



FACTSHEET

HOW BUSINESSES CAN SUPPORT EDUCATION DURING COVID-19

COVID-19 and education

The outbreak of COVID-19 has led to large-scale disruption for businesses, communities, and the economy. Public services have also suffered the effects of lockdown and the closure of schools has put increased pressure on people in terms of childcare, education, and wellbeing.

School closures have also put the educational outcomes of children at risk as young people still in education are now trying to complete learning remotely with a dramatically changed assessment system.

It is well documented that children from poorer backgrounds suffer the effects of summer learning loss more acutely than those from well-off households¹. This impact will likely be mirrored in the disruption caused by COVID-19. In the UK, we know that family earnings have a direct impact on a child's education – the current crisis could easily exacerbate educational inequality if left unchecked.

The negative impact of the crisis on education outcomes will spill over into employment. Before

¹ Quinn, D. & Polikoff, M., 2017, Summer learning loss – what is it, and what can we do about it [online], accessed here: <https://www.brookings.edu/research/summer-learning-loss-what-is-it-and-what-can-we-do-about-it/>

the crisis, over 700,000 young people were not in employment, education, or training (NEET). It is extremely likely that this number will continue to increase as redundancies, redeployment and a recession take hold and as the closure of education outlets, youth clubs and children's services begins to be felt.

COVID-19 WILL CHALLENGE OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM AS NEVER BEFORE

Unfortunately, COVID-19 has also had an impact on one of the most important factors to prevent a young person becoming NEET: a positive qualification outcome. Research by Impetus highlights that young people with low qualifications are twice as likely to be NEET as those with five GCSEs (29% vs 15%). Young people with high qualifications experience the lowest NEET rates (8%)².

Business in the Community (BITC) members are leading the way in continuing to support schools and children's education during the lockdown.

Our focus is now on what more we can do to support schools to tackle the attainment gap.

² Establishing the Employment Gap, 2019, Impetus, accessed here: <https://impetus.org.uk/assets/publications/Report/Youth-Jobs-Gap-Establishing-the-Employment-Gap-report.pdf>





Calls to action

Business in the Community has developed the following calls to action for businesses seeking to support schools during COVID-19. Drawn from the work of the [Education Leadership Team](#), these examples will help businesses responding to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to have a positive impact on communities.

1. Deliver educational outreach remotely

Work out how you can use technology to continue to deliver your educational outreach programmes remotely.

2. Donate equipment

Consider how any unused IT equipment could be repurposed to enable remote learning for families who need it most.

3. Develop resources

Create resources and learning packs to support parents to home school.

4. Think about the wider impact of school closures

Engage with schools in your community or who you are partnered with to work out their specific needs.

Deliver services remotely

Rules on social distancing have made volunteering and working with schools more complicated than before. However, support is not impossible and many businesses have been able to use technology to deliver their volunteering and educational outreach remotely.

KPMG have converted their business as usual employee volunteering to virtual volunteering, where possible. This includes a range of remote education volunteering opportunities covering employability and skills support. Examples include video feedback to students on business pitches, online study groups for students participating in their Numeracy in the News project, and individual

subject tuition for GCSE and A-Level students as part of the 'Access Project'.

In addition, **KPMG** have worked with Governors for Schools to develop guidance and support for their **KPMG** School Governors, so that volunteers are equipped to continue supporting their schools remotely during this time.

Goldman Sachs have been able to continue their Business Class partnerships with some virtual engagement. This includes closing out a two-year mentoring programme with 20 students over Zoom where all mentors were DBS checked and with a member of school staff dialing in. They have also been working on video clips to share with students on CV writing.

Businesses should consider how they can deliver volunteering remotely using charities who may have an existing infrastructure and an audience. For example, **Capita** are continuing to deliver remote volunteering opportunities for their employees through Young Enterprise, while **bp** are working with Speakers for Schools to develop remote work experience opportunities.

Donate equipment

The rapid shift to remote learning has had a huge impact on many children's education. It is important to consider how access to equipment and connectivity acts as a barrier to learning for children and families from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Businesses can seek to level the playing field in this respect through donations of IT equipment which can then be distributed to families who need it most.

Through the [National Business Response Network](#), **bp** have already donated laptops which will be used to support families without access to IT equipment. Business in the Community is also working with [FutureDotNow](#) on its coordinated





campaign to support vulnerable and disadvantaged adults with access to the equipment needed to learn remotely.

Develop resources

While donations of equipment can be useful, the realities of delivering on these requests can be challenging. As an interim measure, businesses have considered how they develop paper resources for parents to use.

UBS have funded a series of activity packs to support education and engagement for acutely disadvantaged families from their partner schools in Hackney, as well as continuing remote mentoring.

Siemens and **bp** both have high quality education resources available online, originally created for teachers to use to enhance learning. These are now being developed to support parents, using data insights from these platforms to create content that families will value and use.

KPMG have redeveloped their National Numeracy Day resources for parents and carers to use at home with children who are not in school. Materials from their Numeracy in the News project with the Economist Educational Foundation and their flagship employability skills programme, WorkReady, have also been adapted for use at home.

Aware of the volume of resources being produced for parents, **KPMG** are also working with the Careers and Enterprise Company to make sure resources are shared in a sensible way alongside other resources. They have also shared the

resources internally via their Family Network to support their employees' homeschooling efforts.

Think about the wider impact of school closures

School closures are already having a huge impact on children's education; however, the impacts extend beyond simply the lack of face-to-face time with teachers. For families who rely on free school meals to feed their children, the closure of schools is having a huge negative impact. This is compounded by the fact that working parents in families eligible for free school meals will likely be working in sectors that are most exposed to the health or economic risks associated with the virus.

While the government has introduced a voucher scheme to make sure that children do not go hungry during the lockdown, this scheme has unfortunately been beset by delays³, and setbacks⁵. Reduced access to food will have a negative impact on a child's physical and mental wellbeing, as well as their education, by reducing their ability to concentrate. Holiday hunger is a known problem in the UK. Nearly 60% of National Education Union members note that children in their school had experienced it⁶. School closures because of COVID-19 will replicate, and likely worsen, these conditions.

UBS are working closely with their partner schools and Chefs in Schools to use school kitchens as meal production and distribution hubs to provide weekly meal hampers for the most vulnerable children and families. They are also supporting the Felix Project to link suppliers with surplus food and charities feeding vulnerable people across London.

³ Coronavirus: families still waiting for free school meal vouchers, 2020, BBC News, accessed here:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-52488208>

⁴ Schools give emergency food to families with nothing to eat, 2020, BBC News, accessed here:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-52325332>

⁵ 'Humiliation' as school meal vouchers fail at till, 2020, BBC News, accessed here:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-52551464>

⁶ Child poverty – the facts, National Education Union, 2020, accessed here: <https://neu.org.uk/child-poverty-facts>





DON'T FORGET...

Work in partnership

Any business wanting to start supporting education outcomes should remember that there are lots of charities and support organisations that you can partner with to get your programme up and running. All the businesses mentioned above have worked in partnership with other organisations to achieve positive outcomes. These include working with schools or University Technical Colleges directly, or working with charities, support organisations, or sector bodies such as Careers & Enterprise Company, Speakers for Schools, or Young Enterprise.

For businesses who have existing partnerships, it is important to provide the *right* support at the *right* time. Businesses should not assume the needs of the schools they are partnered with and instead should communicate regularly to work out what the needs are, what services schools are trying to prioritise, and what work has already been successfully delivered. This will ensure a coordinated and efficient approach which does not duplicate effort.

Focus on essential skills

Ensuring all young people can build successful working lives requires us to have a focus that is beyond qualifications alone. The Youth Jobs Gap report from Impetus (2019) highlights that 'disadvantaged young people are around 50% more likely to be NEET than their similarly qualified but better-off peers.'

As we enter a period of recession and continued economic uncertainty, it is vital to build essential skills – the skills that are required for *any* job – into your educational delivery to ensure that young people have the skills employers know they need in an uncertain labour market. The Office for Budget Responsibility is predicting that up to 2 million jobs could be lost if the economy shrinks by 35% and we know that young people will be disproportionality represented within that 2 million.

Business in the Community is urging all UK businesses to recognise and develop the essential skills of their current and future workforce, which includes embedding essential skills development in your education programme delivery.

For more information on essential skills and how you can use the Skills Builder Universal Framework to measure and develop them, see our [Essential Skills campaign web page](#).

