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CES Newsletter: Issue 25

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[Date]

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This newsletter should be of interest to all teachers, Because of the crisis it will be issued on a weekly basis from now on. This will hopefully mean I can pass on whatever useful information I find and, to be honest, because I am time rich, if income poorer. It will of course be shorter than the usual fortnightly edition.

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**SNIPPETS**

**SCHOOLS**

**NEED TO CUT DOWN THE NUMBER OF GCSE AND A LEVEL EXAMS NEXT YEAR**

[Lee Elliot Major](https://inews.co.uk/news/long-reads/inequality-must-be-addressed-professor-social-mobility-1361715), Professor of Social Mobility at Exeter University, has said that [GCSEs](https://inews.co.uk/topic/gcse) and [A-levels](https://inews.co.uk/topic/a-levels) exams will have to be cut down in 2021 because of the learning time lost. He added that the Government should also consider taking the opportunity to permanently shift qualifications away from “end-of year memorisation tests”.

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Prof Elliot Major said, “While rows rage over the return of schools following the Covid-19 closures, we need to turn our thoughts to a growing wave of anxiety felt by the million teenagers due to take exams next year. These pupils are set to lose at least a third of teaching time for their courses. The official line that GCSEs and A-levels will go-ahead as normal in 2021 looks increasingly tenuous.” He said, “It’s now clear that teaching will not resume in any normal sense for these year groups until the autumn at the very earliest, and even then [social distancing measures will still be in place so full classes are highly unlikely](https://inews.co.uk/news/education/coronavirus-uk-schools-limit-classes-to-15-space-desks-two-metres-apart-stagger-breaks-2849775). There simply won’t be time to cover the masses of content taught by subject specialist teachers.”

Prof Elliot Major said, “Schools face a massive catch-up challenge. My worry is that teachers and pupils will find themselves completely overstretched, adding more stress to an already bad situation. We will need to shrink the curriculum and drop some exam papers to make the content students are expected to learn manageable. Perhaps GCSEs could be assessed on single papers, and A-levels based on two papers not three. End of year examinations could be complemented by teacher-based assessments, now that these have been established.”

However, Prof Elliot Major said that the situation “offers a welcome opportunity to introduce permanent reforms to how students are assessed at the end of school. The truth is that reforms to our high stakes school exams have been long overdue. The problem is that so much now relies on end-of-year memorisation tests that they warped behaviour in schools. Subjects like art and music and sport have been sacrificed as more time is spent on qualifications that matter for school league table standings. Teachers have been forced to focus on teaching to the test: concentrating on getting pupils to answer exam questions rather than developing a deep and broad understanding of a subject.” He said, “combining teacher assessment alongside core exams could create a more balanced system fit and fair for all our children”. He also said that pupils, teachers and parents needed “clarity and certainty very soon” on the 2021 exam season.

Mary Bousted, joint head of the NEU, has already said that [all exams, including primary school SATS, would have to be slimmed down in 2021](https://inews.co.uk/news/education/coronavirus-lockdown-education-analysis-gcse-technology-ai-2542518). She said, “Any idea that GCSEs and A-levels in 2021 can just be the same as they were in 2019 is profoundly wrong.” An Oqual spokesperson said, "We know the Covid-19 outbreak will have caused stress and uncertainty for many students, regardless of whether or not they were due to take exams this year. Students who are studying GCSE, AS or A level courses, but are not due to take exams until 2021, will also have experienced disruption to their teaching and learning this year. We do not as yet know for how long this disruption will continue”.

**BORIS SHOULD RESIST CALLS TO EASE THE LOCKDOWN AND OPEN SCHOOLS**

Boris Johnson should resist calls to ease the lockdown, including reopening schools, until a new system to trace the spread of coronavirus is a proven success, according to two members of the SAGE council. In its usual fog Downing Street has not said when contract tracing will start, nor given details of how it will operate. One official said that "lots of work" is going on to have it ready as soon as possible. A smartphone app, which will eventually form part of the contact tracing process, is unlikely to be ready for several weeks.

Professor John Edmunds, dean of the faculty of epidemiology at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, a world authority on mathematical modelling of the spread of infectious diseases, said, a "well-functioning track and trace system" was needed before lifting lockdown further, "without that, we would return to a situation where the epidemic is increasing." He said that it was "a very hard thing to achieve a well-functioning" system, requiring a "huge amount of manpower" and technology. He added that evaluating the system was just as important, something there is little time to do. He said, "Then you need to know whether this is actually working or not. How many cases are being identified who are already in quarantine, what fraction of cases popping up already in quarantine, that would be a good measure of how well contact tracing is occurring." Asked whether the system was needed before schools should start to reopen, he said that "I think it would be greatly preferable".

A [SAGE](https://news.sky.com/story/coronavirus-sage-membership-revealed-after-criticism-over-transparency-11982941) member said, "The general approach is we need to relax these restrictions very gradually, very incrementally, each time we make a step we need to evaluate how we're doing before we move to the next step”. Another SAGE member said that before lockdown is significantly eased, the government should do three things, improve further the quality of the data around the [R rate](https://news.sky.com/story/coronavirus-why-the-government-will-anxiously-look-at-the-r-number-as-lockdown-is-eased-11985811), reinforce the existing social distancing advice and have a "capable" contact tracing system. They said that the contact tracing system was "a bit of a problem". "It's about speed of tracing and speed of testing that's really important. The system must be able to trace over half, perhaps as many as three quarters of contacts to be a success. Other countries like Singapore had access to real time credit card data and facial recognition CCTV to help tracers identify contacts of those infected. Such options are not available in western countries, which is why France and Germany are also struggling with track and trace schemes”.

**CLASS DIVIDE IN LOCKDOWN LEARNING**

A study of more than 4,000 families, carried out for the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), found that children from wealthier families spend more time studying in lockdown, with better-off children likely to have studied for around seven days more than their poorer peers by next month. Children in the highest-income families spend six hours a day on education, but the poorest spend four and a half. The gap was slightly bigger for primary age children than older pupils. Overall, over half of parents said they were finding it hard to support their children learning at home, 64% of secondary pupils in state schools from the richest households are offered some form of active help, compared with 47% from the poorest fifth of families. Interestingly, only 29% of parents in the poorest families said they would send their child back to primary school given the choice, compared with 55% of the most affluent parents.

The researchers called on the government to address the disparities between children from different backgrounds during school closures. Lucy Kraftman, co-author of the report, added: "These differences will likely widen pre-existing gaps in test scores between children from different backgrounds." A DfE spokeswoman said: "We will do whatever we can to make sure no child, whatever their background, falls behind as a result of coronavirus. We have set out plans for a phased return of some year groups from 1 June at the earliest in line with scientific advice."

**LEGAL CHALLENGE TO DECISION TO ‘RELAX’ DUTY OF CARE FOR SEND PUPILS**

The government is facing a legal challenge after ‘relaxing’ the duty of councils to provide support for SEND pupils during the coronavirus outbreak. A notice at the end of April told councils they would only need to show ‘reasonable endeavours’ to fulfil their duty in pupils’ education, health and care plans (EHCPs) during May. The new powers also remove requirements to meet certain timescales around needs assessments, planning and review processes of plans until September 25.

Polly Sweeney, a partner at Rook Irwin Sweeney has written to Gavin Williamson on behalf of a young person, supported by her mother asking him to “urgently confirm he will withdraw the notice and amendment regulations with immediate effect”. The girl is unable to attend school because of the pandemic but hopes to start a college course in September and her EHC plan is being amended. She and her mother are worried that she will not have the SEND support that she needs for her transition to college. Ms Sweeney said her client’s concerns included that “the notice undermines the core statutory entitlement for children and young people with SEND to receive the provision required to meet their special educational needs, which has been in place undisturbed for decades”. The lawyers claim that there was a failure to consult on the measures, but a government memorandum stated there was “no legal requirement” to consult on changes to the timescales, but that it “discussed the principle of amending the timescales and why urgent action is needed with a range of stakeholders”.

Tulip Siddiq, shadow minister for children and early years, has written to Vicky Ford, the children’s minister, asking what steps would prevent the amended timescales leading to “a backlog of actions that have to be taken within a very short timeframe” in September. She said, “Can you reassure me that the regulations will not be extended simply to avoid local authorities and health bodies having to ‘catch up’ on delayed actions all at once?” Anne Longfield, the children’s commissioner, said she also had “serious concerns”. She said, “clearly not all provision for children with SEND can be delivered in the usual way”, but that the downgrading of “key duties towards children with SEND is disproportionate to the situation”. She said, “The government, local authorities and clinical commissioning groups should set out their reasons and evidence for implementing or making use of the changes. The government should also publish as soon as possible an assessment of the impact of these changes on children’s rights.”

Vicky Ford said the emergency powers would “only be exercised for the shortest period where necessary and will be regularly reviewed”. A DfE spokesperson said the temporary changes would allow councils and health services to focus on the most urgent needs. They said, “Local authorities, health services and education settings must continue to work together to support children and young people with SEND and their families.”

**NOT QUITE AS SAFE AS THE GOVE SAYS (using the French example)**

Just a week after one-third of [French](https://www.independent.co.uk/topic/France) schoolchildren went back to school there has been around 70 new [Covid-19](https://www.independent.co.uk/topic/coronavirus) cases linked to schools. The French education minister, Jean-Michel Blanquer, said the return has put some children in new danger of contamination. He said the affected schools (in Northern France) are being closed immediately. He said that given that the incubation period for the virus is several days, people are ‘likely’ to have been infected before the reopening of the schools. France reopened about 40,000 preschools and primary schools last week, with classes capped at 15 students. This week France reopened junior high schools in ‘green’ regions less affected by the virus, which do not include Paris. Bottom of Form

French authorities have reported at least 142,411 people infected with the coronavirus and 28,108 deaths.

**MUST PARACHUTE IN STAFF FROM OTHER SCHOOLS IF NEEDED**

Schools should use teachers from other schools or ‘experienced’ teaching assistants if they don’t have enough staff to teach pupils from June 1, DfE guidance states. The DfE claim that the guidance has been “designed by school leaders for school leaders”. However, schools are “not required to use this guide, and may choose to follow alternative approaches to preparing for wider opening, or to use some sections of this guidance alongside other approaches”. This is despite the two leadership unions ASCL and NAHT calling for clear directions from the DfE.

The guidance tells heads that after preparing their sites, they should audit their staff “to ascertain who will be available to be in school from the week commencing June 1”. Staff who are “clinically extremely vulnerable” will not be required to work, and staff who are “clinically vulnerable”, including pregnant women, should work from home “if possible”, or be offered the “safest onsite roles”.

Schools are asked to work out how large their temporary teaching groups will be and if they do not have the staff available to cover all the new teaching groups, schools “will need to consider possible solutions with your local authority and/or trust”. This could include bringing in supply teachers, teachers on “temporary agreed loan” from other schools, or teachers “provided by your trust or local authority”. Schools could ask “suitably experienced teaching assistants who are willing to do so to work with groups under the supervision of a teacher or use some senior leadership time to cover groups”.

The guidance also states that heads should “consider your own workload and that of your senior colleagues to make sure this is manageable, and you have sufficient leadership time remaining”. If schools still can’t get enough cover and an arrangement which enables eligible children to attend consistently at another local school is not manageable, they should “focus first on continuing to provide places for priority groups of all year groups (children of critical workers and vulnerable children)”. Schools “should not plan on the basis of a rota system, either daily or weekly.” If staff are anxious about coming into school, the DfE states it to “always best to work out a sensible way forward in individual cases that acknowledges any specific anxieties but which also enables the school’s responsibilities to be effectively discharged. If you need support in finding a solution, speak to your local authority or trust.”

**COUNCILS MUST NOT SHIRK THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES RE OPENING SCHOOLS**

[Michael Gove](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/michaelgove), who infamously called the education establishment ‘the blob’, has told local authorities refusing to reopen their schools on 1 June to “look to their responsibilities”. Asked what he would say to councils, including Liverpool Hartlepool and Greater Manchester, which have questioned the plan to open, he said: “I respectfully ask them to think again. The clear scientific and clinical advice is that it is safe to have schools reopen, accompanied with social distancing.” He added: “Children only have one chance at education. Over the course of the last decade we’ve made significant strides in closing the gap between the richest and the poorest in our schools. This lockdown has put that backwards. If you really care about children, you’ll want them to be in schools. You will want them to be learning. You will want them to have new opportunities. So, look to your responsibilities.”

He said schools could have staggered lunch breaks and arrival times, seat children at individual desks and teach in classes of 15 at most, supervised by one adult. He said it was impossible to eliminate completely the risk of catching Covid-19, unless people were kept “perpetually imprisoned in their homes”. He said, “The whole point about life is that you need to manage risk. We cannot have a situation where we keep our economy and our schools and our public services continually closed down, because the health consequences of doing so would be malign as well.”

Liverpool’s director of children’s services, Steve Reddy, has written to parents saying, “our guiding principle is that schools can only reopen to other pupils when it is safe to do so and not a moment before.” Teaching unions have said the implementation of a testing and tracking system should be a precondition for schools reopening, so that individual outbreaks can be controlled. The deputy Labour leader, Angela Rayner, backed their stance, saying, “We urge the government to publish the science, and to ensure the test, track and isolate is in place.”

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**HIGHER EDUCATION**

**CITIES MOST AFFECTED BY LACK OF STUDENTS**

The economic effect of students not attending university has been huge for some towns and cities, according to Nick Hillman, director of HEPI, who said, “Any town or city with either one very large university, or more than one, will be particularly badly affected”. He said that while the Oxfords and Cambridges had other things going on, “there are other places where students may be even more important”. The Sheffield Central parliamentary constituency has the largest number of students in the UK at around 60,000. Other places struggling economically before the crisis with large student numbers, include Sunderland, Huddersfield and Bolton. Bath’s two universities host 21,000 students, one quarter of the city’s population. Mr Hillman said, “Students spend money on accommodation, in cafes and restaurants, in bicycle shops and bookshops. A lot of these towns and cities have whole parts of their economy wholly aimed at students. So, it’s devastating for them.”

**MUST BE TOLD WHETHER YOU WILL BE TAUGHT ONLINE OR NOT**

Nicola Dandridge, head of the OfS, has said that students applying to university must be told with "absolute clarity" how courses will be taught before they make choices for the autumn. She said, "The important thing here is absolute clarity to students, so they know what they're getting in advance of accepting offers. What we don't want to see are promises that it's all going to be back to usual, an on-campus experience, when it turns out that's not the case."

The OFS said information should be provided before students make a firm choice in June, and ‘certainly before’ the clearing process. If universities have to update plans after students have made a decision, they should release students from any acceptances and allow them to "change their minds". Ms Dandridge suggested that a likely outcome would be "much greater and more sophisticated use of blended learning so that's face-to-face plus online," and stressed that it must not only be "bunging lectures online". Universities Minister Michelle Donelan has already said that even if their courses are only taught online, students are liable for the same full tuition fee as those being taught in-person. Manchester University has said that its lectures will be online next term, but it wanted to allow small group teaching as soon as safely possible. Other universities are considering a delay to the start of the autumn term, and there have been suggestions that some more ‘hands-on’ courses will be taught first on campus while others might remain online.

Jo Grady, leader of the UCU lecturers' union, said there needed to be clear guidance from the government on how and when universities should reopen buildings in the autumn, and not to leave decision to institutions in competition with each other. She warned that financial pressure could mean "some universities will rush to re-open". She said, "They will want to promise students that they will be re-opening next semester in order to attract those students, rather than have them go somewhere else". Dr Grady said that campuses would not be easy places for social distancing, and that lecture halls would bring together large numbers of people, adding "Students go from cafes to libraries to restaurants, everywhere is always rammed." A spokeswoman for UUK said universities were "already preparing for a range of scenarios, including periods of online study in the academic year 2020-21". Adding, "Institutions will be communicating their plans to prospective and current students in the weeks ahead."

**AT LEAST 1:5 WILL NOT ENROL IF CLASSES ARE ONLINE AND ACTIVITIES CURTAILED**

A survey by the University and College Union (UCU) found that 1:5 students said they would not enrol in the next academic year if classes were delivered online and other activities curtailed, this would mean there would be 120,000 fewer students. A number of universities including [Cambridge](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/may/19/cambridge-university-moves-all-lectures-online-until-summer-2021), have said they will conduct all lectures online, offering ‘blended learning’ that mixes online teaching with tutorials and in-person seminars where possible. The consultancy London Economics said that this would cost the sector at least £763m in lost tuition fees and teaching grants. They said, “The analysis illustrates that there continues to be a huge amount of uncertainty amongst prospective students in respect of the potential higher education offer in September. If the current deferral rates as a result of the pandemic are borne out, then the financial consequences facing universities will be even more severe than those identified recently. There are a lot of jobs at risk, both in universities and in the wider local and regional economies where universities are based.”

The survey also found that 1:4 applicants wanted to change their applications and switch institutions through clearing, which UCU said could lead to a “summer of chaos” as institutions compete to attract students. Jo Grady, UCU general secretary, said she hoped the “shocking” results of the survey would persuade VCs to join the union in lobbying the government for more support. She said, “The current wait-and-see approach from ministers is exacerbating the crisis for prospective students and putting tens of thousands of jobs at universities and in the wider economy at risk.”

The survey asked applicants: “Suppose that the university you have applied to or received an offer from announces that it will not be operating as usual in the first term in autumn 2020, with many classes delivered online, most university activities severely restricted, and many Covid-19 social distancing restrictions still in place, to what extent would you still intend to go to university in autumn 2020?” 72% of respondents said they were likely to attend. If universities were “operating as usual with all classes in person and few if any social distancing restrictions”, 13% said they would still defer starting. A [survey by Quacquarelli Symonds](https://www.qs.com/how-universities-can-clearly-communicate-to-prospective-students-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/) found that 49% of students from China say they do not want to enrol this year if their courses begin online.

**EMPLOYMENT**

**BORIS PORKY PIE ON HEALTH & SAFETY INSPECTIONS**

The inveterate liar has been accused of misleading Parliament and the public over workplace health and safety inspections when he unveiled the [easing of coronavirus lockdown restrictions](https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/coronavirus-lockdown-timeline-government-plan-for-gradually-lifting-social-distancing-rules-revealed-2849176). Despite claiming [spot inspections of workplaces](https://inews.co.uk/news/uk-coronavirus-lockdown-new-rules-changes-restrictions-wales-england-reactions-2849056) such as building sites, manufacturing plants and food outlets will be taking place, it has been revealed that the Health and Safety Executive is not carrying out inspections and has no confirmed date to restart them. The HSE suspended inspections on safety grounds in late March. Bottom of Form

Mr Johnson had said: “We are going to insist that businesses across this country look after their workers and are Covid-secure and Covid-compliant. The Health and Safety Executive will be enforcing that, and we will have spot inspections to make sure that businesses are keeping their employees safe.”

Instead of spot inspections, the HSE is encouraging companies to ‘self-police safety measures’ and workers can report concerns via the group’s website. Between 9 March and 7 May there were 4,813 concerns reported to HSE, with around 40% triggering an investigation. Andy McDonald, Labour’s shadow secretary of state for employment rights, said: "The Prime Minister must explain why he claimed the HSE will be conducting spot inspections. Rules on health and safety at work are only as good as their enforcement, so given the unprecedented risk to employees and public health, the government must urgently detail how it will ensure a safe return to work outside the home. Given the scale of the challenge, Labour has called for more resources for inspections and for employees to have a much greater role in maintaining safe workplaces."

Frances O’Grady, TUC head, slammed the ‘self-policing’ strategy. She said, "Self-policing is just spin for no policing. Employers must take full responsibility for staff safety, conducting and publishing risk assessments, and meeting the new safety guidelines. But they should also be subject to spot checks and penalties to incentivise compliance.” She added that the Government’s £150m of funding cuts imposed on the HSE, almost half its previous budget, had left the UK “less safe and less resilient." Unite assistant general secretary Gail Cartmail said: "The Prime Minister and his government are guilty of giving false reassurance to workers that sites and workplaces are being inspected and monitored. It is imperative that now the government has brought many parts of the economy out of lockdown that not only is the HSE compelled to maximise the use of proactive unannounced inspections they are given immediate resources to do so.” Mr McDonald added: “The reality is that the HSE didn't have the resources to enforce workplace health and safety before the pandemic. At the current rate, a business can be expected to be inspected just once every 50 years. After a decade of budget cuts, it is fanciful to think the HSE is able to conduct spot inspections.”

A Downing Street truth bender said the Prime Minister’s comment on safety inspections was accurate but the HSE could not confirm a date for when they would restart. An HSE spokesperson, with fingers crossed behind their back, said, “The PM was right to talk about spot checks as something that’s being looked at, moving forward. It is true that there was a pause during our active inspections during the lockdown but we’ve already stated that plans to enhance our regulatory approach further to the new Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy guidance and the additional funding are being developed.” A spokesperson for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy said: "As the PM said, there will be Health and Safety Executive spot checks on businesses to ensure they keep their employees safe." However, they were unable to say when these inspections could take place.

**A TRUMPIAN REVERSAL ON FEES FOR OVERSEAS NHS WORKERS**

It seems 24 hours is a long time in the world of the Boris. On Wednesday overseas NHS workers had to pay a fee to work in the UK, because we needed the money and it was fair, on Thursday the fee was scrapped because we evidently do not need the money and it is presumably not fair. A Downing Street contortionist said the great man had changed his mind because "he had been a personal beneficiary of carers from abroad". They said, "The purpose of the NHS surcharge is to benefit the NHS, help to care for the sick and save lives. NHS and care workers from abroad who are granted visas are doing this already by the fantastic contribution which they make." All we now need is for the Boris and Pritti Pathetic to declare that they had not said they would impose a charge in the first place, and anyone who said otherwise was spreading ‘fake news’, for us to be totally in the Trumpland world.

The change will apply to all NHS workers, including porters, cleaners, independent health workers and social care staff. Sir Keir Starmer said: "This is a victory for common decency and the right thing to do. We cannot clap our carers one day and then charge them to use our NHS the next." More importantly the Boris has been hammered by his usual media supporters and many of his backbenches. Former vice-chairman Sir Roger Gale warning that refusing to waive the surcharge "would rightly be perceived as mean-spirited, doctrinaire and petty". Former party chairman Lord Patten had called the policy "appalling" and "monstrous".

**MISCELLANEOUS**

**WE ARE TO HAVE A ‘WORLD BEATING’ TRACK & TRACE SYSTEM (soon)**

A ‘world beating’ track and trace system to stop a second coronavirus peak and help ease the lockdown has been promised by the end of May by the Boris. He said that the system, which was abandoned in March as the number of [Covid-19](https://news.sky.com/topic/covid-19-8518) cases soared, will be up and running in time for schools to reopen on 1 June. He also announced that 24,000 workers have been recruited to staff the track and trace programme. The great blusterer said, "We have growing confidence that we will have a test, track and test operation that will be world beating and yes it will be in place by June 1."

The Boris also insisted that the UK was now testing more than "virtually every country in Europe". A leading scientist, Prof Hugh Pennington, said the pledge was "good news" as it was "essential if we're going to go anywhere near getting out of lockdown, opening schools". However, he added, "It's taken a long time. As to world-beating, well we've been beaten by quite a few other countries by having such a system running."

**YOUNG PEOPLE LESS LIKELY TO OBSERVE LOCKDOWN MEASURES**

UCL researchers who questioned more than 90,000 adults found ‘complete’ compliance with safety measures, such as physical distancing and staying at home, had dropped in the past two weeks from an average of 70% to less than 60%.

Less than 50% of people under 30 were ‘completely’ complying with lockdown rules. The ongoing study, which was launched in the week before the lockdown, also found 95% of all adults and 92% of young people felt they were either ‘reasonable’ or ‘good’ at sticking to the measures. The lead author, Dr Daisy Fancourt, said that there had been “generally a very high” level of compliance.

The findings come alongside a decrease in confidence in the government since the easing of lockdown was announced on 10 May, with confidence lowest in those under the age of 30. Levels of anxiety and depression have not improved since the easing of lockdown, while worries about getting ill from Covid-19 have fallen slightly. Fears about finance and unemployment were a cause of stress for some people, with 1:12 worried about unemployment, while 1:8 were anxious about their finances.

**GETTING A GOOD NIGHT’S SLEEP**

The following article is a precis of an article in the excellent SecEd bulletin, written by Darren Sayer.

The article says, ‘A good night’s sleep has always been seen as vital for keeping people focused and well. But with the ever-increasing pressures of modern life and the introduction of digital distractions to our daily routines, it is important that young people understand the impact of good quality sleep on both their personal and academic lives, and that they are given the tools to build healthy habits for life’. It says that students aged 10-16 need 9-9.75 hours of sleep, and that those who get the required amount benefit from improved memory, increased focus, reduced stress and higher energy levels. [Conversely, regularly sleeping less than 7 hours a night can have adverse effects on mental and physical wellbeing.](https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/best-practice/the-importance-of-sleep/) Mr Sayer (a teacher) says ‘It is quite clear to me which of my students have arrived at school ready to learn after a good night’s sleep, as they are the ones answering questions and contributing to my lessons. Comparatively, it is quite clear to see which students have not had enough sleep the night before’.

The article says that ‘Aside from the worries that have been causing young people to lose sleep for decades (such as relationship troubles, exam stress, negative thoughts or issues with family life), they now face additional distractions to their sleep routines with the introduction of digital devices in their bedrooms’. It quotes a recent poll for the British Nutrition Foundation which found that 59% of secondary school pupils and 49% of primary school had used a screen before bed the night before, and having screens in children’s bedrooms means that notifications can be disturbing them all through the night. It notes that ‘While a lot of students might be going to bed at a sensible hour, they are not going to sleep, there are endless amounts of conversations, videos, games and notifications keeping them up until the early hours, and they are also checking in on these notifications as soon as they wake up’

The article then looks at measures that can be taken to tackle sleep deprivation. Mr Sayer says that ‘I believe that it is my general responsibility to help instil healthier habits in my students. Helping prevent sleep deprivation is an important part of this work’. He says that his school has banned energy drinks, and he regularly talks to students about the connection between a healthier diet and better sleep so that they can take healthy habits home with them. He says that ‘there is no ‘quick fix’ to tiredness, and that the best way to combat a lack of sleep is by building better sleep habits’. He tells them that ‘rather than seeing these habits as a chore, they need to see them as a secret weapon that can improve their mood, make them feel better and help them achieve their goals, whether they are academic or personal’.

The author’s school use the Public Health England ‘Rise Above for Schools’ sleep resources to help pupils understand the link between sleep and wellbeing, and to explore how to get better quality sleep. He says that ‘The resources are flexible, easy-to-use and include videos, discussion, peer-to-peer engagement activities and lessons plans. They can also fit into PSHE lessons and support teachers in promoting positive health, wellbeing and resilience among young people aged 10 to 16’. Amongst the advice given is

* Get your room ready: Make sure your room is clean, you have your bag packed for the next day, your devices switched off and your lights off. Stress that a bedroom is a room you go to when it is time to sleep.
* Limit screen time: Having a cut-off point two hours before you go the bed ensures that your body is not thrown off by the light from your screens and allows you to slowly relax and remove other distractions by the time you go to sleep.
* Make a bedtime routine: Whether it is listening to relaxing music or sitting down with a book before bed, you will sleep better with a routine. Make sure you find a healthy routine that works for you.
* Practise mindfulness: By focusing on the now and not getting weighed down with what has happened or will happen, you will improve your sleep. If you find yourself too stressed to do this, then talk to someone about your worries and/or write your worries down.
* Eat a balanced diet: Everything you eat affects how you sleep, do not snack too late, avoid caffeine in the evenings and ensure your dinner is healthy and balanced to get your body ready for sleep.
* Get active: People sleep much better if they take part in physical activity during the day. So, if you do your recommended 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day, you should see an improvement in your sleep quality and your energy levels.

**WHERE YOU CAN GET TESTED**

The government has said that millions more people are now eligible for testing. These are:

* All essential workers including NHS and social care workers with symptoms
* Anyone over 65 with symptoms
* Anyone with symptoms whose work cannot be done from home (for example, construction workers, shop workers, emergency plumbers and delivery drivers)
* Anyone who has symptoms of coronavirus that lives with those identified above.
* Social care workers and residents in care homes (with or without symptoms) both to investigate outbreaks and, following successful pilots, as part of a rolling programme to test all care homes
* NHS workers and patients without symptoms if there is a clinical need, in line with NHS England guidance

You can either refer yourself or be referred by your employer if you are an essential worker. Essential workers who are self-isolating can [book a test directly](https://self-referral.test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/). You can select a regional test site drive-through appointment or a home test kit. The availability of home kits will initially be limited, but more will become available. The employer referral portal allows employers to refer essential workers for testing if they are self-isolating, either because they or a member(s) of their household have coronavirus symptoms. This is a secure portal where employers can upload the full list of names and contact details of self-isolating essential workers. If referred, essential workers will then receive a text message with a unique invitation code to book a test for themselves (if symptomatic) or their symptomatic household member(s) at a regional testing site.

These are the 50 Regional Test Sites that have been set up by the Department of Health and Social Care.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Abercynon | Gateshead | Milton Keynes |
| Aberdeen | Gatwick | NHS Nightingale London |
| Belfast | Glasgow | Nottingham |
| Birmingham (Midland Metropolitan) | Greenwich | Oxford |
| Bournemouth | Guildford | Penrith |
| Bradford | Hull | Perth |
| Brighton | Inverness | Peterborough |
| Bristol | Ipswich | Plymouth |
| Cardiff | Leicester | Portadown |
| Carmarthen | Llandudno | Portsmouth |
| Chessington | Leeds | Preston |
| Coventry | Lee Valley | Stansted |
| Doncaster | Lincoln | Twickenham |
| Ebbsfleet | Liverpool | Wembley |
| Edgbaston | London | Worcester |
| Edinburgh | Londonderry | York |
| Exeter | Manchester |   |

Anyone eligible can book a test using an online portal.

**EROSION OF BELIEF IN SCIENCE IS POSSIBLE IF GOVERNMENT MISUSE IT**

Brian Cox, the physicist, TV presenter and Royal Society professor for public engagement with science, has warned that public trust in science could be eroded if it is misused by politicians and blamed for poor decisions made during the pandemic. He said, "The politicisation of scientific advice may deliver some short-term political advantages. It's very tempting to blame the science if decisions are made which subsequently turn out to be suboptimal in some way. But this will have serious long-term consequences. It undermines public trust in science and that matters. The big existential questions we face as a society require in a democracy, voters, the public, to understand what science is and what uncertainty is, because we don't know everything."

The government has been criticised for not publishing the names of experts on its SAGE committee. Prof Cox said, "We have to be transparent in making the scientific advice to government available for all to see, with all its nuance and contradictions at the moment, so people see how the process works, and also see how uncertainty leads to progress. Science can provide certainty. In physics we are certain that everything is made of atoms and we are certain that the Earth goes round the Sun. But certainty arrives, eventually, because of the embrace of doubt. We are in a fast-moving situation. New knowledge is being generated in large quantities in unprecedented short time scales. So, there is no such thing as THE science in this case. We are too early on the curve of understanding for that to be the case." He said that politicians have to be prepared to change the strategy as new evidence on the virus emerges. He said, "That is not something that has to be apologised for. It's the lesson of science. Changing your mind in the face of new evidence, data and modelling is the sign that you are learning. If the advice changes because of new knowledge that is a good thing."

Sir Venki Ramakrishnan, president of the Royal Society, said: "Science at the frontiers is always uncertain. Scientists will often disagree on issues and the truth will take time to establish. So often there is not such a thing as THE science. One has to consider the scientific advice and the government will have to make the best decisions it can now because urgency is an issue. But they also have to be prepared to change tack as new evidence comes to light." He noted that the virus was only recognised as a human health threat in December, yet already scientists have sequenced its genetic code, devised a rapid test, and are developing vaccines and anti-viral drugs. He said, "To do that in 2-3 months is astonishing. A decade ago, it would not have been possible."

**IT WAS THE SCIENTISTS’ FAULT**

Proving Professor Cox was right (although sooner than he expected) Work and Pensions Secretary Therese Coffey told Sky News that "wrong" advice at the start of the coronavirus outbreak could have led to mistakes in the government's response. She said, "you can only make judgements and decisions based on the information and advice that you have at the time. If the science was wrong, the advice at the time was wrong, I'm not surprised if people then think we made a wrong decision. But you have to take judgements based on what you have."

Ms Coffey's Trumpian comments come after a cross-party group of MPs said testing capacity has been "inadequate" throughout the pandemic, while the decision to stop community testing early in the outbreak was "one of the most consequential made". A Downing Street fiberarian said: "This is an unprecedented global pandemic and we have taken the right steps at the right time to combat it, guided at all times by the best scientific advice." Government guidance in place until 12 March, said it was "very unlikely" that those receiving care in a care home or the community would become infected with the virus. On 15 April, over three weeks after the UK was put in lockdown, testing was expanded to include care home staff, residents with symptoms and those being discharged from hospital back into care homes. The Boris has said that guidance was first released on 25 February when there was "no transmission of COVID-19 in the community" and that "we brought the lockdown in care homes ahead of the general lockdown".

Hapless Hancock admitted to MPs that “27% of coronavirus deaths in England have taken place in care homes, which compares to a European average of around half." However, he emphasised that 62% of care homes have not reported a case of COVID-19. He added, "But whatever the figures say we will not rest from doing whatever is humanly possible to protect our care homes from this appalling virus to make sure residents and care colleagues have the safety and security they deserve." He said he had ‘thrown a protective ring around care homes’, missing out that it is in the shape of a dartboard with care homes highlighted as the red circle in the middle.

**WE PRIORITISED THE NHS OVER CARE HOMES (accidental manslaughter justified)**

Justice Secretary Robert Buckland has told Sky News, "We needed to make a choice about testing, we did decide to focus upon the NHS." Pressed on whether it was government policy to focus on the health service first and foremost, he said, "That's right. I think that was absolutely essential." Without any remorse he said, "We've seen a huge tragedy in our care homes which is a great regret." However, he said, "There have been lots of examples of care homes that have mercifully stayed infection free, but sadly there have been far too many cases of infection and then death. I think every country in the world will look back and say there are things we could have done differently." There have been more than 20,000 excess deaths in care homes compared to the five-year average. Another minister, Environment Secretary George Eustice, said that [there could have been "some instances"](https://news.sky.com/story/coronavirus-discharged-hospital-patients-may-have-seeded-covid-19-into-care-homes-minister-admits-11991246) where those without symptoms were moved untested into care homes.

The shameless Buckland said he would be "appalled" if people thought the government was passing the buck to councils when it comes to care home deaths, but added too that the sector is fragmented and that admissions back from hospital were not as widespread as some have claimed. Addressing a committee of MPs care home bosses accused the government of prioritising the NHS and not care homes and failing to make good on promises of support. Professor Martin Green, chief executive of Care England, said that from the start of the pandemic care homes were a second thought despite housing the "most vulnerable people".

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**SNIPPETS**

* David Blunkett, former education secretary, has criticised teaching unions' opposition to school reopening plans, claiming they are "working against the interests of children"
* The [private Reigate Grammar School is to fund bursaries for 10 students whose parents work in the NHS or care workforce.](https://www.independent.co.uk/topic/private-school)
* The government has (quietly) ended its funding to help rough sleepers stay off the streets.
* Vauxhall has reopened its Luton plant with 800 out of the 1,600 staff returning
* NEU guidance provides a comprehensive health & safety checklist. It includes the advice that “It will not be safe to mark children’s books during this period”.
* Casual Dining Group, owners of Café Rouge, Bella Italia and Las Iguanas, has filed intent to appoint administrators at the High Court. The chains employ around 6,000 people.
* There was a rise of 856,500 people submitting benefit claims last month, the ‘claimant count’, measured through Universal Credit applications, is at its highest level since 1996 at 2.1m.
* In total 11 councils have said they are not going to open schools or do not want to open them at the moment. Birmingham, the largest council, said “**We are clear that**we only support Birmingham schools opening to more pupils when it is safe to do so”. **.**
* Cambridge has said lectures will only be held online for the next academic year because of coronavirus.
* **Rolls-Royce** has announced plans to cut at least 9,000 jobs, almost a fifth of its workforce.
* Mary Bousted, joint NEU head, has advised teachers not to engage with their headteachers when asked if they are available to return to school from June 1.
* A poll of almost 30,000 teachers, found that just 5% of respondents said they believe it is safe for more pupils to return to England's schools from June 1
* A healthcare assistant has become the 24th Filipino NHS worker to die with COVID-19.
* According to a survey of 151 local education authorities, 47 are leaving it up to individual schools and headteachers to decide whether to reopen on June 1