

One million laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children and young people

Over one million devices will now reach schools, colleges and councils, helping ensure students have access to high-quality remote education if they need it, the Government has announced today.

Almost 70,000 pupils are also now confirmed to have enrolled in the National Tutoring Programme, as the government continues to step up work to support young people.

The Government is also confirming today that, amidst unprecedented global demand, over 560,000 devices were delivered to schools and councils in 2020. The further purchase of more than 440,000 devices means that over one million will now be provided to help schools and colleges throughout the pandemic – making the programme one of the largest of its kind in the world.

The Government is now investing over £300 million to support remote education and social care, including providing devices and internet access to pupils who need it most. This is alongside work to help young people catch up through the National Tutoring Programme.

High-quality tutoring of the kind offered by the programme has been proven to help young people catch up by as much as 3-5 months lost learning, from just one term's worth of tutoring.

The Government has been clear that keeping education open for all is a national priority. Schools and colleges have already put extensive protective measures in place that are helping reduce the risk of the virus being transmitted.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

We know how important it is for children to be in school, but it's also vital that where public health advice means they can't be, we have all-encompassing measures in place to prevent them falling behind.

That's why scaling up our devices scheme, alongside our tutoring offer to reach as many children and young people as possible, is so important.

Providing one million devices is a hugely significant achievement,

not only in the context of supporting children through the pandemic, but an investment in tech for our schools, colleges and children for years to come.

From January, schools will start being invited to order devices even if they have not had to send pupils home to self-isolate.

Devices are currently delivered within two working days of orders being placed and that will remain the case going into the first week of January. Schools will be kept up to date on delivery times should they be impacted by the level of demand.

The programme will also be extended to include 16 to 19-year-olds in schools and further education, many of whom will be preparing for exams.

The purchase of more than 440,000 devices comes from a further £100 million being committed, bringing the total to over £300 million to support remote education.

The vast majority of devices will be delivered to schools and colleges by Easter.

Matt Hood, Principal at Oak National Academy, said:

This is very welcome news. As we look forward to next term it is right we increase both laptops and data access for the children who most need support.

Every child must be able to access online teaching so they can keep learning, and this will help, no matter a child's circumstance. It's why we are so proud that pupils have taken part in nine million Oak National Academy lessons this term and we look forward to supporting more into 2021.

David Hughes, Chief Executive of the Association of Colleges, said:

This access to digital devices is a welcome step forward for college students. It means they will be able to engage fully in their learning as a result, receiving the high-quality education they deserve at all times. It is vital that our students are able to progress in their education as they should.

Victoria Gowan, Headteacher, Lord Derby Academy, said:

Receiving our allocation of devices has had a very positive impact on our school community – with access and engagement with our

remote learning offer almost doubling amongst our pupils. A number of parents have also expressed their gratitude for their children now being able to access remote learning from home.

Our significant allocation of Chromebooks has boosted staff morale and motivation to be creative in delivering remote learning, alongside supporting us in removing one of the most significant barriers to our pupils' access to the curriculum.

Since schools began enrolling pupils into the National Tutoring Programme following its launch in November this year, over 62,000 pupils have enrolled in subsidised high-quality tutoring through the Education Endowment Foundation's Tuition Partners.

The National Tutoring Programme is expected to continue to ramp up over the spring term, reaching hundreds of thousands of pupils by the summer, ensuring those who have suffered the most from lost learning, including those in exam year groups, have the greatest opportunity to catch up.

188 Academic Mentors, recruited and trained by Teach First, have also started in schools serving disadvantaged communities across the country. This has benefited an estimated 7,000 pupils to date and over 500 additional mentors are set to join schools in January, with a further cohort starting in February.

Sir Peter Lampl, founder and chairman of the Sutton Trust and chairman of the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), said:

Our research has shown that high quality tutoring is a cost-effective way to accelerate pupils' learning. While only part of the solution in addressing the impact of school closures, it's clear that the NTP is able to make a real difference to pupils' outcomes.

So it's good to see the programme get-off to such a promising start, with over 60,000 pupils enrolled since its launch six weeks ago. Even more heartening has been the individual stories of the schools and pupils who have accessed the support.

By building on these strong foundations, the NTP will prove to be a powerful tool for tackling the attainment gap.

Sue Maguire, Headteacher, Hatch End High School said:

We've been absolutely thrilled with the invaluable support our Academic Mentor has provided to our pupils, teachers and whole school this term. A major reason why the programme has been so successful is the regular communication between the teacher and the mentor, resulting in high quality, intense and tailored tuition.

Students have already commented on how their mentor has supported them to gain in confidence, as well as improve their key skills in areas of the English curriculum.

The Department for Education has partnered with some of the UK's leading mobile operators to provide free data to disadvantaged families, further supporting remote learning where it's needed.

Where schools identify a child from a disadvantaged family without internet access at home, they can now request free, additional data through the DfE's Get Help with Technology programme. Families will benefit from this additional data until July.

The level of additional data will vary by provider, but for example EE customers will receive an extra 20 gigabytes per month. Other providers include Three, Tesco Mobile, Smarty, Sky Mobile and Virgin Mobile.

Lutz Schüler, Chief Executive Officer at Virgin Media, said:

We know how important it is for children to take part in online lessons and remote learning, and we're pleased to be working with the Department for Education by offering free mobile data to Virgin Mobile customers who need it. This is the latest in a series of measures we have taken this year to support our customers during this challenging time.

The National Tutoring Programme has been extended to run for two years to allow more tutoring to be rolled out across the country and be more beneficial to the children and young people who need the most support to catch up.

The government is determined to ensure that tutoring is available to boost the progress of all students that need it, not just the most privileged.

Schools are offered blocks of 15 hours tutoring from Tuition Partners and schools are responsible for making decisions on which pupils receive tutoring support and how that tutoring is delivered to pupils. This can be small group or one-to-one tuition and either online or face-to-face.