

# Fair Education Alliance - Collective response to the Spending Review Inquiry

## Who we are

The Fair Education Alliance is a coalition of approximately 200 of the UK's leading organisations<sup>1</sup> from business, education and the third sector. These organisations have come together to create a fair and equitable education system, ending the persistent achievement gap between young people from the poorest communities and their wealthier peers.

As an Alliance, we are calling for investment commitments in the Autumn budget of at least £1 billion per year for at least the next three years. Specifically we are calling for this investment:

- a) To be targeted at improving outcomes for children from disadvantaged backgrounds; and
- b) To tackle long standing inequalities in education as part of the government's levelling up agenda.

Our submission sets out why this investment is long needed and how this need has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

We have set out 7 areas for investment which our 200 organisations collectively believe would create an education system which meets the needs of the most disadvantaged young people. By meeting these needs, this investment will improve overall outcomes for young people and enable the current Government to achieve the aims of the levelling up agenda.

## Case for investment

Although high-attaining pupils in England perform very well when looked at in comparison to international standards, as a nation we continue to face challenges around improving low performance. This is even more pressing as low performance in education is highly correlated with persistent disadvantage, including poverty, special educational needs and other characteristics of vulnerability.<sup>2</sup>

In 2019, the most persistently disadvantaged children (on free school meals for more than 80% of their school life) were on average 22 months behind their more advantaged peers - this gap has not improved since 2011.<sup>3</sup> What is more, data shows that the overall attainment gap between disadvantaged young people and their more advantaged peers has stopped closing for the first time in a decade and has started to widen as more children have fallen into deeper poverty and more

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<sup>1</sup>Fair Education Alliance. (n.d.). *Our Members*. [online] Available at: <https://www.faireducation.org.uk/alliance-members> [Accessed 21 Sep. 2020].

<sup>2</sup>Hutchinson, J., Reader, M. and Akhal, A. (2020). *Education in England Annual Report*. [online] Education Policy Institute. Available at: [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/543e665de4b0fbb2b140b291/t/5f3f9a353e183776e6f0cb4a/1598003777133/2020\\_ReportCard\\_FE\\_A.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/543e665de4b0fbb2b140b291/t/5f3f9a353e183776e6f0cb4a/1598003777133/2020_ReportCard_FE_A.pdf).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

persistent disadvantage. When put into context, the incidence of people living more than 50% below the poverty line has increased over the last two decades<sup>4</sup>. Statistics show that around 55% of people living in deep poverty are also living in persistent poverty which plays a considerable role in geographical disparities, and in the disadvantage gap.<sup>5</sup> Although there have been efforts from the Government, businesses, charities and the third sector to bridge this gap, thus far, it has not made a significant impact on the educational outcomes of young people, particularly the most disadvantaged.

We therefore welcome the opportunity presented by the Governments levelling-up strategy to create systemic change and reduce educational inequality. By improving educational outcomes for all young people (through working with the FEA and civil society) this Government has the opportunity to achieve it's ambitions, create a fairer education system, improve educational outcomes and ultimately level-up economic opportunity across the UK.

However, it is well understood that currently not all areas of the UK are able to access the same opportunities, and this starts with education. The disadvantage gap in some areas of England is hugely disproportionate to others. For example, the disadvantage gap for Secondary School children in Blackpool is 26.3 months whereas in Westminster it is just 0.5 months. **These contrasts reflect the need for effective national policy change backed up by appropriate funding to level-up education provision across England, especially as the disadvantage gap continues long after a young person has left school.**

In 2019 the balance of power shifted in favour of the current Government and the Conservative party was elected for the first time into areas which were previously Labour strongholds. The average earnings of wards gained in this election now means that conservative held wards have earnings 5% lower than Labour held seats.<sup>6</sup> The seats which were gained in this election also have higher unemployment rates than wards held by Labour MP's, and are areas which have been disproportionately impacted by Covid-19.<sup>7</sup> Whilst we recognise this challenge, we also see it as an opportunity. The Government can now act to level-up these areas by starting at the root causes. Acting now to ensure that everyone is able to gain basic qualifications for example, will enable key long-term changes in the economy.

**Even before Covid-19, inequalities among pupils were already worsening.<sup>8</sup>**

During the first phase of the pandemic, we saw inequalities exacerbated as pupils were unable to attend school or access education. **The additional £1 billion of 'catch-up' funding which was given to the education sector to support young people during this time was very welcome and critical.** Some young people benefited from provisions such as free school meals and devices throughout school closures, and in the coming months will benefit from much needed catch-up provision. Yet it was also a missed opportunity to provide effective support to the most disadvantaged, and many young people were still left behind.

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<sup>4</sup> Stroud, P. (2020). *Poverty and Covid-19*. [online] Social Metrics Commission. Available at: <https://socialmetricscommission.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/SMC-Poverty-and-Covid-Report.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> O'Brien MP, N. (2020). *Measuring up for levelling up*. [online] Onward. Available at: <https://www.ukonward.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Measuring-up-for-levelling-up-2.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Hutchinson, J., Reader, M. and Akhal, A. (2020). *Education in England Annual Report*. [online] Education Policy Institute. Available at: [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/543e665de4b0fbb2b140b291/t/5f3f9a353e183776e6f0cb4a/1598003777133/2020\\_ReportCard\\_FEA.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/543e665de4b0fbb2b140b291/t/5f3f9a353e183776e6f0cb4a/1598003777133/2020_ReportCard_FEA.pdf).

Whilst this emergency funding was very needed at the time and should still be a priority, we need to think beyond Covid-19. It is crucial that we consider spending not only to meet the short-term challenges that have arisen from the pandemic, but that we consider spending for systemic change to fix the root causes. It is only then that we will see real improvement in the overall outcomes for education and in turn the future of the UK.

**In recent years the Fair Education Alliance has been working with organisations across education, business and the third sector to put together a comprehensive plan to improve outcomes in education for all young people and level-up opportunities across England.**

We have drawn on the expertise, evidence and experiences of our 200 members to create a clear consensus on what a fairer education system needs to look like. This is an education system that:

- gives all young people a rounded education, so that they develop skills, are looked after emotionally and physically, and can achieve academically no matter their personal circumstances;
- engages parents and communities of all backgrounds, so that education does not stop at the school gates;
- supports, incentivises and rewards teachers and leaders to enable all children to thrive – including incentives to work in more disadvantaged areas;
- gives all young people the knowledge, skills and awareness to succeed in life after school, whether in further education, higher education or employment.

This Spending Review Submission captures seven areas for investment that align with the above vision, which can be used as a basis for achieving a thorough levelling-up strategy.

### **We are therefore calling for:**

- (1) Investment to support parents and carers to build healthy relationships with their child and improve the home learning environment. This includes funding for extra staff time to enable schools and early years providers to provide this support and measures to address the digital divide;
- (2) Additional funding across all children's services (with a specific focus on mental health, inclusion and pastoral support) so that young people have access to appropriate and professional interventions when needed;
- (3) Teachers and leaders to be incentivised and supported to teach in the most disadvantaged areas, including targeted investment in teacher development, support and training for those serving children from disadvantaged backgrounds;
- (4) An extension of the National Tutoring Programme - rolling out into medium to long term the proven intervention of small group tuition - and targeting it to support disadvantaged young people to bridge the attainment gap beyond Covid-19;
- (5) Funding to re-purpose the apprenticeships levy to include pre-apprenticeship training;
- (6) Investment into regional based collaboration to develop and extend widening participation programmes in universities; and
- (7) Investment into capacity building across organisations and schools in order to support skills building, including additional training and support to join up schools and businesses.

The recommendations for investment we have outlined below are aimed at providing systemic change to fix the root causes of key issues to ensure the prosperity and economic viability of the UK for years to come.

## Key recommendations to improve educational outcomes which will in turn enable the government to achieve their levelling-up strategy:

1. We are calling for investment to support parents and carers to build healthy relationships with their child and improve the home learning environment. This includes funding for extra staff time to enable schools and early years providers to provide this support and measures to address the digital divide.

Children from low socio-economic backgrounds underachieve academically compared to their more affluent peers. This gap starts at the earliest stages, with early years attainment. In 2019 there were 13 local authority areas where the disadvantage gap was already at least six months by age five; this is a third larger than the national average of 4.6 months.

We know that the home learning environment is a key factor in a child's education and development. Evidence shows that when parents are engaged in their child's education, they do better at school.<sup>9</sup> This is most evidenced with children aged 4-7, where the impact of parental engagement has been proven to be bigger than the differences associated with the quality of the school the child is attending.<sup>10</sup>

### We are therefore calling for:

- Investment in supporting parents and carers through re-funding Children's Centres

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<sup>9</sup> Parentkind (n.d.). Blueprint for parent friendly schools.

<sup>10</sup> Goodall, J., and Vorhaus, J., with the help of Carpentieri, JD., Brooks, G., Akerman, R., and Harris, A. (2011). Review of best practice in parental engagement: Practitioners summary.

Parents and carers are critical in their child's long-term development. Although there used to be a focus on community support for parents and carers, for example through the Sure Start Centre scheme, spending on this and other children's services has reduced dramatically over the last ten years.

Although spending on this has reduced, the need is still there. Ensuring that young families have access to quality advice on child and family health, parenting, money, training and employment, will give all parents and carers the ability to access the resources and knowledge needed to give their child the best start to life and improve their overall life outcomes in the future.

- **Investment in capacity for parental engagement in education**

To improve the long-term outcomes for all children, more needs to be done to bridge connections between educators and parents in the early stages of their child's life and throughout school.

We are calling for additional funding for staff to enable them to carry out this work, as well as to improve qualifications across the early years workforce, ensuring that their pedagogical approach and communication with parents is effective and impactful. If we are to level-up education across England we need to start at the beginning and ensure that education doesn't stop at the school gates.

- **Investment in hardware and provision of data access to address the digital divide at home**

The National Foundation for Educational Research showed that 28% of pupils have limited access to IT at home, which for many schools has resulted in them incurring thousands of pounds of costs in additional IT provisions during Covid-19. Schools in less affluent areas have been hit hardest by this.

Although we support the Government's move to implement the technology support scheme for key year groups so far, we urge that this is extended to all year groups from low-income families so that they have access to technology, especially as we start to see more blended learning approaches. We also urge for the Department of Digital Culture, Media and Sport to Collaborate with the Department for Education and schools so that specific websites necessary for learning are whitelisted so that they are free and available for all young people to use, for example the Oak National Academy website which provides video lessons and resources to support teachers, parents and pupils at school and at home or BBC bitesize daily.

Without each child across England having proper access to a device and a stable internet connection the digital divide will continue to impact their education. This is especially true as any further disruption to formal education settings will result in the most persistently disadvantaged young people missing out on key learning. With the future of education still uncertain, this investment is critical in ensuring that educational outcomes are not impacted.

## 2. We are calling for additional funding across all children's services (with a specific focus on mental health, inclusion and pastoral support) so that young people have access to appropriate and professional interventions when needed.

Covid-19 has exposed many social issues which schools help to address, beyond core education and learning, from supporting pupils with their mental health to ensuring that they do not go hungry.

Although we know that schools are stepping up and ensuring that their pupils are looked after, if we are to level-up and improve educational outcomes across the country this needs to be adequately resourced. It cannot continue to be done as an unresourced add-on to the core work of teaching and learning.

### **Investment should therefore include:**

- **Increased funding for pastoral children's services including mental health support and social and emotional support which schools can access as required**

To some extent teachers will always need to provide basic support to their pupils. However, a universal approach to emotional health and wellbeing training and resources will ensure pupil readiness, enabling teachers to focus more on teaching and learning. It will also mean that those pupils that need professional and sustained interventions will be able to receive the tailored help they need. This investment should include funding for additional staff (student support services) who work in the school and who are specifically trained to provide mental health and pastoral support and external interventions that can be carried out in a school setting.

- **Increased mental health support and training for teachers so they are better equipped to support their students**

It is unavoidable that teachers will at times have to have difficult conversations with students. They have built relationships with pupils, know their challenges and have built trust. By integrating mental health training into teacher training, teachers will be more prepared to effectively manage these conversations and have the awareness to sign-post further help if needed. This is particularly poignant as schools return and we expect to see trauma-related behavioural issues increase and teachers will likely be the first people to spot this.

### 3. We are calling for teachers and leaders to be incentivised and supported to teach in the most disadvantaged areas, including targeted investment in teacher development, support and training for those serving children from disadvantaged backgrounds

For the most persistently disadvantaged young people, teachers can make a decisive difference in their futures. Disadvantaged children, on average gain 1.5 years' worth of learning with very effective teachers, compared to 0.5 years with poorly performing teachers.<sup>11</sup> Yet the areas with the highest levels of disadvantage often find it difficult to attract and retain high performing teachers, despite this being where they are needed most.<sup>12</sup>

Evidence shows that high-quality professional development is an important factor in making teachers more effective in their roles - in turn increasing their job satisfaction and overall sense of wellbeing.<sup>13</sup> Crucially, continued personal development empowers teachers to deliver a better education for their pupils, which has a significant impact on the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils, enabling improved educational outcomes across the UK and ultimately a levelling-up of opportunity.

#### **We are therefore calling for funding to:**

- Change the eligibility criteria of the early-career payments to cover all teacher training routes, including those training through a paid route;
- Increase the element for teaching in disadvantaged areas in the retention payment scheme;
- Enable schools in disadvantaged areas to access the reformed NPQs for free.

### 4. We are calling for an extension of the National Tutoring Programme - rolling out into medium to long term the proven intervention of small group tuition - and targeting it to support disadvantaged young people to bridge the attainment gap beyond Covid-19

The key to national prosperity is young people leaving school with basic English and Maths skills. By the end of secondary school, a disadvantaged pupil is on average 18.1 months behind their peers in overall attainment for maths and English – almost double the gap at the end of primary school. For persistently disadvantaged pupils, the national gap is 22.7 months

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<sup>11</sup> (2011), Improving the impact of teachers on pupil achievement in the UK – interim findings, The Sutton Trust, 2011.

<sup>12</sup> (2019). *Britain at a crossroads: what will it take to provide the teachers our children need?* [online] Teach First. Available at: [https://www.teachfirst.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-08/britain\\_at\\_a\\_crossroads\\_2.pdf](https://www.teachfirst.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-08/britain_at_a_crossroads_2.pdf).

<sup>13</sup>(2019). *The links between teacher wellbeing and effective CPD*. [online] Sec-ed.co.uk. Available at: <http://www.sec-ed.co.uk/best-practice/the-links-between-teacher-wellbeing-and-effective-cpd/>.

Evidence from the Education Endowment Foundation indicates that 1-1 and small group tuition is effective, delivering approximately five additional months' progress on average.<sup>14</sup>

The National Tutoring Programme was launched this year in response to the covid-19 pandemic to help children catch up due to lost learning during lockdown. We support the extension of this National Programme to go further and help address persistent attainment gap issues which existed before Covid.

By targeting the National Tutoring Programme in the areas with the biggest disadvantage gaps across early years, primary and secondary school, we could see a step change in educational outcomes and a levelling up across these areas

**We are therefore calling for sustained investment into the National Tutoring programme over the next 3 years, targeted at the most disadvantaged children.**

## 5. We are calling for funding to re-purpose the apprenticeships levy to include pre-apprenticeship training

The temporary shutdown of a large proportion of industries, in combination with furloughing and job losses across the economy, has raised concerns that employers will soon be unable to provide as many apprenticeships or work-based learning programmes as they had in recent years.

**We therefore support the call from The Prince's Trust and Impetus for the Government to update the apprenticeship levy to enable employers to spend it on pre-employability support to effectively support young people into work.**<sup>15</sup>

Ensuring that all young people have opportunities like apprenticeships going forward is key to levelling-up across the country. However, many need support in building essential skills before they are able to start an apprenticeship.

In order to help young people, more than a quarter of whom have already expressed concern that their future prospects of employment have been damaged, the Government should incentivise companies to provide pre-apprenticeship training for those under 25, giving special attention to the industries most impacted by COVID-19.

Without an intervention, it is likely that routes into the aforementioned industries will drastically reduce in the coming years, blocking training pathways for post-16 and post-18 education leavers for years to come and having a huge impact on the economy and the extent to which we are able to level-up opportunity and outcomes across the country.

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<sup>14</sup>educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk. (n.d.). *One to one tuition / Toolkit Strand*. [online] Available at: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/teaching-learning-toolkit/one-to-one-tuition/#closeSignup> [Accessed 21 Sep. 2020].

<sup>15</sup> Securing a place for young people in the nation's economic recovery Final recommendations from the Youth Employment Group (YEG) YOUTH EMPLOYMENT GROUP. (n.d.). [online] Available at: <https://www.youthemployment.org.uk/dev/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Youth-Employment-Group-Final-Working-Group-Recommendations-August-2020-2.pdf> [Accessed 22 Sep. 2020].



## 6. We are calling for investment into regional based collaboration to develop and extend widening participation programmes in universities

During 2018-19 over 180,000 young people and 1,613 schools and colleges took part in higher education outreach through the Uni Connect programme. Phase two started on 1 August 2019 and is due to finish in July 2021.

We would like to see this extended for another 3 years in order to reduce the gap in higher education participation between the most and least represented groups, support young people to make well-informed decisions about their future education, support effective and impactful local collaboration by higher education providers working together with schools, colleges, employers and other partners and contribute to a stronger evidence base around ‘what works’ in higher education outreach and strengthen evaluation practice in the sector.

## 7. We are calling for the government to invest in capacity building across organisations and schools in order to support skills building, including additional training and support to join up schools and businesses

Evidence has shown that taking part in a wide range of activities can help young people to develop confidence, motivation, resilience and communication skills, leading to better academic outcomes. However, it is not good enough to rely on activities that take place outside of the school day to help build these skills.<sup>16</sup> In order to level-up educational outcomes across the UK there needs to be a systemic roll out of the Skills Builder framework across all schools in England.

**This includes:**

- **Funding for capacity building across Skills Builder partner organisations**

There are already 800 organisations in the Skills Builder partnership behind this and a huge opportunity to grow capacity. By supporting organisations who support building essential skills for example The Careers and Enterprise Company, Department of Work and Pensions, NCS Trust and National Careers Service, there will be greater alignment in the definitions of what these skills are, approaches that can be taken to build them and also how we can effectively measure them.

- **Funding to train teachers on Skills development**

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<sup>16</sup> Yeo, A. and Graham, J. (2015) A deep dive into social and emotional learning: what do the views of those involved tell us about the challenges for policy-makers? EIF/ Cabinet Office/ Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission/ ReachAbility.

Teachers, particularly those supporting young people from disadvantaged backgrounds should receive targeted support based on the Skills Builder Framework methodology so that they are confident in how to build these skills in students.

- **Funding to join up apprenticeship routes with the education system**

Skills Builder are currently working on embedding the same language into apprenticeship standards as is used in schools and colleges. Building on this work will enable increased transparency of the essential skills needed for apprenticeship routes and help teachers and advisors to navigate into apprenticeships for these individuals.

With meaningful investment, schools, colleges and businesses can align behind this approach ensuring that skills are embedded in education and that no child leaves school without the skills needed to thrive in life, enabling them more opportunities and enabling a levelling-up of outcomes across the country.

### **In Summary:**

As an Alliance, we believe in creating a fairer education for all, to ensure that all young people are able to thrive. A comprehensive levelling-up strategy to improve educational outcomes is at the heart of this.

The £1 billion given this year as a result of Covid-19 could be the catalyst to achieving this. However, it will only work if the funding is sustained and aimed at long-term changes to fix the root causes of inequality and disadvantage.

The recommendations for investment we have outlined are aimed at providing systemic change to fix the root causes of key issues to ensure the prosperity and economic viability of the UK for years to come.

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## APPENDIX:

### **Response to the Augur review:**

In addition to the 7 areas of investment we have outlined above, the Fair Education Alliance has also collectively analysed the Augur Review. We welcome the direction and many recommendations of the Augur Review and believe that if interventions are implemented effectively through adequate investment, they could help to create a fairer and more equitable system and level up economic opportunity, particularly for the most persistently disadvantaged.

### **This response identifies our view on the key opportunities and risks:**

#### **Key opportunities:**

Concluding the Augur review is clearly an important part of meeting the government's priority to ensure every young person receives a superb education.

Our starting point is that every young person with the ability to benefit from higher education should have the opportunity to do so. We are concerned that young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds are particularly unlikely to do so, and this is an issue that must continue to be addressed regardless of what other policy changes are made. This must be an essential part of the "levelling up" agenda. While not all costs of higher education are ultimately repaid directly by graduates, we believe this investment in people is vital to expand opportunity.

One of the key features of the changes proposed by Augur is that they form a coherent package.

While there are some recommendations that we are more supportive of than others, we are concerned that they cannot simply be cherry-picked. The government needs to develop a coherent policy in response, built on the foundations laid by Augur.

The recommendations:

**We support the Augar recommendation to restore maintenance grants for socio-economically disadvantaged students (7.1).**

One of the main challenges disadvantaged young people face is the ability to pay their costs e.g rent, food. It is important therefore that this money is additional to what is currently available through loans, and not simply converting what is currently loaned into a grant.

**In terms of the disadvantaged young people that FEA members are concerned about, this package needs to address two central questions.**

- A) How do you design a student funding system that is both fair to disadvantaged pupils but also is marketable to them?
- B) How does the University funding system signal/affect decisions about course choices/career choices?

## Key risks:

The recommendations:

- a) Clarity of expectations around financial contribution from parents when entering the higher education system:**

In setting the level of maintenance support (grants and loans), the government needs to be clear what their overall expectation is about other sources of income students will have access to, for example through working or from parents.

In that sense, we support Augar recommendation 7.2 to make expected parental contributions explicit. However, care must be taken about how this is messaged.

There is a risk that disadvantaged young people will hear that parents are expected to contribute and assume that if their parents are unable to do so, they are unable to go to university. The aim of the maintenance system should be to prevent this, and the system needs to be described and explained in these terms.

- b) Clarity of explanation around loans and access to loans when entering the higher education system:**

We support the suggestion of Augar recommendation 2.1 that people should have access to loans for study at levels 4 to 6. Properly explained, this should support additional people to access higher levels of education, as needed in our economy. However, this should not distract from the focus on widening participation in degrees among disadvantaged young people at age 18. This remains the most proven route to higher level skills and higher earnings.

We are concerned that, badly explained, some young people who would have studied for a degree will instead opt for a level 4 or 5 course, and that the effect of the policy would be to reduce overall levels of education, particularly among disadvantaged young people. This would be particularly likely to be the case if there was a perception that level 4/5 courses were “cheaper”, involved “less debt”, and were therefore “less risky”.

Part of the nuance required is covered in Augar recommendation 6.7 about how the system is described and explained, which we support. Talk of fees, parts of which are designed never paid off; and “debt”, which does not behave like debt, often makes it more challenging to support young people to understand the system. The language around repayments needs to be made simpler and clearer for all. However, this needs to be more than just a PR exercise – we need a fair system that is well explained, and that young people can understand.

**c) The inherent unfairness of extended the repayment period of loans to 40 years for the most persistently disadvantaged young people**

We are concerned about extending the repayment period to 40 years (Augar recommendation 6.3). This will particularly hit lower earning graduates, as higher earners already pay off their loans within 30 years. Lower earning graduates would end up paying for longer, would pay more overall, and many will pay more than their higher earning classmates. In a properly explained system that was well understood, this needs careful handling, and the government needs to provide clear explanations about the nuances of how different types of graduates are affected.

**d) Explicit funding and explanation of widening participation routes**

An essential component of a fair system is explicit funding of widening participation work. Regardless of the financing system, disadvantaged young people will need support to understand it, to make good course choices, and to access university. There is a false economy in not funding this work and therefore not maximising the future contribution of disadvantaged young people to our economy and our society. This is a concern with regards to fee level (Augar recommendation 3.2). Whatever level fees are set at, there needs to be ring fenced funding for widening participation work, whether funded through fees or otherwise. We support Augar recommendation 3.6 on supporting disadvantaged young people to succeed at university.

**e) The inherent unfairness of abolishing Foundation years**

For some disadvantaged young people, a Foundation year is an important part of a successful path to a degree. We do not support Augar recommendation 3.8 to abolish them.

## Summary:

As an Alliance we believe in creating a fairer and more equitable education system that ensures all young people are able to thrive. Although we support many of the recommendations laid out by the Augar Review, we also recognise the risks for the most persistently disadvantaged and want to ensure that when the Government is looking at creating a levelling-up strategy no young person is left behind.

The response to the Augur Review recommendations we have outlined are aimed at providing systemic change to fix the root causes of key issues surrounding access to higher education and are key to the Government's overall levelling-up strategy both now and in the future.