



DEBATE PACK

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Funding for further education

By Aaron Kulakiewicz
Susan Hubble
Philip Loft
Paul Bolton

Summary

There will be a debate in Westminster Hall on Funding for further education between 2.00 and 3.30 pm on 4 November 2020. The debate has been initiated by Gill Furniss MP.

The further education (FE) sector is large and diverse with a wide range of providers and around 1.7 million students. Financially the sector has been through a prolonged period of funding cuts which has led to reductions in provision and falling learner numbers.

The UK Government has allocated an extra £300 million for further education colleges and sixth forms for 2020–21 - this will lead to a real-terms increase in spending per learner of over 4% but will still leave spending per student over 7% below its level in 2010–11 in colleges and over 20% below in sixth forms.

A 2020 report by the National Audit Office concluded that “overall the financial health of the college sector remains fragile”.

The Covid pandemic has impacted on the FE sector in a number of ways, including: the change to providing online learning and the cost of supplying laptops to disadvantaged students, and provision for the increased number of students as a result of higher than expected examination results in the summer and increased demand among adults for re-training.

In June 2020 the Association of Colleges called for an extra £3.6 billion to upskill the 764,000 people most at risk economically post-Covid 19.

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

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1. The further education sector in England

The further education (FE) sector is large and diverse with a wide range of providers and significant numbers of students. In 2018/19, the Association of Colleges' (AoC) publication [College Key Facts 2018/19](#) stated that there were over 257 general, tertiary and specialist further education colleges in England. These colleges teach all levels of education from basic life skills courses up to higher technical and degree level courses. Around one million adults and 660,000 young people study or train in colleges.¹ The Augar Review [report](#) (May 2019) contains an overview of the FE sector and issues around funding and student support.

1.1 Further education funding

Information on FE funding can be found in two library briefing papers:

- [Adult further education funding in England since 2010](#), 16 December 2019
- [16-19 education funding in England since 2010](#), 19 February 2020

The FE funding system is complex. FE providers are allocated funds from different sources depending on the type of courses provided and on the age of students. Funds can be allocated through various funding streams including: the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) Adult Education Budget, 16-19 Funding and Community Learning, and through apprenticeship funding routes.

In 2018/19, **colleges' income totalled £6.5 billion**, of which £5.1 billion (78%) was public funding. Most college funding follows the learner.²

A report by the Institute for Fiscal Studies, [2019 annual report on education spending in England](#) (September 2019), gave an overview of FE funding over the previous ten years which showed that funding for the FE sector increased in 2020/21 following a sustained period of funding cuts:

- Further education colleges and sixth forms have faced the largest cuts in recent years. **Between 2010–11 and 2018–19, spending per student fell by 12% in real terms in 16–18 colleges and by 23% in school sixth forms.** Following on from larger cuts during the 1990s and lower growth than most other stages of education during the 2000s, further education spending per 16- to 18-year-old is due to be only about 13% greater in 2018–19 than it was about 30 years earlier in 1989–90.
- Funding is lowest in school sixth forms and sixth-form colleges. In the 2018–19 academic year, we calculate that **spending per student was £4,800 in sixth-form colleges,**

¹ National Audit Office (NAO), [Financial sustainability of colleges in England](#), September 2020, p14

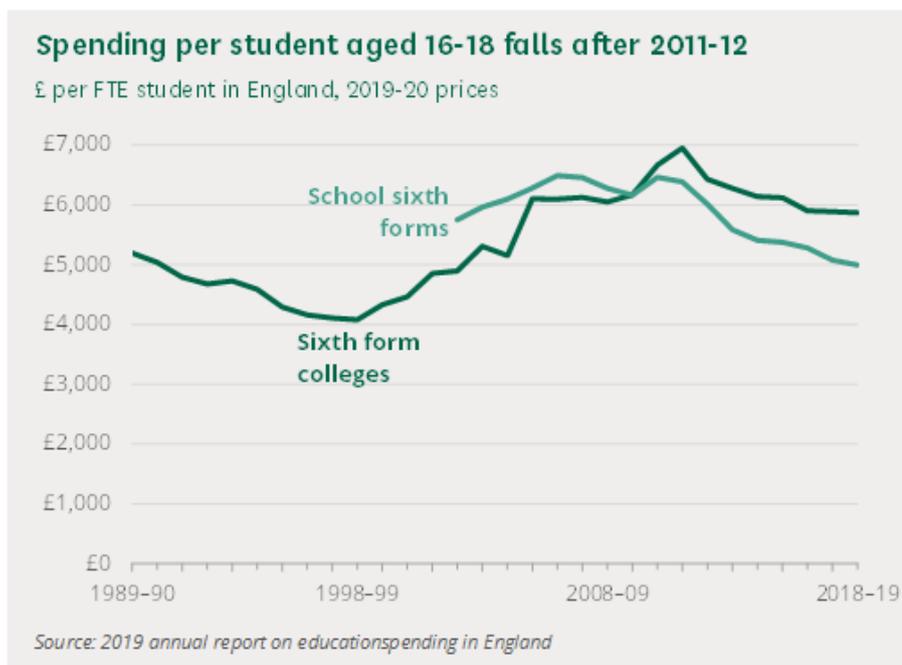
² [Ibid](#), p5

£4,900 in school sixth forms and £5,900 per young person in further education colleges. These differences mainly result from a funding system that provides more to vocational and complex courses, as well as to pupils from deprived backgrounds.

- The government has allocated an **extra £300 million for further education colleges and sixth forms for 2020–21** (in 2019–20 prices). This will lead to a real-terms increase in spending per pupil of over 4% in 2020–21, but will still leave spending per student over 7% below its level in 2010–11 in colleges and over 20% below in sixth forms.
- **Fully reversing cuts since 2010–11 would cost a further £1.1 billion over and above existing plans by 2022–23** (£730 million for school sixth forms and £320 million for 16–18 colleges). This increases to about £1.4 billion to ensure that spending on T levels is additional to an unchanged level of spending per student.
- **Total spending on adult education (excluding apprenticeships) has fallen by nearly two-thirds since 2003–04.** This combines cuts of 32% up to 2009–10 and 47% between 2009–10 and 2018–19. These cuts have mainly been driven by falls in learner numbers, which have fallen from 4.4 million in 2004–05 to 1.5 million in 2017–18. The recent Augar review of post-18 education has recommended reversing a range of the cuts to adult education.
- **Spending on adult education and training is increasingly focused on apprenticeships.** Of the £5.3 billion spent on adult education and apprenticeships in 2003–04, about 21% was spent on apprenticeships or work-based learning. By 2018–19, this fraction rose to 54%. Specific spending on apprenticeships rose by 36% in real terms between 2009–10 and 2018–19. Despite this, the government still seems likely to miss its target for 3 million new apprenticeship starts between 2015 and 2020 by a wide margin. However, an increasing share of individuals on apprenticeships are now on A-level-equivalent courses or higher (over 60% to date in 2018–19 as compared with around 40% in 2011–12) which generally offer higher economic returns.³

The following chart looks at changes to real levels of spending per student over the past three decades. It includes school sixth forms and sixth form colleges only, not students aged 16–18 in general FE colleges. Spending in school sixth forms peaked in 2010–11 and at sixth form colleges in 2011–12. Since then spending has fallen by 23% in school sixth forms (around £1,500 per student) and 16% in sixth form colleges (£1,100 per student).

³ Institute for Fiscal Studies, [2019 annual report on education spending in England](#), September 2019



A National Audit Office (NAO) report, [Financial sustainability of colleges in England](#) (September 2020) stated that “financial pressures have led to colleges narrowing their provision and reducing broader support for students, which is likely to have detrimental effects on students and skills development”. The report concluded that “**overall the financial health of the college sector remains fragile**”.⁴

Devolution of the Adult Education Budget (AEB)

Currently, around 50% of the AEB is devolved to seven mayoral combined authorities and to the Mayor of London. These authorities are now responsible for providing AEB-funded adult education for their residents and allocating the AEB to providers.

Impact of Covid on FE finances

Two library briefings discussed the impact of the Covid pandemic on the FE sector:

- [Coronavirus: Update implications for the further and higher education sectors](#), 21 May 2020
- [Coronavirus: Easing lockdown restrictions in FE and HE in England](#), 2 September 2020.

On 15 June 2020 the AoC published [Rebuild: A skills led recovery plan](#). The report called for **an extra £3.6 billion** to upskill the 764,000 people most at risk economically post Covid 19:

The Association of Colleges warns of increased demand for college places as high unemployment crowds young people out of the labour market; large numbers of young people needing support to catch up as a result of lost learning in lockdown; reductions in apprenticeship places, a large number of apprentice redundancies and a shortage of new places for apprentices; and large numbers of adults requiring

⁴ NAO, [Financial sustainability of colleges in England](#), September 2020, pp8, 12

training to help them move from struggling sectors into those that recover more quickly, or ⁵even grow.

A £3.6 billion package of incentives for business, support for students and investment in colleges would help the 760,000 people most at risk of suffering economically in this recession. It would: guarantee a high quality, education or training place for every 16 to 18 year old, funded to meet their needs and the learning lost; offer a suite of work focussed training programmes, including expanded traineeships and apprenticeships designed to get young people into jobs as soon as they become available; provide support for adults who lose their jobs to train or retrain flexibly up to higher level technical / professional level, aimed at getting them back into the workforce as quickly as possible, with additional training to manage their transition once back in work.⁶

On 10 June 2020 the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) asked for a one-off [£8.6bn post-pandemic skills package](#):

AELP says a large chunk – £3.6 billion – of the “costed” proposal should be spent on subsidising wages for half a million young apprentices to protect them from redundancy, while most of the rest should go towards tripling the existing annual adult education budget to £4.5 billion.

[...]

For adult workers, AELP believes that the government should “park” plans for its £3 billion National Skills Fund and £100 million National Retraining Scheme and instead channel the funding mostly into “well-established adult skills programmes”.

The annual adult education budget (AEB) of £1.5 billion “needs increasing to £4.5 billion to help tackle mass unemployment and support vital reskilling for those who have remained in work”.⁷

Department for Education (DfE) [Guidance](#) issued in October 2020 said that **extra 16-19 tuition funding** would be provided in 2020 to 2021 to mitigate the disruption to learning arising from coronavirus.⁸

Funding for post-16 remote learning-

The DfE funded a scheme to provide some school age pupils with laptops, tablets and internet connection during the pandemic, but this scheme only covered pupils of compulsory school age – not sixth form students. The Government guidance on provision of laptops is set out at: [Get laptops and tablets for children who cannot attend school due to coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

The DfE made clear however that both schools and FE colleges were expected to fund additional support for disadvantaged 16-19-year olds. In October 2020 the DfE set out in [guidance](#) that the **Adult Education Budget and the 16-19 Bursary Fund could be used to provide IT** for disadvantaged students:

⁵ [Ibid.](#), p12

⁶ Association of Colleges, [REBUILD: A Skills Led Recovery Plan, June 2020](#)

⁷ [“AELP calls for one-off £8.6bn post-pandemic skills package”](#), *FE Week*, 10 June 2020

⁸ Department for Education (DfE), [Further education \(FE\) autumn term guidance](#), 16 October 2020

Support for young people who are unable to access remote digital education

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund provides financial support to help students overcome specific financial barriers to participation so that they can remain in education. This may include the provision of devices and connectivity support. As set out in [16 to 19 Bursary Fund](#) guidance, you should decide what support a student needs on the basis of individual assessment, in line with bursary fund rules that all support must be based on individual circumstances and needs.

We are introducing a change to the adult education budget (AEB) funding rules for the 2020 to 2021 academic year. This is to enable providers to use learner support funds to purchase IT devices for students (aged 19+) and to help them meet students' IT connectivity costs, where these costs are a barrier to accessing or continuing in their training.

The introduction of this additional flexibility into the funding rules will be accommodated within providers existing AEB for 2020 to 2021.⁹

Organisations such as the AoC, have raised concerns about FE providers' ability to meet additional costs, including for technology, and have called on the Government to extend the pre-16 schemes to the FE sector – see their September 2020 [submission to the Comprehensive Spending Review](#).

In October 2020, the Government [announced](#) a package of 80 grants of £1,000 that can be used to provide additional training and support for mentors and coaches specialising in assisting FE teachers with remote education.¹⁰

⁹ DfE, [Further education \(FE\) autumn term guidance](#), 16 October 2020

¹⁰ GOV.UK, "[New remote education support for schools, colleges and teachers](#)", 1 October 2020

2. Parliamentary material

2.1 Debates

[Colleges and Skills: Covid-19](#)

20 Oct 2020 | House of Commons | 682 cc361-380WH

Motion, That this House has considered the role of colleges in a skills-led recovery from the covid-19 outbreak. Motion lapsed. Sitting adjourned without Question put.

[Equality of Funding: Post-16 Education](#)

25 Feb 2020 | House of Commons | 672 cc30-55WH

Motion that this House has considered equality of funding for post-16 education. Agreed to on question.

2.2 Parliamentary Questions

[Further Education: Coronavirus](#)

14 Oct 2020 | 100538

Asked by: Andrew Lewer

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if his Department will (a) amend the delivery of the Study Programme for 16-18 year olds attending further education colleges to allow for catch-up learning rather than industrial placements and work experience as a result of the covid-19 outbreak and (b) take steps to ensure that colleges that are unable to offer full content but able to deliver the required hours under that programme do not have their funding reduced.

Answering Member: Gillian Keegan | Department: Department for Education

Industry placements and work experience for 16 to 18 year olds are important components of a student's study programme, providing genuine insight to the world of work and allowing students to gain valuable skills. Ofqual is currently working with awarding organisations to see what adaptations are appropriate and necessary for students to be able to complete their studies, as well as catch up on missed learning due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Adaptations to work experience placements that are part of their qualifications will also be considered.

Where a college or other provider is unable to deliver a work experience placement as part of a study programme they will still receive their full funding allocation if they continue to deliver the planned hours by replacing the work experience with other eligible activity relevant to the student's study programme.

[Further Education: Coronavirus](#)

21 Sep 2020 | 90202

Asked by: Gill Furniss

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding available to further education colleges to provide remote learning and learning packages to students unable to physically attend those colleges as a result of covid-19.

Answering Member: Gillian Keegan | Department: Department for Education

During the COVID-19 outbreak, further education colleges have responded swiftly to deliver education to students remotely and many have made enormous strides in the delivery of online learning, for which we are very grateful.

On 31 August 2019, the government announced that an extra £400 million would be invested in 16-19 education in 2020-21. This is the largest injection of money in a single year since 2010 and represents an increase of 7% in overall 16-19 funding. As part of this, the base rate of 16-19 funding will increase by 4.7% in the 2020/21 academic year, from £4,000 to £4,188.

We are also continuing to invest in education and skills training for adults through the Adult Education Budget (AEB) (£1.34 billion in 2020/21).

Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) allocations for 2020 to 2021 have been confirmed, and payments will be made in line with the national profile, which has been confirmed in the relevant 2020 to 2021 funding rules. This should provide the funding certainty required to seek to address the impact of responding to COVID-19.

To support remote learning specifically, we have ensured that colleges are able to gain access to devices and connectivity for students facing financial barriers to participation through the 16-19 Bursary Fund. This was always possible with the 16-19 Bursary Fund and to complement this, we have introduced a change to the ESFA and AEB Funding Rules for the 2020/21 academic year, to enable providers to use their Learner Support funds to purchase IT devices and meet learners' IT connectivity costs.

The department has also funded professional development support for staff to improve their skills and confidence in delivering online learning through funding the Education and Training Foundation and the EdTech Demonstrator Programme which delivers free training for further education providers. We are also funding 7 College Collaboration Fund projects to develop new high-quality digital curriculum content which will begin to be available for use by the sector from the Autumn.

The department is looking carefully at all elements of further educational funding, in preparation for the forthcoming Spending Review.

[Further Education College Finances](#)

07 Sep 2020 | 679 c349

Asked by: Gill Furniss

Further education colleges provide lifelong learning, and they will be essential if we are to provide the levelling up agenda that the Prime Minister speaks so fondly of. However, coronavirus has left many with a black hole in their funding. We understand that it could be as much as £2

billion, and at the moment we are facing unprecedented demand. I fear that the Government do not understand the value of further education to the economy and the new skills we require in this country. FE colleges are flexible and adaptable, and they can help many young people who have been let down by this Government during the fiasco of the GCSE and A-level results. Will the Minister confirm today that she will look into this and provide the necessary funding, which, according to the Sixth Form Colleges Association, should be £4,760 per year for 16 to 17-year-olds and 18 year olds?

Answering Member: Gillian Keegan | Department: Education

Let me assure the hon. Lady that we absolutely have FE colleges at the very heart and centre. We are planning a big reform of the sector, and as somebody who went to FE college myself from the age of 16, I am absolutely passionate about this area. The colleges have done an amazing job in responding to covid-19 to support students throughout coronavirus. We continue to pay the grant funding and monthly payments for 2019-20, and will do so for 2020-21. We have also provided catch-up funding of £96 million for small group tutoring for those disadvantaged students who need it. On top of that, we have allocated £200 million to enable FE colleges to improve their buildings. We have a team of officials right now working with every college that needs that support. We are working with 40, and so far only five have needed financial assistance, but we will keep this under review.

[Further Education College Finances](#)

07 Sep 2020 | 679 c349

Asked by: Mr Toby Perkins

The Government's own commissioner for further education has warned that as many as 40 colleges are currently at risk of running out of cash, and despite the measures that the Minister has just spoken of, the Association of Colleges is warning of a £2 billion cash shortfall. We also know from the May report that the Government have inadequate mechanisms for identifying colleges in crisis, so the truth is that all those measures that the Minister speaks about simply are not enough. We need far greater action if we are going to see our colleges and their pupils and staff not being let down and left in financial crisis this autumn.

Answering Member: Gillian Keegan | Department: Education

I thank the hon. Gentleman for his question. Just so we are clear, we have provided grant funding to the FE sector, with more than £3 billion for a full year, and it gratefully received that. We have also announced an increase of funding of £400 million for 2020-21, an increase of 7% in overall funding. As he rightly said—and I said in answer to the earlier question—we are working with 40 colleges to structure their finances and helping them to get the advice and support they need. If they need emergency funding, as has been available, it will be available to them as well. We have a team of people working on this all the time, and the colleges accept that we are putting our arms around them to ensure that they get through this period.

[Adult Education: Coronavirus](#)

21 Jul 2020 | 75375

Asked by: Smyth, Karin

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the provision of adult skills.

Answering Member: Gillian Keegan | Department: Department for Education

We are aware that the COVID-19 outbreak has caused disruption to people of all ages in education, in particular lost teaching time.

Colleges and providers swiftly moved more learning online to allow students to continue with studies remotely.

We want to get all further education learners back into education settings as soon as the scientific advice allows because it is the best place for them to learn, and because we know how important it is for their mental wellbeing to have social interactions with their peers and teachers.

Many further education providers are already open for some learners who are 16 to 19 and adults, subject to the required safety measures being met. From Autumn 2020, all learners will return to a full high-quality education programme delivered by their college or post-16 learning provider.

We announced on 20 July that we will be providing a one-off, ring-fenced grant of up to £96 million for colleges, sixth forms and all 16 to 19 providers, to provide small group tutoring activity for disadvantaged 16 to 19 year old students whose studies have been disrupted.

[Education: Coronavirus](#)

14 Jul 2020 | 69419

Asked by: Davey, Sir Edward

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what (a) funding and (b) other support the Government has allocated to (i) the early years sector, (ii) primary schools, (iii) secondary schools; and (iv) further education institutions during the covid-19 outbreak.

Answering Member: Nick Gibb | Department: Department for Education

On 17 March 2020, the Chancellor confirmed that the Government will continue to pay local authorities as normal for free early years entitlement places for 2, 3 and 4 year olds to support providers. On 18 March 2020, the Government also announced a business rates holiday for many nurseries in England for the 2020 to 2021 tax year.

Many early years providers also receive private income. The Government has therefore clarified the circumstances in which early years providers can seek support through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS). It has also provided information to early years providers on the Small Business Grant Fund and the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan. Childminders are less likely to be employers, and therefore are less likely to be eligible for support via the CJRS. We have therefore directed childminders towards guidance for the Self Employment Income Support Scheme.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-a-grant-through-the-self-employment-income-support-scheme>.

Local Authority maintained schools (including pupil referral units) and academies (including free schools) continue to receive their budgets as usual, regardless of any periods of partial or complete closure. This will ensure that they are able to continue to pay their staff, and meet their other regular financial commitments.

We have put in place additional support to help schools meet exceptional costs they may incur as a result of COVID-19. These costs may arise as result of keeping premises open during the holidays, providing support for free school meals for eligible children who are not attending school (where those costs are not covered by the national voucher scheme described below), and additional cleaning.

We have provided a centrally-funded national voucher scheme to make sure eligible pupils can continue to access free school meals, given they are not able to attend school, including through the Easter school holidays. We have also announced a COVID-19 Summer Food Fund which will enable children who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals to be supported over the summer holiday period.

We have made a commitment to boost remote education, including by providing devices and internet access for disadvantaged year 10 pupils, and those who receive support from a social worker and care leavers. We are ensuring every school that wants it has access to free, expert technical support to access Google and Microsoft's education platforms, along with training on how to use the resources most effectively and peer support. We have also supported the Oak National Academy, which is a totally new initiative, assembling video lessons and resources for any teacher in the country to make use of if they wish to do so.

We have launched a £1 billion COVID-19 "catch-up" package to directly tackle the impact of lost teaching time, comprising £650 million to be shared across state primary and secondary schools over the 2020/21 academic year. Whilst headteachers will decide how the money is spent, the Government has supported the publication of the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) guidance, which sets out a range of evidence-based approaches, including small group tuition.

A National Tutoring Programme, worth up to £350 million, which will increase access to high-quality tuition for the most disadvantaged young people, with delivery starting later in the autumn term.

Further Education and Apprenticeship providers include further education colleges, sixth form colleges, designated institutions, independent training providers, adult and community learning providers, and higher education institutions to the extent that they provide further education or apprenticeships. They are funded in 3 main ways: by grant; under a direct contract for services with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA); or through a funding agreement with the ESFA (where provision is delivered under a contract directly with an employer, or through advanced learner loan funded learning).

The ESFA will continue to pay grant funded providers their scheduled monthly profiled payments for the remainder of the 2019 to 2020 funding year. We have also published guidance on how providers can access the wider Government support packages, including the CJRS. Some providers may also be eligible for the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme or Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and we have directed them to guidance on eligibility. Where a provider receives Adult Education Budget (AEB), or apprenticeship funding, as part of a direct contract for services with the ESFA, and is at risk financially, they may be eligible for support (subject to meeting additional criteria) as part of the ESFA's post-16 provider relief scheme.

On 8 July, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor, announced a £1.6 billion package of investment in further education and skills. This investment will scale up employment support schemes, training and apprenticeships to help people looking for a job and, in doing so, will stimulate the further education market.

[Further Education: Coronavirus](#)

08 Jul 2020 | 66825

Asked by: Andrew Rosindell

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what additional financial support his Department is providing to colleges during the covid-19 outbreak.

Answering Member: Gillian Keegan | Department: Department for Education

We have protected grant funding to the further education sector - the Education Skills and Funding Agency will continue to pay grant funded providers their scheduled monthly profiled payments for the remainder of the 2019/20 funding year and for 2020/21.

For colleges in significant financial difficulties the existing support arrangements remain in place, including short-term emergency funding.

The College Collaboration Fund (CCF) has been adapted to support colleges to respond to current challenges including developing new ways of working. We will let providers know the outcome of their application after 10 July.

We will be increasing investment in education and training of 16 to 19 year olds by £400 million for the 2020/21 academic year, including an increased base rate, and more funding for high cost and high value subjects. We are also investing £1.5 billion over five years in capital spending for further education colleges.

On 29 June, my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister announced a transformative ten-year construction programme to deliver the world-class education and training needed to get Britain back on its feet. This includes £200 million for urgent repairs and upgrades to further education colleges this year.

[Covid-19 Education Catch-up Fund](#)

08 Jul 2020 | HL6130

Asked by: Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government why colleges were not included in the £1 billion student catch-up programme.

Answering Member: Baroness Berridge | Department: Department for Education

Many further education providers are already open for 16 to 19 learners on the first year of a two-year study programme and all learners under 19 years old can be offered a face-to-face meeting before the end of the summer term - subject to the required safety measures being met. Our guidance on how to phase the return of learners in further education is underpinned by our latest understanding of COVID-19 and we will continue to be led by the scientific evidence.

From Autumn 2020, all learners, including those who are 16 to 19 and adults will return to a full high-quality education programme delivered by their college or post 16 learning provider. This is as well as continuing to re-introduce face to-face support for 16 to 19 learners who are:

- in their first year of a study programme
- taking their exams next year

Colleges should plan on the basis that, from September 2020, all learners will return to a full high-quality education programme.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) will continue to pay grant funded providers their scheduled monthly profiled payments for the remainder of the 2019/20 funding year and for 2020/21 which should give colleges the security of their agreed funding allocations. For colleges that are experiencing significant financial difficulties, the existing support arrangements remain in place, including short-term emergency funding. The further education commissioner and his highly experienced team are able to talk through plans, concerns and issues as are local ESFA teams.

My right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister announced a £1 billion support package for schools to help pupils catch up on lost teaching time. It is our ambition that all students have the chance to make up for lost education and where breaks in learning have been required, we want to ensure learners can resume their 'classroom' learning and continue to a successful completion. We will continue to work with the sector to establish the best way to support students to make up for the disruption due to COVID-19.

Adult Education: Disadvantaged**11 May 2020 | 42023****Asked by: Chi Onwurah**

To ask the Secretary of State, what steps he is taking to increase participation rates in adult education by people in lower socio-economic groups.

Answering Member: Gillian Keegan | Department: Department for Education

The department recognises the importance of adult education in supporting the economy and tackling disadvantage. Participation in adult education will only become more important as people live longer lives and automation and technological change the profile of the jobs market.

We are continuing to invest in adult education to support people from all backgrounds. Most recently, we announced an extra £3 billion, over the course of this Parliament, for a new National Skills Fund (NSF) to help people learn new skills and prepare for the economy of the future.

The NSF will transform the lives of people who are not in work or who wish to improve their qualifications as well as people who are keen to return to work from raising a family or who wish to change to a different career. It will not only make this country more prosperous but will also make it fairer.

We are also continuing to invest in the Adult Education Budget (AEB) (we are investing £1.34 billion in 2019/20 and 2020/21). The AEB fully funds or co-funds skills provision for eligible adults aged 19 and above from pre-entry to level 3 in order to support them to gain the skills that they need for work, an apprenticeship or further learning.

Through the AEB, providers are able to fully fund learners who are employed and in receipt of a low wage and who cannot contribute towards the cost of co-funding fees. The AEB also funds colleges and providers to help adult learners to overcome barriers which prevent them from taking part in learning. This includes Learner Support, which supports learners with a specific financial hardship.

For the 2019/20 academic year, we are continuing to support those in work on low incomes to access the AEB through a trial, which allows providers to fully fund eligible learners on low wages. This directly supports social mobility by enabling those that have moved out of unemployment, and are low paid or low-skilled, to further progress.

2.3 Early Day Motions

[Support for Further Education colleges](#)

EDM 948 (session 2019-21)

01 October 2020

Robert Halfon

That this House recognises the unique role that colleges play in supporting people, employers and communities to thrive and central role in rebuilding the economy; endorses the vision of the Independent Commission on the College of the Future for a strategic and expanded role for colleges in empowering people with opportunities for lifelong learning, boosting business productivity and innovation, and strengthening every community; welcomes the Government's Lifetime Skills Guarantee to allow adults to retrain and reskill through fully-funded technical college courses and the £1.5 billion capital fund to repair and upgrade college estates; but notes with concern that the recent National Audit Office report into the financial sustainability of colleges in England cites a 7 per cent real-terms decrease in funding per learner aged 16 to 19 between 2013-14 and 2018-19; further

notes with concern that adult funding was cut by 40 per cent in the first half of the last decade and has been fixed in cash terms since then; recognises that colleges can only play their full role through long-term sustainable funding and a long term strategy which enjoys cross-party support; and calls on the Government to celebrate and support colleges by ensuring that colleges are empowered to deliver their full potential for people, productivity and place through adequate and sustainable funding and a new trust-based relationship with colleges seen as key strategic partners.

[Support for students in further and higher education during coronavirus pandemic](#)

EDM 493 (session 2019-21)

18 May 2020

Patrick Grady

That this House notes many students in further and higher education experience financial hardship during the course of their studies and that these difficulties are being exacerbated by the wider economic and social consequences of the coronavirus pandemic; further notes that financial support provided by awards agencies and student loan companies across different parts of the UK is usually provided on a term-time basis only, and that many students would seek to supplement their income with paid employment, especially during summer months; believes that many traditional summer job opportunities for students are unlikely to exist as a result of social distancing and economic restrictions; and urges all Governments across the UK to work in partnership with each other, student representative bodies and relevant awards agencies and loans companies to ensure that adequate financial support is available to further and higher education students throughout the 2020 calendar year, including access to universal credit or other appropriate benefits, the provision of increased finance to further and higher education institutions to disburse through hardship funds, and access to other appropriate support during these unprecedented times.

2.4 Statements

[Lifetime Skills Guarantee and Post-16 Education](#)

01 Oct 2020 | 681 cc541-640

Gavin Williamson | Department for Education

[Independent Review of College Financial Oversight](#)

15 Jul 2020 | HCWS370

Gillian Keegan | Department for Education

3. Further reading

3.1 Reports

Institute for Fiscal Studies, [2020 annual report on education spending in England](#), 3 November 2020

Department for Education (DfE), [Further education \(FE\) autumn term guidance](#), 16 October 2020

National Audit Office, [Financial sustainability of colleges in England](#), 16 September 2020

Department for Education, [Report of the independent review of college financial oversight](#), 15 July 2020

Association of Colleges, [REBUILD: A skills led recovery plan](#), 18 June 2020

Centre for Social Justice, [The long game: how to reboot skills training for disadvantaged adults](#), 14 June 2020

The Edge Foundation, [The impact of Covid-19 on education](#), June 2020

Institute for Public Policy Research, [Shaping the future: A 21st century skills system for Wales](#), February 2020

Institute for Fiscal Studies, [2019 annual report on education spending in England](#), September 2019

Education Policy Institute [16-19 education funding: trends and implications](#)
13 May 2019

4. Press articles

The following is a selection of news and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the views or the accuracy of external content.

4.1 Press releases

[Next stage of post-16 qualifications overhaul gets under way](#)

23 October 2020

Department for Education

[16 to 19 funding allocations: 2020 to 2021 academic year](#)

Education and Skills Funding Agency

22 October 2020

[Dodds announces 3,000 funded online training places](#)

Northern Ireland Department for the Economy

5 October 2020

[New remote education support for schools, colleges and teachers](#)

Published 1 October 2020

Department for Education

[Major expansion of post-18 education and training to level up and prepare workers for post-COVID economy](#)

Prime Minister's Office

29 September 2020

[Delivering the Youth Guarantee](#)

Scottish Government

2 September 2020

[Over £50 million to support Welsh universities, colleges and students,](#)

Welsh Government

22 July 2020

[Policy paper: Higher technical education reforms](#)

Department for Education

14 July 2020

[Education Secretary FE speech with Social Market Foundation](#)

Department for Education

9 July 2020

[Coronavirus: Further and Higher Education sustainability plan](#)

Scottish Government

9 July 2020

[Economy Minister announces £1.7 million to support online learning for people impacted by Covid-19](#)

Northern Ireland Executive

12 June 2020

4.2 News articles

[Funding: Could a higher-level skills tax be the answer?](#)

TES

29 October 2020

[Colleges struggle with 'old equipment, poor connectivity, and lack of skilled IT staff'](#)

FE News

26 October 2020

[Even without a Comprehensive Spending Review, funding for colleges needs to be comprehensive](#)

FE News

22 October 2020

[The system of adult education in the UK is in urgent need of reform](#)

FE News

20 October 2020

['Labour party calls out "pitiful" underinvestment in college estates'](#),

FE Week

9 October 2020

[Covid: PM promises 'radical' shake-up of adult education](#)

BBC

29 September 2020

['Adults in England without A-levels to get free college course'](#)

The Guardian

28 September 2020

[DfE has spent £700m propping up further education in England](#)

The Guardian

16 September 2020

['Colleges' financial health "fragile" says audit office'](#)

BBC News

15 September 2020

Government commits to build stronger relationships with colleges to upskill the country

FE News

15 July 2020

'Government to reveal plan in Autumn to create an employer-led "German-style" FE system'

FE Week

9 July 2020

'Government scraps university target in shift to further education'

Financial Times

9 July 2020

Further Education: crucial to recovery, but neglected

FE News

11 June 2020

'[Association of Employment and Learning Providers] calls for one-off £8.6n post-pandemic skills package'

FE News

10 June 2020

Government UK commits £4bn to post-16 education to tackle skills gap

Financial Times

11 March 2020

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