

ncfe.

campaign
for learning 

No 16-18 Year Old Left Behind

As the Cohort Grows

February 2020

Michael Lemin and Julia Wright (Editors)

NCFE

NCFE is an awarding organisation which designs, develops and certifies nationally recognised qualifications and awards.

www.ncfe.org.uk

Campaign for Learning

The Campaign for Learning is a national charity which works for social and economic inclusion through learning.

www.campaignforlearning.org.uk

Disclaimer

The views expressed by contributors are those of the authors and, where relevant, not necessarily the views of their respective organisations.

Previous NCFE and Campaign for Learning Policy Pamphlets

- Earn or Learn for 18-21 year olds: New Age Group, New Policies
November 2015, Mark Corney
- University or Apprenticeships at 18: Context, Challenges and Concerns,
April 2016, Mark Corney
- Reforming Technical and Professional Education: Why should it work this time?
February 2017, Mick Fletcher
- Mending the Gap: Are the needs of 16-18 year olds being met?
January 2018, John Widdowson
- Shaping the new National Retraining Scheme
March 2018, Susan Pember
- T-Levels for 19-23 Year Olds – The value of maintenance loans
August 2018, Mark Corney
- The Post-18 Review of Education and Funding – A Review of a Lifetime
December 2018, Editors: Michael Lemin, Julia Wright and Mark Corney
- Post-16 Education and Apprenticeship Levy Funding – Next Steps for English Devolution
April 2019, Editors Michael Lemin, Julia Wright and Mark Corney
- Future Proofing Apprenticeship Funding in England for the 2020s, October 2019, Editors
Michael Lemin and Julia Wright

Contents

- 4 Introduction**
- 6 David Laws, Education Policy Institute**
Helping Every 16-18 Year Old to Progress
- 8 Jan Atkinson and Nathan Nagaiah, Shooters Hill Sixth Form College**
Transitioning to Level 3 Academic and Vocational Courses
- 10 Catherine Sezen, Association of Colleges**
Transitioning to Level 3 T Levels
- 12 Kathleen Henehan, Resolution Foundation**
Fewer Level 3 and Level 2 Apprenticeships for 16-18 Year Olds
- 14 Mark Dawe, Association of Employment and Learning Providers**
Transitioning to Level 3 Advanced Apprenticeships
- 16 Susan Pember, HOLEX**
Classroom Learning and Apprenticeships: A Twin Level 2 Offer for 16-18 Year Olds
- 18 John Widdowson, New College Durham**
Entry and Level 1 Pathways for 16-18 Year Olds in FE Colleges
- 20 Kevin Gilmartin, Association of School and College Leaders**
A New Maths and English Policy for 16-18 Year Olds
- 22 Clare Howard, Natspec**
Special Educational Needs Does Not End at 16
- 24 Joe Dromey, Learning and Work Institute**
Counting the Costs: Fair Wages and Maintenance for 16-18 Year Olds
- 25 Mark Corney, Policy Consultant**
Levelling-Up More 16-18 Year Olds
- 35 Reflections**

Introduction

2020 will be a momentous year.

The Conservatives have been returned to office with a majority of 80 in the new House of Commons after the general election held in December 2019. Under the Fixed Term Parliament Act, the next election is scheduled for Thursday, 2nd May 2024. The new Government should be able to press ahead with its domestic policy agenda at least for the next four years.

The UK is now out of the European Union. The new Conservative Government is seeking to complete a deal with the EU by 31st December 2020, the end of the existing transition period.

The Prime Minister is in the process of re-organising Whitehall. The first Budget of the Conservative Government will be held on Wednesday, 11th March 2020. A Comprehensive Spending Review is expected in the summer. A second Budget is expected in late November or early December 2020. By then, we will know whether the UK is leaving with or without a trade deal with the EU from 1st January 2021.

The lives of every 16-18 year old throughout the UK will be affected by decisions taken by the Conservative Government in the coming weeks and months.

The Budget

The signs are that the Budget in March will announce a fiscal framework which allows for significant extra capital spending, but does not allow revenue spending to get out of control. An ageing population and rises in the state pension will place growing pressure on day-to-day spending between 2020 and 2024, and so too will extra funding for the NHS in part driven by an ageing population.

Spending Review

In England, revenue spending for health is protected. In the past, one of the few other areas of protected day-to-day spending was 3-15 schools funding. Spending Review 2020 will be a pivotal moment for the 16-18 phase of education and training. The new Government will determine funding rates for 16-18 year olds relative to other phases of education – especially secondary education and higher education – as well as the funding of technical education relative to academic education for the 16-18 age group.

Spending Review 2020 also presents another opportunity for the Conservative Government to get the 16-18 phase right.

The cost of state funded education and training is free to young people up to the age

of 19 on Level 3 and below qualifications. But participation - and achievement - in education and training during the 16-18 phase cannot be secured on fresh air alone. Parents need financial support to cover the costs of enabling young people to participate in post-16 education and training, and 16-18 year olds need an income to live whilst learning. The current system of income payments to parents and young people, depending upon whether they are in full-time education, on apprenticeships or jobs without apprenticeships, is complex, uncertain and inadequate.

Meeting the Duty to Participate to the 18th Birthday

In England, young people have a duty to participate in recognised education and training to their 18th birthday. Latest estimates suggest that 7% of 16-17 year olds (about 83,000) are not meeting the duty. Participation can never be 100% but 83,000 young people must not be left behind.

Levelling-Up 16-18 Year Olds

40% of 19 year olds do not have a Level 3 by age 19. After five years of secondary education, 36% of 16 year olds do not attain a Level 2 (nearly entirely in the form of GCSEs) and by age 19 around 16% have not done so. More worrying still, 40% of 16 year olds do not

have a Level 2 in maths and English, and 30% still do not by age 19.

Attainment gaps at all levels of education exist between 16-18 year olds with and without special education needs, those from ethnic and non-ethnic backgrounds and those from the least deprived and most deprived backgrounds. The time has come to level-up the attainment of every 16-18 year old.

More 16-18 Year Olds by 2024

And yet, the issue uppermost in the minds of Treasury and DfE officials, perhaps, is the projected growth in the number of 16-18 year olds by 2024. In England, the number of 16-18 year olds could increase by more than 200,000 to over 2 million in 2024. This is more than a 12% increase in five years.

No 16-18 Left Behind when there are more 16-18 Year Olds

The challenge is not so much the projected rise in the 16-18 cohort to 2.05m. We have been here before. In 2008, there were 2.02m 16-18 year olds in England. The challenge the new Conservative Government faces is devoting sufficient resources to meet the needs of a higher population age of 16-18 year olds in the context of the duty to participate until the 18th birthday

and an ageing population where scarce public spending tends to be allocated.

Focus

As with previous policy pamphlets, when commissioning a series of articles on a particular theme of post-16 education and training policy, NCFE and the Campaign for Learning ask ourselves where could such a collection add value to the debate. We judged there would be little to add in relation to A Level reform, the withdrawal of public funding for certain existing Level 3 vocational qualifications, the funding, design and implementation of T Levels or the content of Advanced Apprenticeship standards.

With projected higher numbers of 16-18 year olds and a duty to participate in education and training until the 18th birthday, we judged that a pamphlet would add value by concentrating on policies which would achieve the goal of 'No 16-18 Year Old Left Behind'.

As well as considering existing and new policies to encourage progression to Level 3 pathways from age 16, we thought the pamphlet should look at progression and achievement at Level 2 and Level 1 by age 19 which for many young people would, rightly, represent success. And we also wished to open-up a

debate about whether 'No 16-18 Year Old Left Behind' can be achieved in the 2020s through more of the same – namely a further two years of full-time education. Education policies miss many of the 16-18 year olds who would benefit from them because they are not in the education system but in (or near) the labour market.

The Pamphlet

It was these areas of 16-18 education and training that NCFE and the Campaign for Learning asked our authors to consider and we are delighted to publish their ten articles. We would like to thank all of our contributors and invite everyone to read their pieces and recommendations. The pamphlet is concluded by a set of Reflections which draws together the different aspects covered in the pamphlet, which we hope you will find useful.

Michael Lemin, NCFE

Julia Wight, Campaign for Learning

Helping Every 16-18 Year Old to Progress

David Laws, Education Policy Institute

Introduction

The aspiration for policy makers over the last couple of decades has been to improve early years and school education to the extent that young people enter the later phases of education, post 16, equipped for success. The rhetoric, and to a lesser extent the reality, has been about investing early in the hope that young people would then secure good skills and qualifications, and go on into the labour market enabled to take up productive jobs.

The Bottom Third of 16-18 Year Olds

Sadly, the results have yet to match the aspirations, and large numbers of young people move into post 16 education without a strong set of GCSE (or equivalent) qualifications, and often without the basic skills in English and maths which are necessary to progress confidently. The third (roughly) of young people who do not reach this aspirational level often, and unsurprisingly, have the characteristics which are associated with under-performance pre 16, including living in poor families, having mental health issues or other special education needs, and having been placed in care.

There is therefore a good case for continuing to strengthen the support for these vulnerable

young people both pre and post 16. To do this effectively, we need a better understanding of how many of these children are performing throughout their time in education, compared to their more “advantaged” peers. There is presently a relatively good understanding of these gaps in performance in the pre-16 phases, but a much less good understanding post-16.

A first challenge is therefore to better understand the needs of this vulnerable group. I am pleased to note that the Nuffield Foundation has recently supported the Education Policy Institute to carry out research in this area during 2020 – and we hope to publish later this year a measure showing how the disadvantaged gap evolves post 16.

Funding 16-18 Adequately

Policy makers have talked, then, of “investing early” in order to equip young people for success before they reach the post-16 phase. This is one reason why at present the Pupil Premium – which gives institutions more money to educate disadvantaged students – does not continue beyond the secondary phase. It could also explain why in England (almost uniquely amongst richer OECD nations) we fund the 16-18 phase at a significantly lower rate than the secondary phase.

Since 2010, per pupil reductions in funding in the 16-18 phase have been twice as large (16%) as the reductions in primary and secondary funding (8%). But this is only part of a much longer-term trend which has favoured secondary and primary funding over 16-18 funding.

The funding squeeze on 16-18 institutions has recently caused a large number of them to move into deficit, and can also make it more difficult to recruit well qualified teachers into 16-18 institutions, where budgets are smaller than the equivalent “school” budgets, and where cross-subsidy between pre and post 16 pupils isn’t possible.

A Fundamental Funding Review

There is a strong argument for a more fundamental review by policy makers of the level of funding by phase of education. At present – in spite of rhetoric to the contrary – the early years receive the lowest per student unit of funding. This then climbs through primary and secondary education, before falling in the post-16 phase, and then soaring post 18 (but particularly for higher education routes).

Extending the Pupil Premium Post-16

It is not clear that this distribution

of funding has a clear and evidence-based rationale. The persistence of the disadvantaged gaps (and indeed the fact that they appear to widen over time) could also argue for disadvantage related funding, such as the Pupil Premium, to continue into later education, rather than dropping away post-16.

Higher Funding Rates for 16-18 Technical Education

We also need to look at the funding rates for 16-18 technical education, and how these compare with the funding of 16-18 academic routes. The UK appears to fund technical routes (often taken by more disadvantaged students) at a significantly lower rate than academic routes, which is not the case in most OECD countries.

16-18 Curriculum Reform – Maths and English

And we need to look closely at curriculum and qualification issues, post-16, particularly for the non-academic routes, and for those who have failed to secure the government “pass” expectation in key GCSEs such as English and maths. Too many students who have “failed” pre 16, continue to do so after 16. Is there a more effective way to teach and engage these students, and equip them with the skills they need to get productive jobs?

16-18 Curriculum Reform – Level 3 T Levels

Another question is whether the system of post-16 non-academic qualifications in England - which

has been tampered with so many times over recent decades – is fit for purpose and understood and valued by employers? It remains an open question to what extent T Levels will succeed in providing a credible “non-academic” qualification for those not taking qualifications such as A levels, particularly as technical and vocational qualifications are expected to be accessible to a broad ability range.

Fixing the 16-18 Phase

Having failed to “fix” post 16 outcomes by focusing predominantly on pre-16 solutions, it is time for policy makers to engage more seriously with the specific challenges of the 16-18 phase.

Transitioning to Level 3 Academic and Vocational Courses

Jan Atkinson and Nathan Nagaiah, Shooters Hill Sixth Form College

Introduction

Shooters Hill Sixth Form College serves a diverse community within the boroughs of South East London. Around one third of the students, primarily 16-18 year olds, undertake Level 3 programmes including A levels and vocational subjects.

The College had been graded as 'Requiring Improvement' since 2013. In 2016, senior leaders and Governors worked with key stakeholders to create a 5-year strategic vision. One of our key priorities was to provide an enriched and inclusive learning experience for all young people through high quality standards of education and training services leading to greater progression. Governors agreed to appoint a senior leader of maths and English and this investment led to a new dynamic strategy for improvements in maths and English. As a fully inclusive college it was important that we ensured that individual students had access to a personalised transition pathway to ensure a successful destination.

In 2017, the maths department at the college was the lowest performing department and the GCSE maths grade 4+ result was 11%.

It's all about 'Maths and English'

As a response, the maths faculty launched an innovative 'It's all

about ME' project. This initiative demonstrated high levels of innovation in learning and teaching using both technology-enhanced learning and 'in-class' approaches.

16/17 Year Olds on Level 3 Courses with a Level 2 who failed GCSE Maths and English

Our approach enables 16/17 year olds who have achieved a Level 2 qualification but failed GCSE maths and English to enrol on Level 3 courses (see diagram) because of the Targeted Intervention ME Programme. 16/17 year olds with a Level 2 but failed GCSE maths are able to enrol on most Level 3 programmes – A levels and vocational courses – except STEM pathways (A levels and vocational courses). By comparison, those who passed GCSE maths but not English are able to enrol on Level 3 STEM courses as well as other Level 3 programmes (see diagram).

Increasing Level 2 Maths Attainment via GCSE Grade 4+ Maths

The main aim is to inspire and promote maths and English (ME) skills to all staff and students and to transform the learning experience of our students in developing their ME skills throughout their learning journey. The project involved teams in

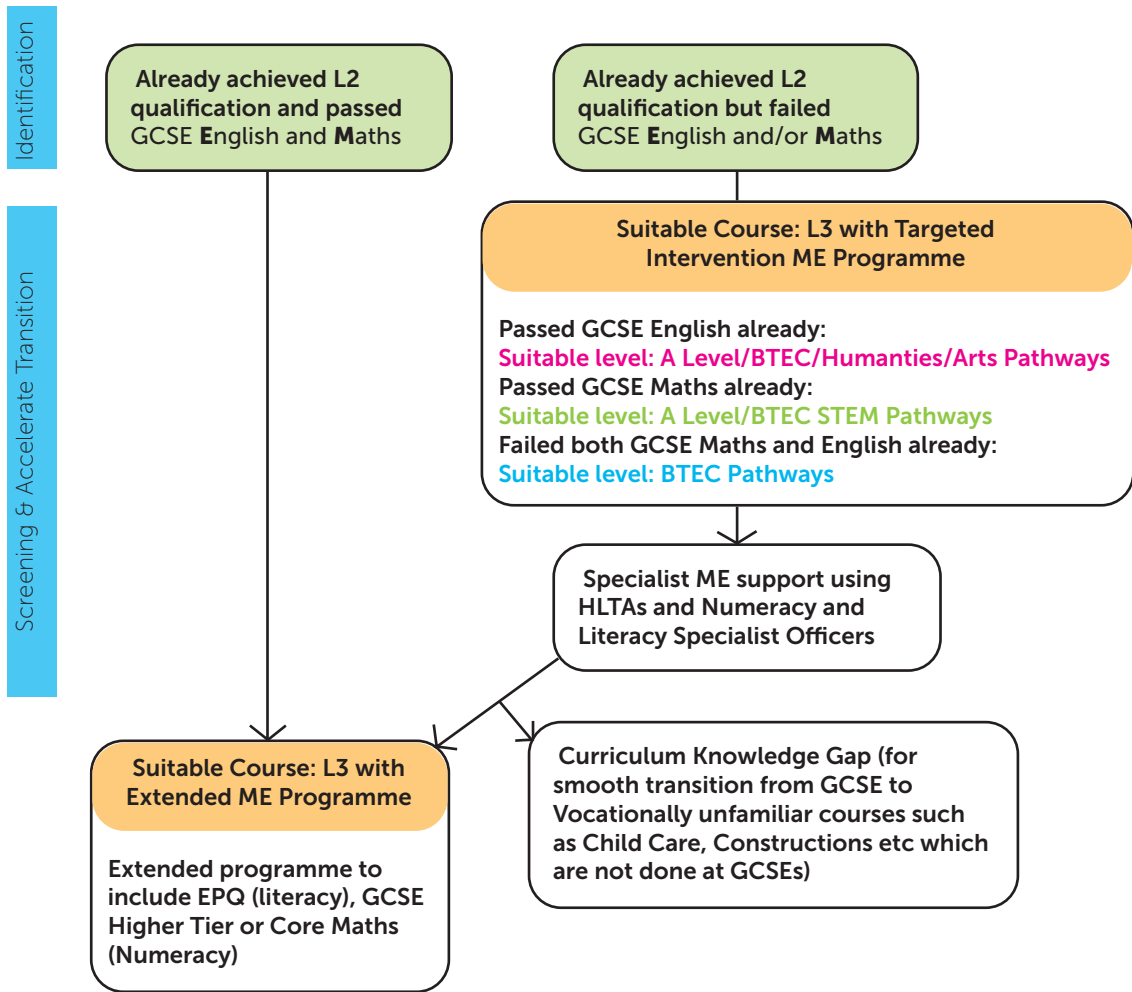
Marketing, Senior Leadership and the governing body and ten ME student ambassadors, with the predominant focus on GCSE maths.

Wider Support

In addition, the College employed an Emotional Support Officer and a Behaviour for Learning Officer to provide targeted interventions for those students with mental health and wellbeing issues which sometimes led to poor attendance and a lack of engagement in maths and English.

As part of the project, the college established a very successful Maths Exploratory Lab (known as MEL). The idea of MEL was first researched by a member of staff of the college during his fellowship at the University of Cambridge and implemented in this project. MEL provides free academic tuition, help and support for all students. Students have access to additional learning, technological instruments, resources and an independent working space.

Students can experiment and explore patterns and ideas and can find a collection of games, puzzles, and non-traditional assessment opportunities for example, online matching games, darts, and the use of board games. This has developed relationships amongst staff, overcoming workforce



challenges and raised the profile of maths in the college and across the region.

Impact – Foundation GCSE Maths

During the 2018/19 academic year attendance to foundation GCSE maths improved by 20% as a result of improved student motivation and aspiration to succeed and progress onto a level 3 programme. In addition, results increased to 41.2% against the national result average of 17% despite the majority of students coming from disadvantaged and SEND backgrounds.

OFSTED

Our full Ofsted inspection under the new framework in October 2019 included a 'deep dive' on both maths and English. Ofsted

recognised the personalised nature of our provision to ensure that maths and English is not a barrier for our disadvantaged students and that they can transition onto a level 3 course with the right support. In addition to maths and English lessons and intervention sessions, Curriculum Leaders also have a relentless focus on ensuring that literacy and numeracy is embedded across all vocational programmes at every level. Our OFSTED Report stated

"Senior leaders have a coherent strategy for courses that are suited to the students who come to the college. They have put in place a curriculum that meets the diverse needs of their students. It helps students who may not have succeeded in their studies previously, for example, to find the right level programme

for them to thrive and move forwards in their education. Leaders and managers work well with local business groups and partners to ensure that courses are relevant to the changing needs of business. For example, they developed a finance course to supply the skills that local employers need". [Ofsted 2019]

Best Practice

Our experience at Shooters Hill Sixth Form College suggests that students with a Level 2 qualification but without a Grade 4+, maths GCSE can enrol on Level 3 programmes – except STEM subjects – and achieve them as long as a 'targeted intervention support package' is available to achieve a Grade 4 maths GCSE.

Transitioning to Level 3 T Levels

Catherine Sezen, Association of Colleges

Introduction

T Levels are exciting new Level 3 study programmes for 16 to 18-year-olds. 25 T Levels in sectors as varied as accountancy to media, broadcast and production and human resources to healthcare science will be introduced over four years. The first to be introduced are Design, Surveying and Planning for the construction industry, Education and Childcare, and Digital Production, Design and Development from September 2020. Each T Level starts with a broad knowledge-based core which will cover elements of what the sector entails, health and safety and legal requirements for example. Students will then move into a specialism with a substantial industry placement.

Starting a T Level after 16

Not all young people, however, will be ready to embark upon a T Level at 16. The 2016 Report of the Independent Panel on Technical Education, chaired by Lord Sainsbury, recommended a 'transition year' to ensure that as many students as possible can complete a T Level by 19. Bearing in mind that, according to AoC data, just over 20% of the college cohort are currently on Level 2 study programmes

and that 48% of current level 3 students start at 17 having spent a year at Level 2, the T Level Transition Programme has the potential to impact on a significant number of young people, especially in colleges. The overall aim is to offer a spring board to higher level study and ultimately better employment opportunities.

T Level Transition Programme

So, what does a programme to deliver 'readiness' look like? AoC is working with the Department for Education (DfE) and a number of T Level 2020 providers to explore current and innovative practice to ensure students are T Level 'ready'. The vision for the national T Level Transition Programme Framework for Delivery 2020/21 published by DfE in October is to offer providers the flexibility to tailor their own transition programmes. This will ensure their students have the best opportunity to develop the academic and technical skills, knowledge and behaviours required to progress to a T Level, and to successfully complete it.

The framework includes thorough initial assessment, English and maths, technical skills, work related learning,

personal and social development opportunities and information, advice and guidance. These principles of course also underpin current study programmes. The 2020 providers are exploring how best to shape the programme to dovetail into T Levels. What are the key ingredients to support successful progression? For example, if students plan to go onto a T Level do they need to achieve a substantial technical qualification at Level 2? Should self-confidence, work place experience and English and maths for life and employment play a more central part?

AoC is excited to have the opportunity to work with colleges and other providers in the planning and development stage. Currently the focus is on supporting students to progress to the first three T Levels. This phase of the project will help inform and shape not only Transition Programmes for 2020 providers, but it will also establish good practice that can be adopted by 2021 providers and subsequent waves for these and the other 22 T Levels.

Opportunities for Greater Success

In terms of ensuring a pipeline for T Levels and enabling even

more young people to access Level 3 study the Transition Programme is crucial. However, there are some potential barriers to overcome.

T Levels have been allocated additional funding and at an average of 1,800 hours over two years they are 50% larger than current study programmes. The Transition Programme is a 600-hour study programme. It seems slightly odd that students who are further away from successful progression have fewer hours to make up the skills deficit they bring from pre-16 education.

English and maths are key to progression, but unlike T Levels, which offer the opportunity to work towards either GCSE

or Functional Skills in these crucial subjects, the Transition Programme is subject to the grade 3 condition of funding. This means Transition Programme students, who are more than likely to have grade 3 English and maths on entry, will have to retake GCSEs which as academic qualifications may not be the best option for their intended progression.

Young people change their minds. Limiting transition to T Level progression only may mean that some students lose out. Students who want to progress to an apprenticeship for example, based on the same standards as T Levels, may well benefit from the Transition Programme offer.

Supporting more 17 and 18 year olds to T Levels

Greater funding to support more teaching hours and a richer experience to nurture social capital, flexibility in the English and maths qualifications to be undertaken and enabling a wider range of students at this level to benefit from a tailored study programme would no doubt support even more students to progress onto a T Level or other Level 3 study.

Fewer Level 3 and Level 2 Apprenticeships for 16-18 Year Olds

Kathleen Henehan, Resolution Foundation

Introduction

A well-known fact in the apprenticeship world is that the number of people starting an apprenticeship fell sharply after Spring 2017 with the introduction of the apprenticeship levy and related reforms. Overall, the number of starts in 2018/19 was 23 per cent lower than the number starting an apprenticeship in 2015/16 (the last full year before the reforms came into place).

At first glance, it looks as if the starkest changes occurred among older, rather than younger, 'would be' apprentices: between 2015/16 and 2018/19 the number of 25+ apprentices starting a Level 2 programme fell by about 58 per cent while the number starting a higher-education (Level 4+) programme grew by 158 per cent. In other words, opportunities for older apprentices on lower-level programmes fell off just

as opportunities for older apprentices on higher-level programmes shot up.

16-18 Year Olds Losing Out

Yet, dig deeper into the figures and you'll find that while opportunities for older apprentices moved in different directions, 16-18 year-olds in search of an apprenticeship have lost out more broadly. The number of under 19s starting an apprenticeship has fallen by 25 per cent: from 131,000 in 2015/16 to just under 98,000 this past academic year.

Largest Falls in Apprenticeship Starts by 16-18 Year Olds at Level 2

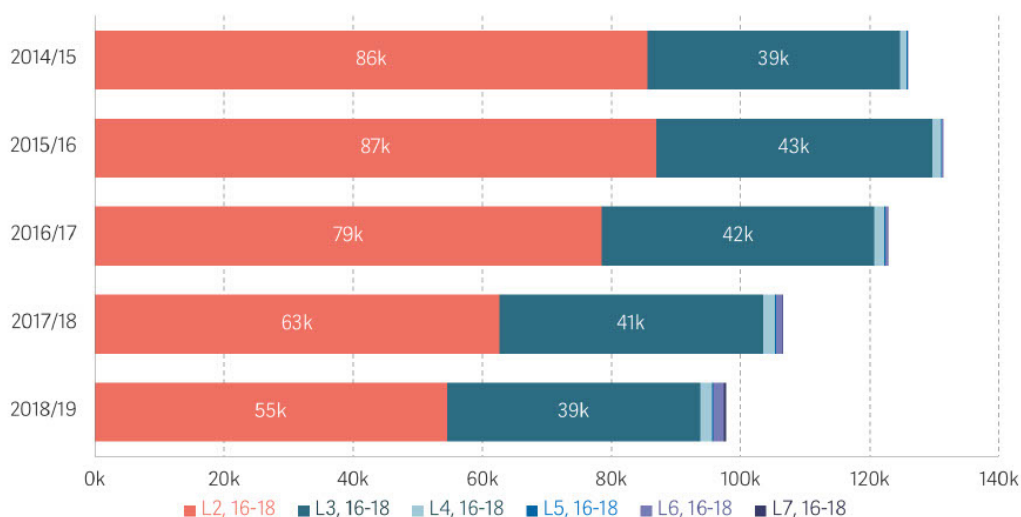
And although the number of 16-18 year-old starts has fallen across Level 2 (GCSE-equivalent), Level 3 (A level-equivalent) and Level 4 (sub-degree higher education), the largest drop in

numbers has occurred at Level 2. Overall, the number of 16-18 year-olds starting a Level 2 apprenticeship has eroded year-on-year: from 87,000 in 2015/16 to 79,000 in 2017/18 (the first full academic year following on from the levy and regulatory reforms) and even further, to 55,000, by the end of last year.

Similar Falls in Level 2 Apprenticeships at age 16, 17 and 18

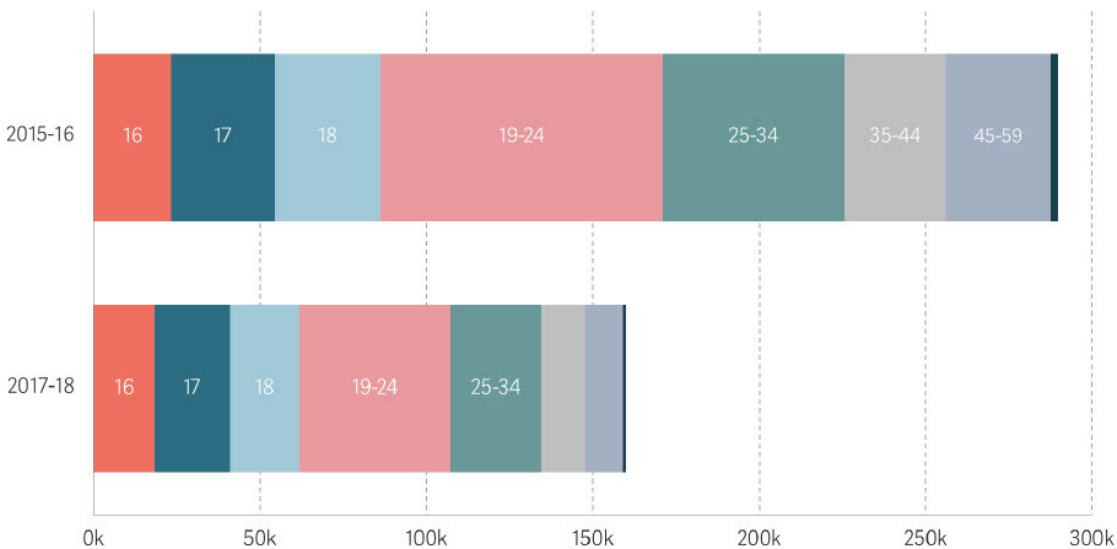
Data limitations prevent us from knowing just how many starts were taken up by 16, 17 and 18 year-olds separately in the last academic year, though it looks like the fall has been greatest among 18 year-olds (a 34 per cent drop between 2015/16 and 2017/18) and smallest, although still substantial, among 16 year-olds (a 21 per cent reduction over the same period). The number of Level 2 starts across the three ages now appears relatively even.

Apprenticeship starts among 16-18 year-olds by year and level: England



Source: RF analysis of DfE, Apprenticeship & Skills data

© Resolution Foundation 2020
resolutionfoundation.org



Source: RF analysis of DfE, Apprenticeship & Skills data

© Resolution Foundation 2020
resolutionfoundation.org

Big Falls in Level 2 Apprenticeships for 16-18 Year olds in Key Sectors

Another key observation is the fall in Level 2 apprenticeship starts by 16-18 year olds. Between 2015/16 and 2018/19, Level 2 starts by 16-18 year-olds also fell across all major subject areas, with the largest shifts (in absolute numbers) occurring in business, administration and law (-11,500), retail (-6,200) and engineering (-6,500) apprenticeships.

Does the Fall in 16-18 Level 2 Apprenticeship Starts Really Matter?

But while the fall in numbers is indeed striking, the bigger question we need to be asking is whether these changes really matter for young people. On the surface, there looks to be some room for cynicism.

For instance, fewer than one-in-ten 16-18 year-olds have been [enrolled](#) on an apprenticeship over recent years – including before the levy came into being. Nearly one-third (32 per cent) of those 16-18 year-olds who were enrolled on a Level 2 apprenticeship during 2017/18 did not successfully [complete](#) their programme. Moreover,

in the past, fewer than one-in-four Level 2 apprentices (of all ages) that did [complete](#) their programme [progressed](#) onto the next level of study within a year. To put it another way: only a small minority of young people take on an apprenticeship and the outcomes for those that do are often disappointing.

But let's not focus only on the negative. At their best, apprenticeships can offer young people outside of the 'A level to university at 18' path a direct route to the skills required for good, rewarding career. Given the complexity of options that sit before students outside the university track, a direct route is something to be encouraged.

And these days, that transition from education to employment is, for some, increasingly fraught: even though employment is at a record high, recent [Resolution Foundation research](#) has shown that the proportion of 18-64 year-olds who have never held a job is, at 8.2 per cent, up 52 per cent since 1998 – a fact that cannot be explained simply by rising student numbers. Apprenticeships can provide young people with the skills development and work experience needed to keep them

engaged in the labour market.

Level 2 Apprenticeships for Young People which support Progression

So what should policymakers do? First, to state the obvious, they need to prioritise apprenticeships for young people. There's a number of ways they can achieve this: by limiting the proportion of funds that levy-paying employers [can spend](#) on older apprentices, to adding incentives to hire younger apprentices, or [directly funding 16-18](#) year-old apprentice training through the public purse – as they do other types of 16-18 education. And yet, they won't want to encourage young people into poor quality programmes with little training and little chance of progression. Second, policy makers need to ensure that apprenticeships feature proper off-the-job training, which also means that they need clear mechanisms for checking this happens. And last but certainly not least, apprenticeship outcomes should be improved more generally. Policymakers should ensure that the apprenticeship system allows young people a route to progress upwards in, rather than a one-off training course.

Transitioning to Level 3 Advanced Apprenticeships

Mark Dawe, Association of Employment and Learning Providers

Introduction

When going into battle for apprenticeships in policymaking circles, a regular riposte which comes back is that not enough successful Level 2 apprentices go on to another apprenticeship programme at a higher level. It is a fair challenge and it is one that we must collectively address, especially for those 16 to 18 year olds who have decided that A Levels are not for them.

Progression to a Successful Career

However well or otherwise that a young person has done at school, an apprenticeship should provide a route to a successful career. We can be justly proud that nine out of ten programme completers stay in sustained employment and earn good wages. Official DfE data published in January 2020 found that on average media annualised earnings rise 7% every year for Level 2 achievers and 6% for those who complete an advanced apprenticeship at Level 3.

After four years, an advanced apprentice can be taking home over £20,000 but at just one level higher they can be earning more than the national average income of £25k a year after four years. It is a very attractive proposition for young people who prefer to earn while they learn and who don't want to be saddled with student debt.

Falling Apprenticeship Starts by 16-18 Year Olds

Yet sadly despite good intentions and improvements in quality, the apprenticeship reforms are not serving teenage apprentices well at all and this is most starkly illustrated by the programme start numbers. A quarter fewer 16 to 18 years olds are now starting apprenticeships compared to the pre-levy era and while the picture is less bleak for Level 3 starts (only a 10% fall), we must remember that these are starts for all ages.

Barriers Holding Back Starts

As AELP has shown with its member surveys, opportunities are being severely limited by the shortage of non-levy apprenticeship funding and it is SME employers who have traditionally championed these cohorts. Worse still, apprentices aged 16 to 18 are the only learners in this age group not to benefit from the government funding 'guarantee', i.e. their training is not fully funded by the state.

Other obstacles to more participation in advanced apprenticeships include the lack of join-up between some Level 2 and 3 standards with often different sets of employers on the trailblazers doing the design. The changes in the way apprenticeships are funded

under the standards have not adequately recognised that the cost of support for the youngest apprentices is generally greater than that for many experienced older apprentices.

The other key point that many policymakers seem to struggle with is the enormous distance of travel that many Level 2 learners have to cover to successfully complete a programme. Eleven years of statutory schooling have failed to equip 40% of 16 year olds with a good GCSE in maths and English, leaving training providers a year or so to put things right with underfunded functional skills. Digital skills are now as equally important if we want to seem better rates of progression.

Moreover, it is disappointing to report that virtually no apprentices with learning difficulties are making use of the Maynard flexibilities even though they have technically been in force since September 2017. This is because an Education, Health and Care Plan is required first and it is essential that this is reviewed.

Enabling Transition

16 to 18 apprentices should have their training and assessment fully funded out of the mainstream DfE budget rather than the levy, whether they are employed by a levy payer or not.

Every individual from 19 to 24

who has not achieved a full Level 3 should have a learning account for a minimum of £13k (this is an average figure and might need to be adjusted up or down dependent on prior achievement). For all apprentices between 18 and 24, the additional £13k should be available to the employer/provider to provide additional support over and above the basic funding band for the relevant standard for Level 2 and Level 3 programmes in both

levy and non-levy environments. This additional support be limited to, say, 50% of the funding band. The same system could be implemented for 16-18 apprentices.

The learning of digital skills should be integrated into all apprenticeship standards alongside functional skills for those apprentices that need them. The funding of functional skills within an apprenticeship

should match the classroom rate, i.e. almost doubled.

And to ensure more progression, apprenticeship frameworks should not be withdrawn in September 2020 if there is not an approved equivalent standard in place.

Classroom Learning and Apprenticeships: A Twin Level 2 Offer for 16-18 Year Olds

Susan Pember, HOLEX

Introduction

It is time to regroup and determine an offer for the 16-18 year old that the school system forgot.

I meet many young people who through no fault of their own have found it impossible to get 5 GCSEs at level 4. Many have known from the age of 11 that they have already been written off but still turn up every day to go through the same despair and demoralisation of sitting in lessons where achieving success was outside their reach. Some don't bother turning up as, in their mind, nobody would miss them and, if they do turn up, their boredom stemming from frustration of "just not getting it" leads to disruptive behaviour. So, their logic is "if I'm not there then at least I don't get into trouble".

The 40% without 5 'Good' GCSEs including Maths and English at 16 Every year around 40% of our young people don't get 5 GCSEs including English and maths and their options are being curtailed.

Traditionally they would have been able to attend college or go on to an apprenticeship and study a level 2 qualification - a trade, a purpose which would allow them to reset and redefine their lives - no longer a failure, and chance to start a career - having pride when asked what they are doing- able to say, "I'm on a Level 2 in plumbing, or

plastering, a care course or business admin" and slowly changing their attitude to learning, gaining confidence and seeing life is worth living.

Eroding Options

But by default - I am still hoping it wasn't by design - those options are being eroded. The unintended consequences of the apprenticeship changes are that fewer young people are pursuing a Level 2 standard qualification and, in some crucial areas, there isn't one available even though employers have requested it. And, with T levels being offered only at Level 3 coupled with the threat that vocational qualifications will be turned off, there is now little investment into updating the college/centre-based Level 2 vocational offer.

Beware of Offering 'More of the Same'

The DfE line seems to be that there is no need to worry as they are developing a transitional year? That just doesn't cut it with young people - another year of the same, is a year lost where they could be learning new applied skills.

There is no pride in saying "I'm on a transition programme", it may as well be rebranded as a remedial year because that's what it sounds like. Traineeships are little no better: true there are

some good programmes, but they are only suitable for certain types of individual and they still delay learning a skill for another year.

A New Offer

It's time to stop this erosion and think again - and ask what will give pride and enthusiasm back to these young people? It's not rocket science, we can do this, but we must work quickly before the infrastructure is lost.

We need to restore a Level 2 offer in apprenticeships, and we need to safeguard the vocational Level 2 offer we currently have in all the key subjects. We should have a system which is built on what young people want and need - so for those who want a Level 2 apprenticeship there should be one out there and, for those who want to go to college to learn a new skill, they should have that option.

Young people have no issue with going back to college. The policy resistance to a Level 2 offer seems to stem from some misconstrued interpretation of the value of Level 2 vocational courses. Research shows that the benefits of following a Level 2 compared with doing nothing makes it well worth doing - something Level 2 learners always knew. So, let's invest in and celebrate a Level 2 pathway built around excellent classroom

practice, skills acquisitions and enhanced learning including improving literacy, numeracy and confidence building skills.

What Should be Done

The first action is for DfE to conduct a stock take of Level 2 vocational programmes

- classroom learning and apprenticeships - to ensure there are clear progression routes. Second, the Institute for Apprenticeships should develop Level 2 Apprenticeships in key areas as a matter of urgency, starting with business administration, plumbing and plastering. And thirdly, investment

going into traineeships and the transition year should be redirected into building a pathway in vocational areas from Levels 1 and 2 to Level 3.

Entry and Level 1 Pathways for 16-18 Year Olds in FE Colleges

John Widdowson, New College Durham

Introduction

Much of the debate around technical and vocational education has focussed on the need to create new qualifications which will have equal value to existing academic awards and aimed at high achieving students at Level 3. Although this ambition is clearly laudable and overdue, colleges of Further Education have long had a key role in helping those young people who have been unsuccessful at school, leaving at the age of sixteen with few qualifications, ill prepared for the world of work and without the firm foundations needed to make a positive contribution as active citizens.

Around 18% of students on full time FE courses arrive in this position and undertake programmes at Entry and Level 1. Despite the fact that successive governments have sought to address this persistent problem, a significant number of young people fail to achieve at sixteen, or perhaps more accurately, emerge from an education system which has failed them.

The Forgotten Third

This is compounded as every year around a third of school leavers fail to achieve a grade 4 GCSE in English and Mathematics. Ironically, for many that failure is reinforced when they are obliged to re-take those subjects whilst

on a vocational FE course or as an Apprentice, with only 21% achieving the re-sit grade in mathematics and 30% in English.

Apart from the all too apparent waste of resources this represents, the re-sit process demotivates and discourages young people who could spend the time better in developing the skills they need for employment. Even for those students who achieve below grade 3, the functional skills curriculum barely meets their needs and is often seen by students as irrelevant to their career choice and reinforcing the negative experiences they have had at school.

Entry and Level 1 Students aged 16-18

The students studying at Entry and Level 1 have a broad range of needs. Some have learning difficulties or disabilities which have adversely affected their school performance or in the worst cases, gone unrecognised. Although some of these students attract additional funding there is an increasing number whose behavioural problems do not fall within the current support system. Others have had disrupted school careers due either to the same issues or to ill health.

Another group have simply

failed to engage with a school curriculum they find uninteresting and irrelevant and leave school with no clear idea of what they want to do and without the skills they will need to achieve the ambitions they have. Inadequate information advice and guidance at school particularly for this group of students with complex needs is either under resourced or in the worst cases entirely lacking. This results in either inappropriate choices based on inadequate information or making no real choice at all, with the higher risk of becoming NEET that this implies.

Continued Commitment from FE Colleges

There have been severe cuts to FE budgets for many years, with a consequential impact on programmes of study and the student experience. This has had particular implications for students needing at least an extra year in full time post sixteen education. The funding system itself has discriminated against the very students who need more support and a longer period in the post sixteen phase by reducing that already meagre funding per student once they reach the age of eighteen. Despite this, FE colleges have remained committed to giving those students not just another chance but a much better chance to succeed.

Best Practice

There are many examples of how colleges are doing this, starting with recognition that although some of these students can present as “problems”, many have the ability to progress to higher level study and employment, including Apprenticeship, within a relatively short period and all can improve on their low starting point.

Successful programmes recognise the crucial importance of improving literacy and numeracy but do so in a context which also develops employability skills. The best programmes build on this by providing a clear focus on improving personal skills such as confidence, independence and resilience. Initiatives such as the National Citizen Service have been targeted at students on lower level courses, knowing that these young people are often the least likely to participate without encouragement and support from their tutors.

Many students benefit from tailored advice and guidance which links better literacy and numeracy skills, coupled with completion of their study programme, to progression into a higher level course or an Apprenticeship. Effective advice and guidance programmes recognise that students may

well want to use the skills and knowledge they have acquired to change direction at the end of their Level 1 programme. In this way, students make better, more informed decisions about their next step and thus are less likely to drop out.

Meeting the Needs of Entry and Level 1 Students

Whitehall in general and DfE in particular need to recognise that a significant number of young people leave school at sixteen with poor levels of achievement and are likely to continue to do so until major improvements are made in achievement levels at sixteen. Such students and their often complex needs should be recognised and taken into account in designing the right course to meet those needs.

Rather than place such students in a deficit position, requiring “remedial” attention and risking the reinforcement of failure, provision up to Level 1 should be seen as transformational rather than transitional, in most cases providing the stepping stone to higher level study and Apprenticeship rather than into low skill employment.

In addition, the curriculum at Entry and Level 1 must be reformed. It must have sufficient breadth to provide not only

support to develop literacy and numeracy skills in a vocational context but also to provide a diagnostic approach which ensures young people can experience a range of vocational options before making a choice of employment or the best progression route for them.

In other words, providers must recognise that these students are not simply at the lowest level in a vocational hierarchy, with all that may imply, but constitute a significant group across most colleges deserving of just as much thought and attention as those able to study straightaway at a higher level.

More Funding

And it goes without saying that the 16-18 funding must be reformed to ensure that those students with the greatest needs are afforded the right level of resource. The treasury and DfE must accept that young people who have failed to succeed at school pre-16 will need more contact with their teachers/lecturers and may take at least an additional year of study to progress to either employment, apprenticeships or the next level of study.

A New Maths and English Policy for 16-18 Year Olds

Kevin Gilmartin, Association of School and College Leaders

Introduction

Geoff Barton, ASCL's General Secretary has been oft-quoted after commenting, "What are we as a nation saying to a young person who after 12 years of being taught by teachers through early years, primary and secondary education, gets a grade 3 and then two years of mandatory resits. Why do we insist in rubbing their noses in disappointment?"

It explains why the story of City College Plymouth's Lauren Reid, who achieved a grade 4 in GCSE maths in the summer of 2019, made international headlines. Lauren had passed at the ninth time of asking. What amazing resilience. What a credit to herself and her persistent teachers. But this is, of course, far from the normal resit experience, where only 1 in 5 students pass their GCSE resit English, and fewer than 1 in 3 in maths.

It does mean the professional marquee erection industry is booming though, as colleges enter swathes of students every summer. Approximately 18 colleges entered more than 1,000 students for GCSE maths resits last year and even more colleges did so for GCSE English.

Entered to Fail Again

Erecting huge marquees to accommodate the students is often the only solution to this logistical problem. What dignity

here for the hordes of youngsters trooping in to fail yet again? What a demoralising experience for them and their teachers, who've battled all year to give the students hope – against all the odds.

Is the GCSE Maths and English Resit Policy Really Necessary?

The educational answer seems to be universally accepted as 'no'. However, the financial answer is unfortunately 'yes'. The government's 'condition of funding' rule means that all full-time 16-18 students with a grade 3 at GCSE maths and/or English must resit. Students with a grade 2 can take functional skills instead. And for school sixth forms and colleges whose students do not comply, the full student funding will be reclaimed (typically £4,000 to £5,000 per student). So, the outcome is that students are in reality forced to resit – again and again.

More than 150,000 Young People Resit GCSE Maths or English

In 2019, just over a third of state-educated students did not score at least a grade 4 in both English and maths GCSEs. And crucially this will always be the case because of the system of 'comparable outcomes' which keeps results broadly stable from one year to the next. This meant that 170,000 post-16 students

sat GCSE maths and 152,000 sat GCSE English across England. Unless policies change then, thousands of our young people will have to continue to endure their own Groundhog Day nightmare.

Consequences of Failure

A report from the Sutton Trust has found that a disproportionate number of the affected students come from disadvantaged backgrounds, and this poor experience means they leave school feeling demoralised about their prospects for onward progression to courses and careers. So, the recent changes to GCSEs, along with comparable outcomes, are "further disadvantaging the disadvantaged" at a time when young people move into further study and work.

The Forgotten Third

This scandalous situation led ASCL to set up its "Forgotten Third Commission" which advocates an overhaul of GCSEs aimed at improving the prospects of the "forgotten third" of students who currently fall short of achieving that magical grade 4 in GCSE English and maths.

Signs of Change?

Perhaps, though, the government has at last recognised that there

is a need for change. In its latest T level action plan, published in October 2019, the first cohort of T level students who will start in September 2020 are exempt from the condition of funding rule. This means that if students starting their T level programme have a grade 3 in GCSE English or maths, they can take functional skills at level 2 as an alternative. Is this just a necessary move to guarantee enough of a cohort to get the flagship technical programme off the ground? Or is it finally an indication that the government has recognised the need for change? For the sake of our young people's dignity – let us hope it is the latter.

United Action

In our view, the whole education sector needs to unite behind the campaign for an end to the

present compulsory resit GCSE policy, with the alternative of functional skills being available to all students, not just those undertaking T levels.

A New English 'Passport' Qualification

There is also an overwhelming case for new 'passport' qualifications in English, and in time maths, which all students would take at the "point of readiness" between the ages of 15 and 19.

A working group representing the Department for Education, Ofqual and the professional associations should be established to introduce a Passport in English to replace the current GCSE English Language. This highly respected qualification would be taken by all students

'graduating' from school/college into the workplace or higher education.

The Passport should be criterion referenced, comprising online assessment, a portfolio of a student's writing and a significant oracy component.

The qualification could be taken at different levels between the ages of 15 and 19, ending the wasteful GCSE resit industry. It is recommended that the Passport in English be certificated by a body with international standing, with employer approval and branding.

A Maths 'Passport' Qualification

And in time, similar consideration should be given to a companion Passport in Maths.

Special Educational Needs Does Not End at 16

Clare Howard, Natspec

Introduction

The reforms to the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) system contained in the 2014 Children and Families Act were a once in a generation systemic change for young people and their families. For the first time, rights and duties were extended from the earliest years to young adulthood, in a new 0-25 system, giving Further Education colleges and providers new statutory obligations.

Post-16 Special Education Needs

The SEND reforms, combined with the raising of the participation age to the 18th birthday, mean that SEND provision does not end at 16. There are increasingly heavy demands on FE – the number of young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) aged 16 to 25 increased from 84,000 to 96,000 between 2018 and 2019. Whether it is post-16 or post-18/19, the move into further education and training is arguably the least well-developed area of the SEND reforms.

16-19 Year Olds

At some stage between the ages of 16 to 19, these young people and their families will be considering their post-school options. That might be a college

place possibly with an element of residential experience, a supported internship, an apprenticeship, or voluntary or paid work.

Leaving school and moving on to something new is both exciting and stressful for any young person, but it can be especially difficult for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, many of whom find change very unsettling. This is further hindered by a funding system that is hard to navigate and lack of information about the full range of options available.

Moving to college (sometimes after 15+ years at the same special school) gives young people a real opportunity for a fresh start; it means making new friends, having new experiences, learning new skills, and experiencing and overcoming new challenges. For many young people it is the ideal stepping-stone from school into adult life. Expectations for what can be achieved in this last – and shortest – phase of education are rightly set high. The impact of high-quality further education for learners with SEND can be enormous – for the young people themselves, for their families, and for wider society. But currently there are a number of issues getting in the way. What are they – and how might we resolve them?

Education, Health and Care Plans

EHCPs should be well-constructed, based on realistic and personal aspirations, and contain aspirational and specific outcomes. Evidence collected by numerous reviews, the most recent being the Education Select Committee SEND Inquiry, demonstrates that the vast majority are not. Natspec has recommended that DfE introduce a new national EHCP template and better guidance for writing Plans. Timeliness of assessment and finalisation for plans is also an issue; for new EHCPs, SEN stats published by DfE in 2019 show that only 60% were issued within the statutory 20 week deadline in 2018.

Local Authorities

Local authorities are required to inform families with a full range of options and services on their Local Offer websites. With LAs unfamiliar with the FE landscape, and many being unwilling to fund places outside their own area, many colleges and training providers are not included within Local Offers.

An Ofsted thematic report in 2016 reviewed 20 Local Offer websites, and found 16 which "failed to provide sufficiently detailed information...". This lack of information was a particular

problem for those young people with more complex or profound learning difficulties or disabilities". Natspec's own research in 2019 found over half of Local Offers did not list specialist colleges as an option, and mainstream colleges were often hard to locate on websites.

Timeliness Decision Making

The proportion of post-school placements that are confirmed before the March 31 legal deadline each year is tiny. Specialist colleges are reporting that less than 10% of places are confirmed by June, and many students are left in limbo (with all the increased anxiety that results) into August, September or even later. Natspec would like to see LAs working with all post-16

providers to look at supply and demand, develop strategic plans and work jointly across regional areas to account for FE travel patterns and specialist centres.

Quality Provision

All providers should offer a good range of learning opportunities for students with SEND to meet their needs and interests and build on their strengths. Colleges should have rigorous systems for assuring quality, especially if the learning programme is not accredited, and be providing support that prepares the young person to be increasingly independent, including through use of technology (Natspec's TechAbility programme brings together the best examples of this).

High Aspirations

And finally, all post-16 and post-19 study programmes should have high aspirations and be based on outcomes. What kind of adult does the young person want to become? What personalised programme of learning is needed to help them get there? The late teenage and early adult years are critical in determining levels of independence and success in adulthood. And the right education at this stage can save the public purse millions later in life.

Counting the Costs: Fair Wages and Maintenance for 16-18 Year Olds

Joe Dromey, Learning and Work Institute

Introduction

Indirect costs such as transport can have a significant bearing on 16-18 year old's decisions to participate in apprenticeships and full-time further education.

Fair Wages for Apprentices

The National Minimum Wage for apprentices stands at just £4.15, well below half the National Living Wage – the minimum wage for workers aged 25 and above. Despite the lower minimum wage for apprentices, non-compliance is widespread. The government's own [survey of apprentice pay](#) released earlier this year found that one in five level 2 and 3 apprentices were paid below the legal minimum, a rate of illegal underpayment far higher than that seen for non-apprentices.

Child Benefit for Parents of Apprentices

The situation is further complicated by rules around Universal Credit and the benefits system. A young person succeeding in getting onto an apprenticeship can have an impact on their parents' income under Universal Credit. While parents can claim Child Benefit for children living with them under age 20 who are in approved education or training, parents are ineligible to claim if their child is on an apprenticeship. This can mean

a young person's family losing out on over £1,000 a year in vital financial support if they start an apprenticeship.

This is in part a classic problem around joined up government, with responsibilities falling between departments, and between tiers of government. The issue around child benefit is a challenge for Department for Education in its impact on apprentices and their families, but the rules around eligibility are set by Department for Work and Pension. Central government can argue that decisions on transport discounts should be left to local areas, but local government has seen a decade of decline in funding.

Education Maintenance Allowances for Full-Time Students

The Education Maintenance Allowance was designed to address some of these barriers, and to ensure that cost is not a barrier to young people participating in education and training. This means tested allowances was paid to young people aged 16 – 18 whose parents were earning less than £31,000.

The allowance, which cost £580m a year in 2009/10 and provided support to one in three young learners, was scrapped in England in the early years

of the Coalition Government. This came despite positive [evaluation evidence](#) which found that the EMA was successful both in increasing participation, retention and attainment among disadvantaged young people, and therefore represented a cost-effective way to narrow inequalities educational outcomes. The government has been [consulting](#) on the 16 – 19 Bursary Fund, which repealed EMA, and which aims to ensure that all students – regardless of their financial situation - can fully participate in education.

A Cross Government Maintenance Review

If this new government is seeking to level up skills and opportunities across the country, to narrow entrenched inequalities and deliver opportunities for all, it should ensure that no young person is priced out of the education and training opportunity that is right for them. The new government should look across the piece at the barriers to participation, and develop a cross government strategy – with sufficient funding behind it – to ensure that all young people are able to take the path that is right for them.

Levelling-Up More 16-18 Year Olds

Mark Corney, Policy Consultant

Rising Numbers of 16-18 Year Olds

The population of 16-18 year olds is projected to increase significantly between 2020 and 2024. Projections by the ONS for Great Britain estimate that the number of 16-18 year olds will increase from 2.11m in 2020 to 2.38m by 2024 (see Table 1). This is a projected increase of 267,000.

The all-age population of England as share of the GB all-

age population is about 86.7%. And so, a rule of thumb estimate is that the population of 16-18 year olds in England is set to rise from 1.83m in 2020 to 2.06m in 2024, an increase of 230,000 or 12.5%. In 2008, the population of 16-18 year olds in England was 2.02m.

Participating in Full Time Education and Apprenticeships

The premier forms of participation in education

and training post-16 is full-time further education and apprenticeships. At the end of 2018, 91.2% of 16 year olds and 84.9% of 17 year olds were in these forms of education and training. An interesting feature is that participation between 16 and 17 falls in total in these forms of education and training but full-time education falls whilst apprenticeship participation rises albeit from a very low base (see Table 2).

Table 1: Projected Population of 16-18 Year Olds – 2020 and 2024 (GB)

Cohort	2020	2024	Increase
16	718,632	812,824	94,192
17	700,284	788,836	88,552
18	692,748	777,224	84,476
Total	2,111,664	2,378,884	267,220

Source: National Population Projections 2018-based: Principal Population Projection by Single Year of Age 0 to 125.

Table 2: 16 and 17 Year Olds Participating in Full-Time Education and Apprenticeships – End 2018 (England)

	16 594,000	17 607,900
Full-Time Education	87.9%	78.4%
Apprenticeships	3.3%	6.5%
Total	91.2%	84.9%
Jobs 'with' or 'without' Education or Training	2.5%	8.8%
Not Employed but Studying 'Other Education and Training'	3.2%	2.0%
NEET	3.2%	4.3%
Total	8.9%	15.1%

Source: Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16-18 Year Olds, DfE, June 2019

Duty to Participate to the 18th Birthday

Disturbingly, overall participation in full-time education and apprenticeships falls at age 17 despite the duty to participate in education and training until the 18th birthday. A point often forgotten is that the proportion of 16 and 17 year olds not meeting the duty to participate is much greater than those not in education, employment and training (the NEET group).

Data collected by Local Authorities estimates that 7.6% of 16-17 year olds – 83,000 in total – were not meeting the duty to participate in March 2019 (16-18 NEET and Duty to Participate, DfE March 2019).

Earnings Pull

One aspect of the 16-18 education, training and employment market is the fall in the proportion of 16-18 year olds in full-time education with so-called 'Saturday' or 'student' jobs. Yet, there is another feature which is often overlooked. The

proportion of 17 year olds in jobs with apprenticeships, other forms of education and training or without education and training (15.3%) is nearly three times greater than for 16 year olds (5.8%). And so, for nearly 100,000 17 year olds, full-time education is not for them.

Increasing Achievement at Level 3 by age 19

A key objective of 16-18 policy is to increase the proportion of young people achieving a Level 3 qualification – especially in technical education - whilst maintaining education standards. At present, just short of 40% of 19 year olds do not achieve a Level 3 (see Table 3). A Level reform, the introduction of T levels – and the removal of public funding for some existing vocational Level 3 qualifications – and the possibility of limiting the definition of 'apprenticeships' to Level 3 – i.e. Advanced Apprenticeships – stem from this objective.

Level 3 attainment by age 19 is dominated by A Levels. Next in line, but half as large, are existing

Level 3 vocational qualifications. Most strikingly of all, is the low proportion achieving a Level 3 via Advanced Apprenticeships (1.6%).

Achieving Level 2 before Achieving Level 3 by age 19

16 year olds without a Level 2 qualification are highly unlikely to achieve a Level 3 by age 19. Only 5.3% of 19 year olds achieve a Level 3 – via full-time vocational qualifications – without a prior Level 2 (see Table 4). And so, for the vast majority of young people achieving a Level 3 by age 19 a pre-requisite is to have achieved a Level 2 beforehand. A critical question with respect to technical education is whether a Level 2 is necessary pre-requisite to achieve a Level 3.

Increasing Participation at Level 3 at 16

Existing Full-Time Level 3 Programmes

One strategy to increase attainment at Level 3 by age 19 above the 60% mark is to increase participation on full-time

Table 3: Percentage of 19 Year Olds Qualified to Level 3 in 2018 (England)

Cohort	A Levels Applied A Levels	AS Levels	Vocational Qualifications	Advanced Apprenticeships	Other	Percentage
611,951	38.9%	1.0%	18.0%	1.6%	0.6%	60.2%

Source: Level 2 and 3 Achievement in England: Attainment by Age 19, DfE, April 2019

Table 4: Percentage of Young People Qualified to Level 2 in 2018 (England)

	Age 16 2015	Age 17 2016	Age 18 2017	Age 19 2018
611,951	69.5%	76.2%	80.2%	84.0%

Source: Level 2 and 3 Achievement in England: Attainment by Age 19, DfE, April 2019

classroom Level 3 programmes by 16 years immediately on leaving secondary education. A key group is 16 year olds with a Level 2 – usually defined as 5 good GCSEs – but who have not achieved a grade 4+ in maths and/or English.

As a condition of enrolment, post-16 providers – including sixth form and FE colleges – typically insist on GCSE resits in maths and English, and have targeted interventions so that 16 year olds can combine Level 3 study – academic or vocational – and GCSE re-sits in these vital subjects.

Where, however, a 16 year old wishing to enrol on a Level 3 programme with a Grade 3 in maths and/or English must, due to a condition of funding, as a matter of policy re-sit their GCSEs, post-16 providers in practice may allow 16 year olds with a grade 2 in maths and/or English to enrol on Level 3 courses if they commit to attending targeted support programmes to up their grade to 4+.

Level 3 T Levels

Young people aged 16 will be able to enrol on Level 3 T

Levels from September 2020. Whether T Levels increase overall achievement at Level 3 will depend upon the extent to which, other things being equal, they result in more than the current 18% obtaining a Level 3 via existing vocational qualifications.

In terms of GCSEs, the condition of funding does not apply. If 16 year olds have achieved a GCSE grade 3 in maths and/or English, they can enrol on a T Level but will be given flexibility over whether they re-sit their GCSEs and achieve a grade 4+, or sit a level 2 functional skills qualification to satisfy the exit requirement of the T level programme. Failure to achieve maths and English at level 2 by the end of the T Level runs the risk of not gaining the award.

Going forward, an interesting issue is whether post-16 providers delivering T Levels will insist at an institutional level on 16 year olds with a grade 2 in maths and/or English to join targeted GCSE re-sit programmes or allow them to opt for Level 2 functional maths and/or English qualifications. Equally, a key decision for 16 year olds with a grade 3 and below in GCSEs in maths and English who might

be aiming to the use T Level as an entry into full time and part-time higher education at age 18/19, is whether HE providers will look more favourably on T Level achievers with grades 4+ in maths and English compared to those with functional equivalents.

Level 3 Advanced Apprenticeships

Increasing attainment at Level 3 by age 19 is not limited to full-time education, academic or technical. A third pathway is level 3 Advanced Apprenticeships. But to attain, young people must participate. The extremely low proportion of the 19 year old cohort with a Level 3 via Advanced Apprenticeships (1.6%) can partly be explained by the extremely low proportions of 16, 17 and 18 year olds on Level 3+ apprenticeships (see Table 5).

Direct entry at age 16 is tiny: only 1% of the age cohort or 5,940 16 year olds. Entry at age 17 is also limited, with 2.4% of the age cohort entering or 14,600 17 year olds. Participation only climbs at 18 when 4.7% of the cohort enter or 29,400 18 year olds.

Even before the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy in April 2017, the number of

Table 5: Participation by 16, 17 and 18 Year Olds on Level 3+ Apprenticeships – End 2018 (England)

	16	17	18
	594,000	607,900	626,200
Level 3+	1.0%	2.4%	4.7%
Level 2	2.3%	4.1%	3.6%

Source: Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16-18 Year Olds, DfE, June 2019

Advanced Apprenticeships available to 16-18 year olds were low. At the end of 2016, 47,600 16-18 year olds were on Level 3+ Apprenticeships. At the end of 2018, the number was 49,400. Either employers do not need Level 3 advanced apprenticeships, or do not want to hire the young people applying for them.

Progression from Level 2 to Level 3

Achievement of a Level 2 as the highest qualification increases over time until age 19. In 2015, 69.5% of 16 year olds had achieved a Level 2 qualification (mainly in the form of 5 good GCSEs). By the time they turn 19, a further 15.5% had gained a Level 2 to 84.0% (see Table 6), although 5.0% had apparently skipped Level 2 and achieved a Level 3. Taking this into account, about 79% of 19 year olds in 2018 had achieved a Level 2 as their highest qualification, an increase of 10ppts between age 16 and age 19.

The main source of increased Level 2 achievement is vocational qualifications (9.9% of the cohort) rather apprenticeships (2.9%) or 5 good GCSEs (2.2%). Importantly, however, achievement at Level 2 (79%) is greater than achievement at Level 3 (60%),

equivalent to 100,000 19 year olds. Achievement, of course, is not the same as participation but the current 16-18 system seems to be failing to convert Level 2 achievement into Level 3 achievement by age 19.

Full-Time Education: Level 2 to Level 3

In 2016, around 17% of 16 year olds were on full-time Level 2 programmes. By comparison, 63.6% were on Level 3 programmes, with 48.4% on A/AS programmes. In 2017, the proportion of 17 year olds on full-time Level 3 programmes increased to 64.5%, with 43.7% on AS/A levels (see Table 7).

Given that the proportion of the cohort gaining a Level 2 increased by 7% between the age of 16 and 17 (see Table 6 above) and the achievement of Level 2 is typically a precursor to progression to Level 3, the proportion of 17 year olds with a Level 2 enrolling on Level 3 programmes should be much higher than the 1% recorded in 2017.

The increase in Level 3 participation between age 16 and 17 masks a fall in A/AS level participation (-4.7%) and an increase in other Level 3 (+5.6%). But if staying-on in full-

time education after age 17 by progression from a full-time one-year vocational Level 2 course to a two-year vocational Level 3 course were the norm, the increase in Level 3 participation would be much higher than 1%. And it is, of course, from age 17 when the proportion who are in jobs - with or without training including apprenticeships - jumps to 15.3% compared to 5.8% (see Table 2).

Apprenticeships: Level 2 to Level 3

Progression from a Level 2 apprenticeship to a Level 3 advanced apprenticeships is limited. There were nearly twice as many 16 and 17 year olds in 2016 and 2017 on Level 2 apprenticeships (54,000) as there were 17 and 18 year olds in 2017 and 2018 on Level 3+ apprenticeships (29,000) (see Table 8). By definition, however, ending public funding for Level 2 apprenticeships would cut off this progression route to Level 3 apprenticeships altogether.

Full-Time Education at Level 2 to Level 3 Apprenticeships

It is easy to believe that many 17 and 18 year olds achieving a Level 2 via full-time education might wish to trade-up and gain a job with an Advanced Apprenticeship.

Table 6: Percentage of Young People Qualified to Level 2 by Qualification Type in 2018 (England)

Total At 16	5 GCSEs	Apprenticeships	Vocational Qualifications	Level 3 Qualifications	Other	Total At 19
63.5%	2.2%	2.9%	9.9%	5.3%	0.2%	84.0%

Source: Level 2 and 3 Achievement in England: Attainment by Age 19, DfE, April 2019

And yet, fewer than 55,000 17 and 18 year olds in 2018 had jobs with Advanced Apprenticeships.

A Transition Year to Level 3 T Levels

A specific approach to increase participation and achievement at Level 3 by age 19 is to enable 16 year olds with or without a Level 2 qualification to undertake a transition year before embarking on two-year full-time Level 3 programmes. This is central to increasing progression onto Level 3 T Levels from age 17. Unlike the full T level programme, the conditionthe condition of funding for maths and English will

apply to this group of learners. This means that some learners may be faced with GCSE resits during their transition phase, but once they progress to the full T level programme, they would be able to take functional skills as an alternative. Even though work experience will be integral to the Transition Programme - and offered alongside the relevant maths and English courses – a crucial question educationalists are asking is whether a stand-alone ‘Level 2’ qualification should be part of it. And to reiterate, a 16 year old with a grade 2 GCSE in maths and English who wishes to keep their options open about

progressing from the Transition Year to T Levels to entry into full-time higher education at age 18/19 would need to give careful consideration to opting for GCSE re-sits than taking functional equivalents to be reasonably confident of a place at a higher education institute (university or FE college).

In England, progression to Level 3 is typically after a Level 2 qualification has been achieved beforehand. Achieving a recognised Level 2 qualification as part of a transition year would ensure 17 and 18 year olds have ‘something’ - in addition to work experience - if they decide not

Table 7: Participation in Full-Time Courses: Level 2 and Level 3 between 2016, 2017 and 2018 (England)	
	Share of Cohort
Full-Time Level 2 – Age 16 End 2016	17.2%
Full-Time Level 3 – Age 16 End 2016	63.6%
<i>of which</i>	
A/AS Levels	48.4%
Other	15.2%
Full-Time Level 3 – Age 17 End 2017	64.5%
<i>of which</i>	
A/AS Levels	43.7%
Other	20.8%
Full-Time Level 3 – Age 18 End 2018	13.3%
<i>of which</i>	
A/AS Levels	3.6%
Other	9.7%

Source: Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16-18 Year Olds, DfE, June 2019

Table 8: Participation by 16, 17 and 18 Year Olds Level 3+ and Level 2 Apprenticeships – End 2016, 2017 and 2018 (England)			
	2016 16	2017 17	2018 18
	616,000	620,500	626,200
Level 3+	0.9%	2.3%	4.7%
Level 2	2.9%	4.4%	3.6%

Source: Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16-18 Year Olds, DfE, June 2019

to sign-up to a further two years of full-time education. Indeed, young people who achieve their Level 2 at age 17 or 18 through full-time further education could ultimately conclude that another two-years of full-time study to age 19/20 is not for them however well T Levels are designed, including access to a valuable work placement and high quality pastoral care.

The Need for an Income

Even for 17 year olds with who gain a Level 2 and might wish to progress to a Level 3 on a full-time basis find the prospect of doing so on little or no income daunting. Not all 17 year olds can expect their parents to transfer child benefit and child tax credits to them and many will not be eligible for bursary grants. Student jobs are also diminishing. A job with some money might be viewed as a better prospect than full-time education without any.

Succeeding at Level 2 by age 19 is 'Success for Some'

Despite the well-intentioned focus on increasing progression and achievement at Level 3 by age 19, the danger is that enabling more young people to acquire a Level 2 by the same age is equally desirable and would count as a success for many. Close to 100,000 young people aged 19 – about 1 in 6 of the age cohort - do not achieve a Level 2.

Level 2 Classroom Learning and Apprenticeships

The first order question is whether the achievement of Level 2 qualifications remains a policy objective for the 16-18 phase: if it does, the consequent

issue is whether Level 2 participation and achievement should be done via classroom based only learning - full-time or part-time – or a combination of classroom-based learning and apprenticeships at Level 2 should be followed, noting the need for a ruthless drive on achievement rates for each.

Ending Funding for Level 2 Apprenticeships

Any decision to cease public funding for Level 2 apprenticeships even if phased over time would have an impact on 16-18 year olds on Level 2 apprenticeships. In 2018, about 62,000 16-18 year olds were on Level 2 apprenticeships (see Table 8). To avoid a rise in NEET and an increase in the proportion of 16-17 year olds not meeting the duty to participate, extra places in full-time further education would need to be created.

Back to the Need for an Income

To encourage more young people to study full-time rather than become NEET, as apprenticeships which have a wage attached to them were phased out, increased eligibility and levels of financial support might well be required.

Level 1 and Entry Pathways

Predictably, the focus on Level 3 and GCSE re-sits takes the eye away from the work by post-16 providers with 16-18 year olds on Level 1 and Entry Pathways.

Level 1 Participation and Progression

About 34,000 16-18 year olds are on full-time Level 1 programmes.

At 16, 3.4% of the age cohort attend these courses, falling to 1.5% at age 17 and 0.7% at age 18. Many will not have a maths and/or English GCSE grade 4+. Some will be encouraged to re-sit their GCSEs. For many progression to a full-time Level 2 course will be a real achievement but so too will getting a job.

Other Courses

A similar number of 16-18 year olds, 34,000, are on what are defined as 'other courses' in the national statistics. This covers all courses at below Level 1 as well as young people attending Pupil Referral Units and specialised colleges (where the qualification level is unknown).

The 'Maths and English' Problem

A story of the 40% at 16, and the 30% at 19

Cutting across the agenda to increase participation and achievement at Level 3 and indeed Level 2 is low rates of attainment in maths and English.

More than 40% of 16 year olds in state funded schools in England do not achieve a Level 2 in both maths and English after 5 years of secondary education. At 16, it is GCSEs in maths and English that are studied. A pass in now defined as a grade 4+.

At 19, nearly 30% still do not have a Level 2 in maths and English and some will have spent one or two years in full-time or part-time further education. Over 95% of 19 year olds with a Level 2 in maths and English hold it the form of GCSEs rather than functional skills qualifications.

For 16 year olds in 2015, just over 61% had achieved a Level 2 in maths and English primarily in the form of GCSEs (see Table 9). When they became 19 in 2018, just under 71% had secured a Level 2 in maths and English, with nearly the entire improvement due to GCSEs.

Full-Time Education: Policy Changes

In 2014/15, the DfE made changes for young people in full-time study aged 16-19 who had not achieved a Level 2 in maths and English. This resulted in young people having to study maths and/or English programme as part of their further education. From 2015/16, young people with a GCSE grade D/3 in maths and/or English would have to re-sit GCSEs until they achieved a Grade 4+ or their studies ended. Although only those with a GCSE grade 3 must re-sit maths and English, 16-19 year olds with grade 2 and below also re-sit them because parents, young people and providers recognise the importance employers attach to a standard pass when recruiting.

Special Education Needs

Young people with low needs are supported through what is known as 'SEN support'. Those with complex needs are supported through Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans. Traditionally the debate on SEN has concentrated on pupils under the age of 16 in schools. There has been a growing realisation that SEN does not stop at 16.

Developments in SEN policy has extended to include 16 to 24 year olds. Support for post-16 students with special educational needs and disabilities is different to support pre-16 pupils. Nevertheless, it is difficult to get a clear picture of the number of 16-18 year olds with special education needs – including as a share of the 16-18 cohort – and therefore an idea of the scale of specific measures to assist the 16-18 SEN group.

15 Year Olds: 90,500 with Special Education Needs

According to one source of DfE data, there were 90,500 aged 15 and attending state schools – mainstream and special – with special education

needs. Of these, 68,957 were on SEN support and 21,554 had statements or ECH Plans (Level 2 and 3 Achievement in England: Attainment by Age 19, DfE, April 2019). Even allowing for the fact that some 15 year olds in private education might have special education needs, a SEN group of 90,500 would be equivalent to at least 14.6% of the cohort of 15 year olds in 2018.

16-18 Year Olds

On the assumption that special education needs – low level as well as complex ones – do not disappear at 16 – a rough estimate of the number of 16-18 year olds with SEN is perhaps 260,000. This a vast and extraordinary number and there is a possibility that it could rise as the increasing cohort of 15 year olds drives the population of 16-18 year olds upwards by 2024.

EHC Plans Made when Young People are aged 16-19

A small number of young people acquire complex special education needs between 16 and 19 are EHC Plans are put in place. About 2,300 EHC Plans were put in place when young people were aged between 16 and 19.

Table 9: Level 2 Maths and English Achievement at Level 2 by Type at age 16 in 2015 and age 19 in 2018 (England)				
	Total Level 2	GCSE	Functional	
Age 16 2015	61.5%	59.0%	2.5%	
Age 19 2018	70.7%	68.1%	2.6%	
Change	+9.2	+9.1	+0.1	

Source: Level 2 and 3 Achievement in England: Attainment by Age 19, DfE, April 2019

16-17 Year Olds with SEN in Education and Training

According to data collected by local authorities for the DfE, 88.6% of 16-17 year olds known to them with SEN support and 87.0% with EHN Plans were in education and training (16-18 NEET and Duty to Participate, DfE March 2019). On the face of it, this is an excellent set of figures. On the other, local authorities report that they are in contact with 92,000 16-17 year olds with special education needs when DfE data would indicate the number should be c180,000.

Educational Achievement by age 19

An important point to state is that

data on education achievement by specific groups refers to pupils aged 15 in state schools in England. The data shows there are widespread attainment gaps at all levels by 19 year olds with SEN and without SEN when they attended state schools at age 15.

The difference at Level 3 by age 19 is 36.5ppts (see Table 10). And it begs the question whether it is realistic or not to aspire to increase attainment above 57% if, to do so, many more 19 year olds with SEN will have to do so and when educators recognise the large difference between the ability to achieve a Level 3 compared to a Level 2.

At Level 2, the difference is slightly lower at 33.1ppts

although achievement by SEN students more than doubles from 24% to 54%. The existing 16-18 system is clearly assisting 16-19 year olds with special education needs to achieve at Level 2 and it raises the question that achieving a standalone qualification is good for some disadvantaged young people and a transition year without one might not meet their needs. Closing the attainment gap between SEN and non-SEN young people is still, however, highly desirable.

In terms of achieving GCSE maths and English at Grade 4+, the gap between 19 year olds without SEN and with SEN is very large at over 44ppts. On the other hand, the proportion achieving them by age 19 is nearly 8ppts.

Table 10: Percentage of Young People with Special Education Needs achieving Level 3, Level 2 and Maths and English at Level 2 by age 19 in 2018 (England)

Proportion State School Pupils aged 15	16	19
All Level 3		57.2%
Non-SEN		63.1%
SEN		26.6%
All Level 2	62.6%	82.2%
Non-SEN	70.1%	87.6%
SEN	24.2%	54.5%
Level 2 Maths & English		
Non-SEN	67.0%	77.9%
SEN	22.6%	33.8%
Level 2 as GCSEs Maths & English		
Non-SEN	66.9%	75.5%
SEN	22.4%	30.1%
Level 2 as Other Maths & English		
Non-SEN	0.1%	2.4%
SEN	0.2%	3.7%

Source: Level 2 and 3 Achievement in England: Attainment by Age 19, DfE, April 2019

Schools and colleges are certainly assisting 16-19 year olds with SEN to gain good GCSEs in maths and English although too many still fail. There is also the sensitive issue of whether it is correct to ask 16-18 year olds with SEN to re-sit GCSEs whether they are mandated to, or not if they fail continuously.

The Cost of Participating in 16-18 Education and Training

Deprivation and Post-16 Attainment

Poverty and deprivation adversely effects achievement of 5 good GCSEs (Level 2) as well as GCSE maths and English by age 15. It is no wonder, therefore, that

attainment at Level 3, Level 2 and GCSE maths and English is linked to poverty and deprivation. Indeed, there are large attainment gaps between the least deprived and the lower middle deprived let alone the most deprived (see Table 11).

The gap at Level 3 attainment by age 19 is nearly 20ppts. Whereas attainment by 15 year olds from the least deprived by age 19 is 70%, attainment by those from the lower middle group is 51%. And more than 1 in 5 15 year olds from the lower middle group do not achieve a Level 2 by age 19. In terms of GCSEs in maths and English, the gap between the least deprived and lower middle groups at 16 persists at age 19. More than a third of 19 year olds

from the lower middle group at age 15 do not get a good pass in GCSE maths and English.

Cost to Families and Income for Young People

If the new Government wants more young people from poorer households to achieve good passes in GCSE maths and English, Level 2 and Level 3 by age 19 it must recognise two points: first, the cost to poorer parents/guardians of keeping 16-18 year olds at home so they can participate in education, and secondly, 16-18 year olds from poorer households want money in their pockets to have some kind of life outside of education but do not have the bank of mum and dad to turn to.

Table 11: Percentage of Young People from Least Deprivation and Lower achieving Level 3, Level 2 and Maths and English at Level 2 by age 19 in 2018 (England)

Proportion State School Pupils aged 15	16	19
All Level 3		57.2%
Least Lower Middle		70.5% 51.4%
All Level 2	62.6%	82.2%
Least Lower Middle	77.1% 56.9%	90.8% 79.0%
Level 2 Maths & English		
All	59.8%	70.7%
Least Lower Middle	73.8% 54.3%	83.1% 66.0%
Level 2 as GCSEs Maths & English		
All	59.6%	68.1%
Least Lower Middle	73.6% 54.1%	81.1% 63.1%
Level 2 as Other Maths & English		
All	0.2%	2.6%
Least Lower Middle	0.1% 0.2%	2.0% 2.9%

Source: Level 2 and 3 Achievement in England: Attainment by Age 19, DfE, April 2019

Assisting Participation and Achievement through Financial Support

The current system of financial support to facilitate post-16 participation is extremely complex as can be seen in Table 12. Payments by the state to parents and students has been cut back, heavily means-tested and what is left targeted on the

very poorest households and students.

A bright spot has been the extension for free-meals to 16-18 year olds attending FE colleges rather than just those attending school sixth forms, not least because more 16-18 year attend FE colleges than school sixth forms and indeed more disadvantaged 16-18 year olds

do so. Nevertheless, if the new Conservative Government wishes to level-up every 16-18 year old, a more generous, extensive and equitable system of financial support across all pathways is necessary.

Table 12: Income Sources to 16-18 Year Olds and Parents by Pathway			
Status of 16-18 Year Olds – Examples			
	Full-Time Education	Job with Apprenticeship	Job without an Apprenticeship
Payments to Parents			
Child Benefit	Yes But means tested	No	No
Child Tax Credit	Yes But heavily means tested	No	No
Payments to Young People			
Bursary Grants	Yes But heavily means tested and not as extensive as Education Maintenance Allowances	No	
Wages	Yes if gain a student job but such jobs in decline	Yes Under 19 paid apprentice rate	Yes Under-18 minimum wage rate 18-20 minimum wage rate

Reflections

Two Challenges

1 The new Conservative Government must ensure no 16-18 year old is left behind during a period of an expanding cohort of 16-18 year olds and level-up attainment of 16-18 year olds with special education needs and from poor and low middle income households.

Funding Beyond the Cost of Provision

2 Tackling these challenges will require funding the 16-18 phase of education and training more equitably compared to pre-16 education and higher education. But the funding question goes beyond funding rates for provision and between academic and technical education. A more generous, extensive, equitable and less complex system of financial support to parents and young people in full-time education and apprenticeships is needed.

16-18 Year Olds must be In It to Win It

3 To achieve GCSEs in maths and English, Level 2 or Level 3 qualifications, 16-18 year olds must be participating in recognised education and training in the first place. Education policy makers should desist from putting the cart before the horse. As the population of 16-18 year olds in England breaks the 2 million mark by 2024, now is the time

for the Conservative Government to make effective the duty to participate to their 18th birthdays.

Full-Time Study for Two Years from 17 to Achieve a Level 3 will not Suit Everyone

4 Whether a transition year at 16 is intended to facilitate progression to T Levels or A levels to achieve a Level 3, two years of full-time study will not be suitable for every 17 year-old. Some young people might decide they have had enough of full-time study, however excellent the content and structure of T Levels might be. Others might wish to stay-on and benefit from the promise of a work placement but decide on financial grounds they cannot afford to do so. The prospect of some money from minimum wage jobs at age 17, 18 and 19 might outweigh the limited amount of child benefit and uncertain eligibility for child tax credits to their parents, and uncertain eligibility for the 16-19 Bursary Grant and diminishing changes of getting a 'Saturday' job.

Review Availability of Advanced Apprenticeships for 16-18 Year Olds

5 Advanced Apprenticeships for 16-18 year olds are an alternative pathway from A levels and T Levels to increase attainment at Level 3. Some 17 year olds might wish to progress to an Advanced Apprenticeship after completing a transition year. Advanced

Apprenticeships are seen as the gold standard for apprenticeships and there has been debate about limiting public funding to Level 3 Advanced Apprenticeships only. The reality is that the number of Advanced Apprenticeships at both 16 and 17 is a relatively small fraction of each cohort. Even at age 18, the share is 4.5% or about 29,500. Crucially, the low number of Advanced Apprenticeships at age 16-18 predates the Apprenticeship Levy. The new Conservative Government should consider what steps can be taken to expand Advanced Apprenticeships for 16-18 year olds.

Don't Forget Level 2 and Below

6 The laudable aim of increasing progression and achievement at Level 3 by 16-18 year olds should not blind policy makers of the importance of Level 2 and below qualifications to many young people. For some, achievement of a Level 2 or a Level 1 followed by a job is a personal success.

A Brave Decision to Remove Funding for Level 2 Apprenticeships

7 Any decision to cease funding Level 2 apprenticeships from the Apprenticeship Programme Budget would have a negative impact on 16-18 year olds. More than 62,000 16-18 year olds are on Level 2 apprenticeships. The new Conservative Government would need to insure against

a rise in the number of 16-17 year olds not meeting the duty to participate and 16-18 year old NEET (not in education, employment or training) by funding an extra 62,000 places in full-time education at a cost of £250m. Of course, the NEET group could rise if 16-18 year olds turn their back on full-time education and decide to be unemployed instead. A more sensible approach would be to guarantee funding for 16-18 year olds on apprenticeships by transferring the cost from the Apprenticeship Programme Budget to the 16-18 Education Participation Budget.

Maintain Level 2 Qualifications

8 Achieving a Level 2 before progressing to a Level 3 is the norm in 16-18 education. Level 2 achievement between 16 and 19 increases by 20ppts to 84%. Young people with special education needs also do particularly well at Level 2.

And a 17 year old completing a transition year which does not have a standalone Level 2 qualification and decides not to enrol on a T Level would have little to show for it. Level 2 qualifications should be maintained in full-time further education and form part of the T Level Transition Programme.

GCSE Maths and English Re-sits: The Brexit Issue of 16-18 Education

9 Nothing quite like the maths and English GCSE re-sit policy ignites such polarised views in 16-18 education. It is the Brexit issue of the 16-18 phase. Progress is being made, but at what cost? For those who make the grade, the benefits should not be dismissed, but for those who repeatedly fail the impact can be devastating. Consider, for example, 16-18 year olds with special education needs. At age 16, 22% have a GCSE grade 4+ in maths and English: by age 19, the proportion is 30%. This is of

immense credit to them and their teachers. Many others, however, will have failed not once but twice or sometimes even more. Compromises are in short supply but we need to break the re-sit impasse urgently.

Child Benefit to Parents of Apprentices, EMAs for Young People

10 To underpin participation, and enhance the chances of achievement of all levels of education, the new Government should use the Budget and Spending Review to assess improvements to 16-18 financial support. On the one hand, it should consider extending eligibility of child benefit to parents with 16-18 year olds on apprenticeships. On the other, it should re-introduce Education Maintenance Allowances paid to 16-18 year olds in full-time further education.

Michael Lemin, NCFE

ncfe.

www.ncfe.org.uk

NCFE designs, develops and certifies NCFE and CACHE branded qualification with over 500 national accredited qualifications in NCFE's portfolio. All are supported by NCFE's exceptional customer service and unique, friendly approach. Last year, around 600,000 learners from over 3,500 educational institutions chose NCFE to move their careers forward. A registered educational charity with a heritage in learning that goes back over 170 years, NCFE is proud of its unique approach.

campaign 
for learning

www.campaignforlearning.org.uk

The Campaign for Learning is an independent charity which works for social and economic inclusion through learning. The Campaign is a specialist in engaging people in learning. We work with partners to research, design and deliver innovative programmes and approaches that support people wherever they are to access life-changing learning opportunities.