

A. A better response to the impact of Covid-19 on education

Conference notes:

1. That young people's education and opportunities have been hit hard by Covid 19.
2. That the cumulative impact of disruption to education during the Covid pandemic has not been evenly spread among those in education, and that those with fewer resources have been hit disproportionately hard.
3. That the impact on educational opportunities has also been unevenly spread across English regions, with some regions hit with far greater disruption to schooling than others.
4. That the pandemic has had a very serious impact on young people's mental health, as well as their educational opportunities.
5. LGA analysis showing that spending by local authorities on youth services nationally has reduced by 69 per cent since 2010/11, from £1.4 billion to £429 million, with the loss of more than 4,500 youth work jobs and the closure of 750 youth centres. Such youth services offer young people safe places to meet, support them to succeed in school, training, or employment, and help them avoid long-term unemployment, mental health problems, and being lured into criminal activity.
6. That the pandemic has made the need for such services greater than ever.
7. That meanwhile the National Citizen Service (NCS) receives an estimated 95 per cent of the Government's youth services budget, despite only one in six eligible young people taking part and a fall of eight per cent in participants in the past year. National Citizen Service offers just two to four weeks of voluntary activity for 16 to 17-year-olds, receiving £1.26 billion in government funding from 2016 to 2020.
8. That the government's apprenticeship levy has cost businesses millions of pounds, but there has been little or no analysis of the impact of the levy.
9. That much of the apprenticeship levy remains unspent.

Conference believes:

- A. That more must be done to ensure that the impact of the pandemic on the life chances of young people is recognised and urgent action must be taken to ensure that young people are not disadvantaged in the long term.
- B. That given the uneven nature of the impact of the pandemic on children in different areas of England and with different home circumstances and access to online learning, to continue to base the assessment of GCSEs, AS and A levels on exams alone would be deeply unfair.
- C. That investment is needed in youth work, mental health support and pastoral care in schools to ensure young people are able to recover from both educational and emotional damage as a result of the pandemic.
- D. That some of the National Citizen Service funding would be better spent on all-year-round provision for young people of all ages, rather than a time-limited programme

which is restricted to a narrow age group and is attracting only a relatively small number of teenagers.

- E. That at this time of national crisis, which is hitting the work opportunities of the young particularly hard, young people at the start of their careers should be the main beneficiaries of unspent apprenticeship levy money.

Conference therefore recommends :

1. That given the ongoing disruption to education in many areas of England, over a prolonged period, while the move to alternative assessment is welcome for students due to take exams in 2021, thought needs to be given now to how students taking exams in 2022 can be assessed fairly.
2. That the money allocated to the National Citizens Service and the £500 million Youth Investment Fund programme for 2020 and 2021 be passed to Local Authorities to provide expanded and targeted year round youth work and education recovery programmes to improve the mental health and wider life chances of young people hit by the pandemic.
3. That any unspent by companies which would be clawed back by the Treasury be allocated to local authorities in partnership with FE colleges and schools to ensure the maximum number of apprenticeship placements are available for young people leaving school and college in 2021.
4. That such LA funded apprenticeship schemes should be granted flexibility over the work placement requirements until July 2022, as the need to get young people into training is urgent, and the number of employers with whom to partner in such schemes is likely to be restricted in the coming year.