



How young people can be supported during and after the global Covid-19 pandemic

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On 6th May, the UPP Foundation (supported by Public First) hosted a roundtable with a number of experts from charities, universities, schools, and others to discuss how young people can be supported during the current pandemic. The report summarises the discussion and sets out proposals for further action.

The UPP Foundation was set up to ensure there is greater equity in going to, succeeding at and benefiting from the university experience. The Foundation also supports, via a programme of grant giving and policy work, action to support vulnerable young people. The current Covid-19 pandemic represents a significant challenge to this mission and requires collective and co-ordinated response from Government, universities, FE colleges, schools and charities to ensure that:

- Young people are supported to overcome the educational and employment barriers that arise from the crisis.
- The agenda for widening participation to higher education is not disrupted or reversed.
- Students who do go to HE are able to stay in it, and to succeed.

In order to support these goals, the UPP Foundation makes four calls to action:

1. We propose that the Government create a 'Community Leadership Academy' worth around £500m a year. This programme would support a civic army of 75,000 paid young people who would be employed by coalitions of charities, universities and other bodies to work on a full or part-time basis for up to six months delivering local civic projects. As part of the programme, participants would be supported on their journey to enter, or remain in, higher education through universities or colleges.

Eligibility for the Academy should be for two main groups:

- a. Any young person formerly eligible for pupil premium who is under the age of 25 and not engaged in any other form of education, employment or training.
- b. Any current university student - from undergraduate through to postgraduate - with priority given to those qualifying for maximum government support.

2. Throughout the next school year (September 2020 - July 2021), the Government should provide a temporary uplift of the Pupil Premium and a temporary extension to post-16 eligibility. This time limited fund would be used to support ongoing additional interventions for this group and others in schools and colleges to prevent a reversal in widening participation progress. Specifically, this should be aimed at creating wrap-around academic and pastoral services, provided either by the schools and colleges or other charities and third parties, for those who have likely been disadvantaged by learning loss and less likely to have the wider networks in order to ameliorate it themselves.

3. The Government should fund a relevant (or small coalition of relevant) sector body[ies] to co-ordinate and design a 'Covid Support Programme' that all universities and colleges are encouraged to offer. This programme will provide good practice guidelines to support incoming first year higher education students, recognising the disruption they have faced.

4. Building on the outstanding progress already made to move open days online, universities and colleges should commit to running 'fully open and accessible' virtual open days for all students in the Autumn term of 2020.

The impact of Covid-19 on young people

We do not know what the full impact of Covid-19 will be. However, as the Centre for Economic Policy Research¹, the Resolution Foundation² and others have pointed out, young people will face numerous challenge - whether learning loss due to school and college closures, disruption to university terms or reduced employment prospects.

Based on analysis conducted by the UPP Foundation, the discussion held with participants, and drawing on other recently published research, we believe there are seven factors which lead to a conclusion that Covid-19 is going to significantly impact the employment and education of young people this September and in future years, and which should guide responses by Government, educational institutions, and third sector organisations:

1. Recent research has found that young employees are most likely to have lost work due to furloughing, job losses and hours reductions.

34% of students report that they have lost a job, had reduced hours, or not been paid for work completed, while 22% report that their parents have been less able to support them financially. Students at post-1992 universities were more likely to have suffered work-related losses.³

The employment market is also extremely bleak for this year's graduates and school and college leavers. The Institute for Student Employers forecasts that entry level jobs for school leavers, including apprenticeships, have been reduced by 23% this year⁴. The OBR estimates that more broadly, the UK economy will contract by 12.8% in 2020, with unemployment reaching 10%.

2. Learning loss is likely to impact poorer school pupils the most.

From previous school closures, the Centre for Economic Performance at LSE⁵ has found that when schools closed for more than two weeks there was a drop in performance affecting disadvantaged children worst. From this, it looks likely children will start school in September far behind their expected standard. So, some form of summer catch up scheme is vital to address this gap in the short-term. We support the principles of such a scheme, and we encourage Government to take it up. But it is likely that however effective any form of summer scheme is, students in schools will need support throughout next academic year as well, including face-to-face support as soon as possible which has significant benefits in terms of retention of knowledge, as well as helping with wider issues that such young people may be facing.

¹ Burgess and Sievertsen, "Schools, skills, and learning: The impact of COVID-19 on education", 1 April 2020

² Resolution Foundation, "Class of 2020: Education leavers in the current crisis" 6 May 2020

³ Sutton Trust Covid-19 university access briefing note, 4 May 2020

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2020/may/18/firms-slash-entry-level-jobs-by-almost-quarter-owing-to-coronavirus-pandemic-young-people>

⁵ Eyles et al, "Covid-19 school shutdowns: what will they do to our children's education" May 2020

3. There is significant concern about a system based on predicted grades, which may disproportionately impact disadvantaged students and increase appeals, impacting the application cycle.

In previous years predicted grades have been lower for disadvantaged students and there are widely shared concerns about how this will work for them. But anxieties about how the system will work is also felt amongst many students, regardless of background. Research by the Centre for Education and Youth (CfEY) and University of Exeter found that when asked “Have your feelings about your future education, training or employment options changed since your school / college closed?”⁶, a third (30%) of pupils mentioned worries about how the calculation of their grades using predicted grades would impact on their next steps such as university entry. If there is a loss of faith in the grading system, this may negatively impact student aspirations and increase appeals, disrupting the process of confirming places at university.

4. Given the uncertainty over what the beginning of the university term in September will look like, there remains a question over how new students will be supported once they enter university, especially if the start of next year is disrupted.

Many universities have already indicated that several core elements of ‘university life’ for many, including lectures, societies, and other activities which cannot be done while maintaining social distancing, will not take place. The crisis will also

significantly impact current students from poorer backgrounds who rely on part-time employment to see them through their studies, and who work in sectors disproportionately impacted by the crisis.

5. The widening participation charities who usually support these young people are struggling to provide adequate support in the run up to university and college transition due to funding and changes to delivery, and it is possible that this difficulty will continue into next year.

Forthcoming research from The Centre for Education and Youth (CfEY) and University of Exeter into the impact on young people, suggests that all but a small handful of respondents said there were negative implications for their work, with the most prevalent implication being postponement or cancellation of planned activities with groups of students and/or teachers. One respondent to the research said 182 events had been cancelled so far. Where events have been postponed, knock-on effects were noted for the future, for example, much of the work they have spent the last 4 months planning is now postponed and finding new dates, re-booking events and so on will take time from the work that would have started in September.

⁶ Mountford-Zimdars, A and Moore, J (2020) Safety, food and well-being are a greater concern than attainment: The views from university widening participation staff in the context of Covid-19, Centre for Social Mobility, University of Exeter, Working Paper, forthcoming

6. Universities and FE colleges are entering a period of financial instability during a time of partial closure to students and with a decline in international student numbers.

“Research from London Economics suggests that universities could lose a cumulative total of £2.5bn next year from tuition fee income, with additional losses from ancillary sources of income”.⁷

Therefore, it is going to change how universities and FE colleges implement their access and participation plans. Widening participation outreach may face difficulties in the coming months as social distancing measure will limit campus activities and restrict wider events.

7. Responses must be based on the whole range of difficulties being faced by young people, and should be respectful of particular issues faced by certain groups or communities.

Attendees at our roundtable spoke of how Covid-19 is having a serious impact on young people’s mental health, as well as issues around hunger, lack of support from statutory services, and significant risks for a small number. A study by the mental health charity Young Minds found 83% of those under 25 said the pandemic had made their mental health worse.⁸ The rebuild beyond the pandemic must be led as a national effort. However, it is important to note that different regions, cities and towns will face contrasting challenges and require support from differing support services. Therefore, it is important responses are tailored to and led from within communities through local partnerships.

Whatever happens with Covid-19 in the next few months, the UPP Foundation believes that young people will need additional support whether they are i) going into employment as a school or college leaver or graduate, ii) entering higher education at university or college or iii) attending school and preparing for a transition year in 2021. Such support will be needed during the summer period, but also – just as importantly – into September 2020 and beyond.

The renewed civic action inspired by this crisis should be seized upon. Up and down the country, universities and their staff and students have been at the forefront of local community support, to help the NHS and vulnerable people. Collectively, the Government, universities, FE colleges, schools and charities should utilise this endeavour to empower young people to support their local communities – ‘levelling up’ disadvantaged young people and communities alike.

⁷ London Economics, “Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on university finances”, April 2020

⁸ Young Minds, “Coronavirus: impact on young people with mental health needs”, April 2020

Recommendations

We call upon Government, universities, FE colleges, schools and charities to take collective and co-ordinated action to ensure that:

- Young people are supported to overcome the educational and employment barriers that arise from the crisis.

- The agenda for widening participation to higher education is not disrupted or reversed.
- Students who do go to HE are able to stay in it, and to succeed.
- Civic activity is strengthened to support communities in need.

Specifically, we make four calls to action:

Recommendation 1:

We propose that the Government create a 'Community Leadership Academy'⁹ worth around £500m a year. This programme would support a 'civic army' of 75,000 paid young people who would be employed by coalitions of charities, universities and other bodies to work on a full or part-time basis for up to 6 months delivering local civic projects. As part of the programme, participants would be supported on their journey to enter, or remain in, higher education through universities or colleges.

Eligibility for the Academy should be for two main groups:

- a. Any young person under the age of 25, formerly eligible for pupil premium, who is not engaged in any form of education, employment or training.
- b. Any current university students – from undergraduate through to postgraduate – with priority given to those qualifying for maximum government support.

Participation at university in 2020/21 is uncertain¹⁰. Some students may decide that waiting for a year is a lower-risk option. Others may decide that alternative opportunities are few and far between, so opt to attend. But given the challenges with predicted grades, the loss of learning, the uncertain student experience in the Autumn, the reintroduction of a cap on student numbers, and the impact of the crisis on the jobs market, the educational and employment outlook for young people - whether they are school or college leavers, would-be university students in an enforced gap year, or a current tertiary student at university or college - is really difficult.



⁹ With grateful thanks to King's College London, from whose own similar scheme entitled "Civic Leadership Academy" we have adapted the name

¹⁰ Up to 23% of students indicated that they may defer their place if universities are not "operating as usual". London Economics, op. cit.

If the pandemic is not to lead to a permanent scarring effect on a cohort of young people, they should be supported to overcome these challenges and given the same opportunities other generations have enjoyed who haven't entered this vital transition into and throughout early adulthood in the midst of a global crisis.

In particular, for young people who decide not to, or are unable to, attend university this year evidence shows (for disadvantaged students at least) they are likely to opt-out of higher education altogether after a year away from formal education.¹¹ These students form part of a wider group of younger school leavers who may have considered university in the past but now, after several years out of school, are facing a harder barrier to overcome. These young people will face a double disadvantage as the jobs market is looking weaker as a result of the pandemic than it has done for decades.

For poorer students who do go to university, fewer opportunities for paid part-time work may result in them dropping out of university as they are unable to financially support themselves through the year. The pandemic may also impact their ability to enjoy an immersive student experience – so vital to developing social capital, forging life-long friendships, and supporting a sense of belonging and wellbeing.

The Community Leadership Academy would be designed to address both issues. It would operate as a fund to directly employ up to 75,000 young people for a period of up to 6 months – paying them a Real Living Wage as well as providing the participants themselves with skills, and support to progress into higher education at college or university should they wish to. While employed in the Academy, the young people would carry out civic projects in their local community.

The intention is that such jobs would be wide ranging but would have a broad civic purpose – supporting other young people, working in local communities, or offering public services. The participants would spend a period of time – perhaps as much as 20% of the week, mirroring an Apprenticeship - engaged in off-the-job training and support focussed on building their skills and supporting them, if they wish to, to apply to or remain in higher education.

Participants would be employed by, and deployed by, coalitions of local organisations (each coalition would need to identify a lead organisation) who would be funded by the national Academy to deliver existing work. This would avoid the need for a complex new tendering exercise or creation of a large scale new organisation – and instead, build upon the infrastructure of so many civic and third sector organisations in the country already working on such projects, who could turbocharge their efforts with the support of additional paid staff. There are numerous examples where the CLA could be relevant. It could help scale up schemes where students read to residents in care homes (online or in person, if measures allow), provide mentoring to younger school aged pupils, support cultural and arts organisations' outreach programmes, provide additional resource to local charities and civil society groups, help with local organisations' business functions and much more besides. Critically, activities should adopt the principles of the civic university movement. They should be co-produced with young people and local communities, to ensure they are tailored to what young people can offer and the real needs of each place. The Academy would fund programmes (via a bidding process) based on the quality of the civic activity, and the commitment to supporting participants' future employment and education prospects.

¹¹ Crawford and Cribb, "Gap year takers: uptake, trends and long term outcomes", November 2012

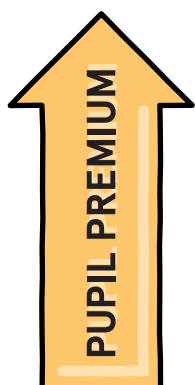
Eligibility to join the Academy would be made for two groups:

- Any young person under the age of 25 not in education, employment or training, and who was formerly eligible for the Pupil Premium at any time between the ages of 11 and 16. They would join the Academy full time for six months.
- Any current university student - from undergraduate through to postgraduate – with priority given to those qualifying for maximum Government support. They would join the Academy part-time, for up to ten hours a week.

On the basis of 25,000 current students and 50,000 full-time young people participating in the scheme across the country on a Living Wage basis for six months, we estimate the scheme would cost in the region of £500m for a six-month cohort.

As well as supporting the participants this programme will make a transformative difference to vulnerable people in local communities. The UPP Foundation Civic University Commission said that higher education institutions are deeply committed to their host towns and cities¹², and the pandemic has clearly illustrated that civic commitment. Yet the financial consequences of the crisis may result in the loss of important community programmes, such as activities with local schools, cultural centres, business and civil society groups (highly valued by local communities) if institutions have to limit resources. By providing a civic army of young people, the Community Leadership Academy would ensure that community activities are not only maintained but strengthened.

¹² The UPP Foundation Civic University Commission's final report from 2019 [Truly Civic: Strengthening the connection between universities and their places](#) includes examples of projects and local partnerships which could be enhanced by the Community Leadership Academy.



Recommendation 2:

Throughout the next school year (September 2020 – July 2021), the Government should provide a temporary uplift of the Pupil Premium – and a temporary extension to post-16 eligibility. This time limited fund would be used to support ongoing additional interventions for this group and others in schools and colleges to prevent a reversal in widening participation progress. Specifically, this should be aimed at creating wrap-around academic and pastoral services, provided either by the schools and colleges or other charities and third parties, for those who have likely been disadvantaged by learning loss and less likely to have the wider networks in order to ameliorate it themselves.

It is very possible that, as noted above, some form of support will be made available to school aged children this summer – drawing from various proposals including those of the EEF and the Sutton Trust, Rob Halfon MP, Teach First, and CfEY. We support the principles of such schemes, and encourage Government to adopt them – including, critically, additional funding to make them run.

We do believe, though, that catch up across the summer period is unlikely to fully address either the breadth or the depth of the various educational and emotional harms that will have occurred during Covid-19. As such, we recommend that throughout the next school year (September 2020 – July 2021), the Government provides a temporary uplift of the Pupil Premium, to support ongoing additional

interventions for pupils are more likely to be disadvantaged by learning loss and less likely to have the wider networks in order to ameliorate it themselves.

In addition, current year 11 (next year's year 12s) have been significantly affected – many of whom (from disadvantaged backgrounds in particular) will be facing retakes after six months off school. There's also evidence that in the short-term at least, summer learning loss is worse for older age groups and those closest to exams. ***It is also vital that this is extended to post-16 provision*** so students from disadvantaged backgrounds studying A levels and those that need to retake GCSE qualifications, will receive extra support.

Others, such as the Education Policy Institute, have suggested that doubling the Pupil Premium would be the right amount¹³. Whatever the increase, as with all Pupil Premium funds, it should be up to schools and colleges to decide how best to use this funding – and possibly widening its scope to pupils who themselves are not directly covered by Pupil Premium funding if appropriate. We envisage that it should be tightly focussed on the additional needs caused by Covid-19, well-evidenced and drawn from the expertise and capacity of wider third parties, including statutory services. It should be delivered through schools and FE Colleges, as the universal service for these young people. As an immediate priority funds can be used to continue support for widening participation and access to higher education delivered by existing third-party charities and other organisations. Other areas the fund could cover include:

- Ongoing support for high quality academic catch up, delivered under any version of tutoring funded by the Government during the summer period.
- Accessing provision from the Community Leadership Academy workforce as in Recommendation 1 – drawn from current school leavers or students, and the services that the CLA will offer.
- Accessing broader experiences to build cultural capital, for example on character education.
- Supporting young people's wider needs, such as mental or physical health, or other social welfare support.

¹³ <https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/disadvantage-gap-covid-19/>

Recommendation 3:

The Government should fund a relevant (or small coalition of relevant) sector body[ies] to co-ordinate and design a 'Covid Support Programme' that all universities and colleges are encouraged to offer. This programme will provide good practice guidelines to support incoming first year higher education students, recognising the disruption they have faced.

First-year students will have faced disruption to learning since April. Therefore, they will need extra support. It is clear from the roundtable that many universities are already considering what this looks like – but there is a danger of duplicated thinking and effort.

To counter this, we recommend that a holistic 'Post-Covid Support Programme' be designed by a relevant (or small coalition of relevant) sector body[ies] in partnership with a group of colleges and universities. This guidance should be created at speed by September and establish a good practice suite of materials and activities. There would be a particular focus on support to first-year students recognising the disruption they will have faced in their transition year. This guidance will support universities and colleges develop their offer this year, so that they can provide clarity and transparency about the student experience before the start of the academic year.

Students starting in September could have a significantly different experience to what they pictured. Learning will be online or social distanced lectures, with student halls not the traditional social bonhomie and social events minimal, with mask-wearing and temperature checks a regular future.

Currently universities and colleges are adopting different approaches to teaching next year, so the guidance would have to be flexible to support institutions providing a primarily online, face-to-face or blended experience (although we accept this is a very changeable situation so there may be more uniformity by September). It will clearly have to be appropriate for students living in halls of residences and those 'commuting' too.



While this recommendation does not offer an exhaustive list of practices, we suggest it should include guidance and good practice examples on:

1. The teaching and learning experience

Supporting students to get the best out of their education, however it is delivered. Resources for staying motivated/study skills, extenuating circumstances procedures that will be fair and reasonable in accommodating the effects and after-effects of Covid-19.

2. Student mental health and welfare

How to deliver a 'whole university approach' to mental health (as developed by the Student Minds University Mental Health Charter) in 2020/2021. This will need to include developing procedures and practice for how to pick up on students being unwell when staff are physically distant from them. This is important as informal signals of ill health in a socially distanced or online world will be less clear.

3. Extra-curricular experience

University life includes a combination of freshers, societies, sport, volunteering, living in halls, and ultimately developing new and lifelong friendships. To many students these formative experiences are key motivations for accessing higher education. These motivations are entirely rational, as they build social capital and communities, so important to a student's wellbeing and future prospects. Guidance should support universities develop ways to run or supplement these activities safely. In addition, the guidance should help universities provide a safe and enjoyable halls of residence experience to those living in student accommodation.

With a long list of challenges, it significantly raises the risk of student drop-out. It is therefore imperative that universities have the appropriate support mechanisms in place to deal with student concerns and worries. All those beginning university in September need to feel reassured that although the 'new normal' is different, they will receive as full a university experience as possible in a safe environment.



Recommendation 4:

Building on the outstanding progress already made in moving open day experiences online, all universities and colleges should commit to running fully open and accessible virtual open days for all students in the Autumn term of 2020.

UK universities set international standards for virtual open days. Continuing travel disruption and restrictions on large gatherings make it necessary to expand on existing virtual open days to reflect the experience of physical open days.

As well as a short-term solution to the problems caused by Covid-19 for physical open days, virtual open days should remain as a permanent feature beyond Covid-19. They are a cost-effective way to reach students who are unable to visit in person due to distance, or cost.

This would build on many good examples of virtual open days, such as those run by Nottingham Trent University (NTU) and others – which offer online tours as well as full virtual open days including live discussions. From our analysis of best practice on delivering virtual open days we recommend the following to be part of packages:

- Applicants can explore the accommodation, teaching facilities and campus using 360-degree videos
- Webinars with current students and lecturers
- Live Q&A session with current students
- Taster lectures



Appendix: Individuals and organisations who attended the 6 May roundtable

Name	Role	Organisation
Anand Shukla	CEO	Brightside
Anne-Marie Canning MBE	CEO	The Brilliant Club
Barbara Herring	Acting Head of UK Recruitment and Widening Participation	Newcastle University
Professor Becky Francis	CEO	Education Endowment Foundation
Carl Cullinane	Associate Director - Research and Policy	Sutton Trust
Charlotte Hollom	Head of Pathways and Enrichment	Ark
David Woolley	Director of Student and Community Engagement	Nottingham Trent University
Ed Vainker OBE	Executive Principal	Reach Academy
Greg Burke	Director	South Yorkshire Futures
Joanna Marchant	Head of Widening Participation	King's College London
Loic Menzies	CEO	Centre for Education and Youth
Nathan Sansom	CEO	The Access Project
Penelope Griffen	Director of Higher Education and Impact	The Bridge Group
Dr Rachel Carr OBE	CEO + Co-Founder	IntoUniversity
Richard Brabner	Director	UPP Foundation
Rowena Hackwood	CEO	David Ross Education Trust
Russell Hobby	CEO	Teach First
Dr Sarah Dauncey	Head of Policy	The Bridge Group
Sarah Waite	CEO	Get Further

“Participation in the roundtable was under the Chatham House rule. Attendance does not imply agreement or otherwise with any of the detail of the report or its recommendations, which are that of the UPP Foundation only. In addition, we’d like to thank Chris Hale, Chris Millward, Mary Stuart and Rosie Tressler for their comments and suggestion (although not necessarily approval) on draft versions of the report.”

