National Food Strategy's recent report.²⁰ This expansion would cover an additional 1.5 million children not currently eligible for FSM, but who nevertheless face hardship which means they often miss out on regular nutritious meals. The National Food Strategy estimated this expansion will cost an additional £670 million per year and will improve children's health and tackle food poverty in the face of the coronavirus fallout and Brexit.
2. **Eradicate holiday hunger by extended FSM provision of at least £15 per child per week during all school holidays**. Food insecurity is a part of everyday life for many children growing up in poverty in the UK – this bites particularly hard during periods of school closure. A National Education Union's December 2019 survey of its members found that 63 per cent were worried that more children would be going hungry over the Christmas period than in the previous year.²¹ Over the course of the pandemic the Government did the right thing by expanding the FSM scheme to include the Easter and summer holidays, as well as the week of the May half-term. Children cannot learn if they come to school hungry – especially if they return from school holidays too weak and tired to concentrate in the classroom. Expanding the scheme implemented by Government during lockdown (in which families were allocated £15 per child every week) to include the 14 weeks of school holiday in an academic year would cost an estimated £546m per year. This calculation takes into account the National Food Strategy's recommendation to include children from households on Universal Credit in the FSM scheme.
3. **Reform all school uniform policies to ensure uniform options are affordable for families in the local community**. The average cost of school uniforms runs into

²⁰ <https://www.nationalfoodstrategy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/NFS-Part-One-DP.pdf>

²¹ <https://neu.org.uk/press-releases/child-poverty-poll>

hundreds of pounds – money that many families on low incomes simply do not have. Branded or specialised school uniforms place unnecessary financial pressure on parents and carers to provide unaffordable clothing for their children, when similar, cheaper options can often be found in supermarkets or high street shops.²² When children arrive at school without the correct uniform they often feel isolated or stigmatised, and can even be sent home for wearing the wrong brand of clothing. Ensuring all schools cater for their needs of their local community will alleviate pressure on families and allow pupils to focus on their learning in school, rather than worry about what they are wearing.

4. **Provide free household internet access for children and young people in households on Universal Credit.** According to Office for National Statistics (ONS) research, an estimated 60,000 children had no home internet access at all prior to the pandemic and therefore did not have access to the technology they required to access learning online from home.²³ Internet access is a vital learning tool in the 21st century and the Government recognised the seriousness of this digital divide by providing 50,000 4G wireless routers to disadvantaged families during lockdown. According to Government data there are around 1.6 million households with children currently on Universal Credit – these households will be hardest hit by the financial impact of Covid-19 and are less likely to be able to afford a reliable internet connection. With the average monthly cost of broadband standing at £27.50 per calendar month, or £330 per year, Government investment of £540m per year will ensure no child misses out on online learning. Of course, with mass rollout of internet provision in this way, it is likely that savings will be able to be made and that costs will come in at a lower rate.
5. **Establish a new, dedicated technology budget for all schools to combat the digital divide.** According to ONS data, 700,000 11-18 year olds have no home internet access from a device suitable to support home learning, such as a tablet or laptop.²⁴ 68% of children in this age group said they would find it difficult to complete schoolwork without such devices, emphasising the impact of the digital divide in limiting the learning experiences of children trapped in poverty. The Government's £85 million scheme to provide free wireless routers, laptops and tablets to disadvantaged children during the pandemic recognised the importance of access to adequate technology to support pupil learning. By the end of the 2019/20 academic year 220,494 children and young people had been provided with the digital device they needed to access online learning from home, leaving 479,506 pupils without. Establishing a new, dedicated technology budget for schools in high poverty areas will enable schools to work with the local communities they serve to combat the digital divide and ensure provision is tailored to the needs of their students. Following a Freedom of Information request the NEU has learnt that the DfE spent £280 per device provided during the pandemic (this cost covering the device, configuration, protective case, software licence, enhanced warranty and delivery). Providing the equivalent of a new device for all children who were not reached by the

²² <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8813/CBP-8813.pdf>

²³

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/householdcharacteristics/homeinternetandsocialmediausage/articles/exploringtheuksdigitaldivide/2019-03-04>

²⁴ Ibid.

Government's scheme in time for the new term would require a cash injection of £134,261,680.

In total, to ensure no child is left behind we urge Government to invest an additional £1.75bn per year to support disadvantaged children in the ways outlined above because this will remove serious and entrenched barriers to learning. Separately, we urge Government to fully deliver on its pledge to provide access to digital devices for disadvantaged children, which we estimate will require a ringfenced amount of £135m.

Priority area three: Supporting education recovery

The NEU has published its views on the case for a national recovery plan for the education system here: neu.org.uk/press-releases/coronavirus-national-education-recovery-plan. This needs to encompass steps to help continue to manage and reduce the spread of the virus and avoid further disruption, as well as help schools and colleges support learners in the aftermath of the several months' disruption already suffered.

In our view, the Government needs to work on a fully funded plan B in response to the ongoing crisis, including in particular serious steps to secure the reduction of class sizes which are the highest in Europe, in order both to reduce the size of transmission networks and to avoid education on the basis of rotas wherever possible.

This will require steps in relation to additional staffing resources and also to additional physical accommodation. In effect, we now need Nightingale schools as well as Nightingale hospitals.

In order to staff additional provision, and also to ensure that schools and colleges have sufficient cover for sickness among existing staff and can go some way towards reducing the workload related to Covid, schools and colleges need additional funding for additional staffing including supply cover.

The Government should consider funding the central employment of NQTs, many of whom are struggling to find work after qualifying, and also developing a plan to use the experience and expertise of supply teachers, many of whom would gladly embrace the prospect of a return to regular teaching service. This plan should also include additional funding this year for additional support for NQTs who have missed out on classroom experience during their training and may need additional coaching and mentoring support.

In order to support the recruitment of new teachers, Government should cost the provision of support to schools to provide placements for NQTs including additional time for experienced staff to coach and mentor.

The needs of schools and colleges are not limited to teaching staff and similar initiatives should be considered with regard to sourcing support which could be provided by additional non-teaching staff as well.

There are other special challenges in the wake of the continuing coronavirus epidemic. The real-terms cuts to funding since 2015 have affected schools' ability to provide pastoral

support for students and staff. Posts which would have normally played a role in supporting pupil mental wellbeing, such as teaching assistants and emotional literacy support assistants (ELSAs), have been lost. In a 2019 NEU survey, almost 60 per cent of respondents reported that the number of support roles at their school had reduced since the previous year²⁵. Similar issues have been experienced in colleges.

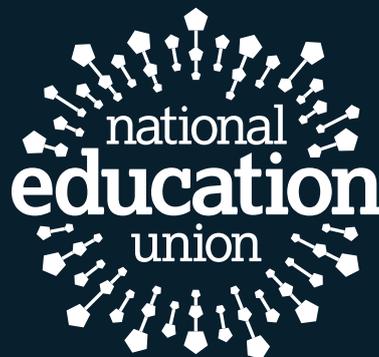
The NEU therefore believes that targeted funding for schools and colleges to rebuild their pastoral and mental health support should be provided as a matter of urgency. The NEU also believes additional funding is required so that NHS and child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) services can cope with the likely rise in demand in mental health support from children and young people and to enable face-to-face support to resume widely where possible.

We have not sought to quantify here the additional cost of the measures outlined above and others which we have proposed, but we would welcome the opportunity for discussion with both HM Treasury and DfE on those matters.

National Education Union
September 2020

²⁵ ** <https://neu.org.uk/press-releases/neu-survey-shows-widespread-funding-and-workload-p pressures-school-support-staff>

**NO CHILD
LEFT BEHIND**



#NoChildLeftBehind