

Today's GCSE results show a young person's future continues to be largely dependent on their background. One in three young people on free school meals do not get the equivalent of five good GCSEs by the age of 19 – compared to one in six of their better off peers.¹

The disadvantage attainment gap – which sets out the difference in attainment outcomes between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged young people – has seen little change in twenty years.²

These results have shone a spotlight on systemic failings in supporting disadvantaged young people, a situation that has been exacerbated by the pandemic with learning loss more significant for the most disadvantaged pupils. This needs urgent attention.

Despite Government funding targeted at disadvantage in the schooling system, through the Pupil Premium policy implemented in 2011, this has not been extended to post-16. Clearly, disadvantage does not stop at 16.

That is why, to address the barriers to progression faced by our most disadvantaged young people, we are calling for the new Prime Minister to:

1. Fund a Pupil Premium Plus in post-16 settings – ensuring effective targeting towards those most in need and covering engagement, targeted academic and practical learning support; and careers counselling.
2. Implement a Digital Inclusion Guarantee – ensuring access to technology for students; digitally enabled, post-16 settings; and the necessary digital training for all staff.
3. Protect qualifications at Level 2 and below – sitting alongside GCSEs, and ensuring a wide range of employer-endorsed, meaningful qualifications which act as a steppingstone for young people, enabling direct entry into employment.

We are failing an entire generation of young people – locked out of opportunities, and the potential to progress. It's time for the Government to act.

Signed:

Nacro

The Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP)

City & Guilds

The Edge Foundation

The Centre for Education and Youth

Youth Employment UK

¹ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/ec9bcc56-8c37-4633-bc8e-7a7f03089f8c>

² <https://ifs.org.uk/inequality/press-release/lack-of-progress-on-closing-educational-inequalities-disadvantaging-millions-throughout-life/>