

6.10 Current debates and reforms

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Forthcoming policy developments

Reform of technical education

The Government announced its intention to implement an overhaul of technical education as set out in its [Post-16 Skills Plan](#). These reforms have had a renewed focus in the context of COVID-19. In 2020, the government announced [further funding](#) for these reforms:

To support reforms to technical education, the government announced:

- £1.5 billion to upgrade the existing further education (FE) estate in England as announced in the 2020 budget
- up to £290m for Institutes of Technology
- £2.5 billion for a national skills fund to help adults and employers access training as announced in the 2020 budget

Among these reforms are plans to introduce newly-approved digital qualifications in 2022, potentially leading to jobs like network engineer or software developer. Approved qualifications in health and sciences and construction will follow in 2023.

Internet safety strategy

In 2017, the [Internet Safety Strategy Green Paper](#) was released, which set out proposals to tackle unacceptable behaviour and content online. Since then, the Government's period of consultation and [response](#) to the Green Paper, as well as the [2018 Digital Charter](#) set out to create a more regulated and safer online experience in the UK for all. The Charter states an investment of an additional £7 billion in research and development by 2021/22, delivering major upgrades to the digital infrastructure, and states the government will introduce a new statutory duty of care enforced by an independent regulator to tackle harmful online content. A National Data Strategy is also expected to be established.

Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (PSHE)

The Government [has committed](#) to making a new curriculum of PSHE mandatory from September 2020, though schools are encouraged to adopt it from September 2019. The PSHE Association has developed a [programme of study](#) for PSHE, endorsed by the Government and to be taught at key stages 1-5. It is based around three areas - health and wellbeing, relationships, and living in the wider world.

T Levels

The introduction of [T Levels](#) will take place in September 2020. T Levels will follow GCSE's and be equivalent to three A Levels. They will consist of both classroom learning and "on-the-job" experience, to cater to meet the needs of the industry. In anticipation of T Levels, the nationwide [Next Level campaign](#) was launched in October 2019, as well as the [T Level Action Plan](#). This plan confirms the details of the remaining 15 T Levels – to be introduced from 2022 and 2023 – as well as the selection criteria for providers wishing to deliver T Levels in 2022.

Ongoing debates

Brexit

The UK left the EU on January 31st 2020 at 11pm, beginning the transition period that is set to end on December 31st 2020. An [update](#) on the website of the Erasmus+ UK National Agency states that:

under the Withdrawal Agreement negotiated with the EU, the UK will continue to participate fully in the current (2014-2020) Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps (ESC) programmes. This means that the projects successfully bid for during the current (2014-2020) Erasmus+ and ESC programmes will continue to receive EU funding for the full duration of the project, including those where funding runs beyond 2020 and the end of the transition period. As a result, the UK government guarantee of EU funding will no longer be required and the Erasmus+ and ESC guarantee IT system has been closed.

Additional updates have been published on the [Erasmus+ site](#)

COVID-19

In June 2020, the government announced a [billion pound Covid catch up plan](#) to tackle the impact of lost

teaching time due to COVID-19. £650 million will be shared across state primary and secondary schools over the 2020/21 academic year and headteachers will decide how the money is spent.

Separately to this, the National Tutoring Programme worth £350 million forms part of the package, and is aimed at increasing access to high-quality tuition for the most disadvantaged young people over the 2020/21 academic year and provide a sustained solution to closing the attainment gap. The National Tutoring Programme has been designed and developed by a collaboration of five charities – the Education Endowment Foundation, Sutton Trust, Impetus, Nesta and Teach First – working in partnership with the Department for Education. You can visit the official website [here](#).

In August 2020, the government [announced](#) a £9 million funding package, as part of the National Tutoring Programme, to target reception-age children and boost their early language skills.

The government released [statutory guidance](#) for schools in August 2020 during the coronavirus outbreak including guidance on special educational needs and disability, safe working and online learning. [Statutory guidance](#) on keeping children safe in education was also released in September 2020 as children start back to school in the UK.