

Reforms set to boost early language outcomes and cut workload

Reception teachers will benefit from a cut in unnecessary paperwork giving them more time to support children's early development, the Department for Education has confirmed in its response to a consultation proposing reforms to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

More than 2,000 early years professionals responded to the consultation about revised early learning goals – key measures teachers use to check children's development at the end of the Reception year – with a consistent view that they were clear and would contribute to a well-rounded assessment.

A focus on language and vocabulary development, as well as teaching numbers in maths, was welcomed – equipping children with important skills as they begin their school journey.

The Department for Education has also confirmed today, Wednesday 1 July, that disadvantaged and vulnerable pre-school aged children will receive additional support as they transition back into early education. Grants worth more than £1 million over six months will go to national early years voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations including National Children's Bureau, Early Years Alliance and Pacey.

Education Minister Nick Gibb said:

It is encouraging to see that many Reception teachers and early years staff welcome our plans to reduce time spent on unnecessary paperwork and help them spend more time interacting with pupils in the classroom. These reforms will strengthen the teaching practice and improve pupils' vocabulary and reading as they move into Year 1 and beyond.

We will be rolling out these improvements to the whole early years sector from September 2021 and will continue working closely with nurseries and schools so that these positive changes keep driving up the standard of early education across the country.

The VCS grants will be targeted at improving outcomes for children most at risk of falling behind by the age of five, and will increase the support for young children with special education needs.

The Department for Education has also confirmed the [Hungry Little Minds](#) website – an online tool for parents and carers that includes tips to support children aged 0 to five with their learning at home – will be zero-rated by the major mobile providers, meaning that parents won't use up their mobile

data allowance if they browse the site from their smartphone.

Children and Families Minister Vicky Ford said:

Nurseries, childminders and pre-schools have remained open to many children throughout the pandemic, providing reassurance and continuity to the youngest children during an uncertain time. The early years of a child's education are crucial and it is vital now more than ever that we work with the sector and with parents to get children back on track.

That is why we are working with early years organisations as part of a wider effort to make sure no child falls behind, partnering with experts to help them catch up from any time missed in their formal education. We're also making it easier for parents, no matter their background or income level, to access online resources that help them to support their children's learning at home.

The reforms to the Early Years Foundation Stage follow the Government's commitment to improve the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) in response to the Primary Assessment consultation in September 2017.

Today's consultation response confirms that local authorities will no longer be required to externally moderate the EYFS Profile within schools when the measures become statutory from September 2021, reducing the burden on teachers to gather extensive evidence of a pupil's development and allowing them to spend more time interacting with pupils. It builds on pilot findings published last year, where teachers found changes largely positive, with feedback that it helped focus on stories, group work and discussion, inspiring pupils to be more imaginative and improving their language skills. The improvements also resulted in a reduction in paperwork which lead to a better focus on supporting their pupils' education.

Reception classes have been invited to bring in the EYFS reforms a year early if appropriate, marking a further step in cutting teacher workload and boosting early language development.

Professor Dame Alison Peacock, Chief Executive of the Chartered College of Teaching, said:

The Chartered College of Teaching welcomes these reforms. It is vital that teachers and early years colleagues are free to spend the majority of their time focussing on leading learning rather than constantly tracking and monitoring progress for external moderation purposes.

Dr Julian Grenier, Headteacher at Sheringham Nursery School and Children's

Centre, said:

I think it's important for the sector to take hold of the opportunities these reforms offer us. Reducing the workload around the EYFS Profile will enable practitioners to focus their assessment work where it's most needed. That's for children in danger of falling behind the majority, and children who may have barriers to their learning.

This is an opportunity for schools to think about their early years curriculum, and what they want children to learn, experience and enjoy, rather than focusing on assessment data. The key to giving children better and more equal life-chances is to strengthen the profession in the early years. I hope that colleagues will seize this opportunity to put less emphasis on generating 'data' on more on developing a stronger and better-trained workforce.

Tiffnie Harris, primary specialist at the Association of School and College Leaders, said:

We support this new approach to early learning because it will remove the administrative burden of external moderation and give our fantastic early years teachers more time to interact with children. Early years education is so important for future outcomes, and it is a key to narrowing the attainment gap between rich and poor. We very much welcome the focus on this vital phase.

Jan Dubiel, specialist in Early Childhood Education, said:

Recent events have been a stark reminder of how unpredictable the world can be. As educators and policy makers concerned with early years care and education, we have a duty to ensure that we are preparing children to be knowledgeable, skilled, resilient and creative to manage and succeed in the future that they will face.

We are all committed to providing the most effective and up to date provision for children that will ensure this. The review of the Statutory Educational Programmes, Early Learning Goals and EYFS Profile provides us with a timely opportunity to reflect on, update and refine key aspects of the EYFS.

[UK – Turkmenistan sustainable economic cooperation](#)

World news story

Ceremonial signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Minister of Finance and Economy of Turkmenistan.



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Yesterday Her Majesty's Ambassador to Turkmenistan, His Excellency Mr Hugh Philpott signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Minister of Finance and Economy of Turkmenistan, His Excellency Mr Ezizgeldi Annamammedov.

The document will further enhance bilateral trade relations and facilitate cooperation on sustainable economic development between the two countries with the backing of UK Export Finance.

After the signing ceremony the two sides discussed the projects on the bilateral agenda and agreed to work towards realisation of those in the near future.

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[Call for bids in Kazakhstan: e-](#)

Learning courses

The British Embassy in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan is now accepting project proposals for the 2020/2021 financial year that will end on 31 March 2021.

This year the British Embassy in Nur-Sultan is seeking to support projects that aim to institutionalise training on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in the health sector, and strengthen health response to GBV in Kazakhstan.

There has been an increase in the number of victims of gender-based violence throughout the COVID-19 lockdown in Kazakhstan. One of hotlines, established to help victims of domestic violence, reported a 50% increase in the number of calls in the first half of April compared to February. 50% of girls are subjected to violent methods of upbringing in the family; including 21% who receive physical punishment and 45% experience psychological aggression and violence.

The British Embassy in Nur-Sultan is seeking to support the Government of Kazakhstan in its COVID-19 response plans, including actions on enhancing the GBV response mechanism, and working closely with the Ministry of Healthcare.

We are particularly interested in project proposals aimed towards developing E-learning courses that can deliver the following outcomes:

1. increased proficiency of health professionals in complying with the Clinical Protocol on Gender-Based Violence
2. strengthened capacity and expertise of health professionals in following suitable systems to refer GBV survivors within the health system and providing emergency and social care
3. increased awareness of GBV, amongst first responders including ambulance staff, nurses, doctors, police officers, psychologists and social workers
4. increased awareness of GBV amongst the general public, i.e. for people to understand the concept and develop a zero tolerance attitude toward the issue and abusers; for women to know their rights and be aware of the mechanisms available for them to be treated and protected in case they are GBV survivors

Characteristics

- the E-Learning courses should be comprehensive, self-standing and accessible in various free platforms including those of the British Government
- the courses to be available in Kazakh and Russian languages

Audience

The target audience are first responders to emergency calls, including ambulance staff, nurses, doctors, social workers, psychologists and those that may identify cases, e.g. teachers

Bid guidance

- project will be funded in the 2020/2021 financial year that will end on 31 March 2021, with no expectation of continued funding beyond this period
- maximum budget limit: USD 38,000

Assessment

Bids will be assessed against the following criteria:

- alignment with the above mentioned thematic priorities and outcomes
- outcomes are achievable within the funding period
- project design includes clear monitoring and evaluation procedures
- sustainability demonstrating that project benefits continue after the funding ends
- risk and financial accountability procedures
- the organisation's safeguarding policies that ensure protection of beneficiaries
- overall value for money

Process

1. project proposals must be received by midnight on 17 July 2020. Late proposals will not be considered
2. proposals must be submitted using the attached forms only (Project Proposal and Activity Based Budget)
3. proposals must be submitted to ukinkz@fco.gov.uk
4. project proposals selected for further consideration will be notified on 31 July 2020
5. the British Embassy Nur-Sultan aim to sign grant agreements with successful project implementers by 14 August 2020

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Documents

[Activity Based Budget Template](#) (MS Excel Spreadsheet, 29.9KB)

[Project Proposal Form above £10k](#) (MS Word Document, 87.5KB)

Coronavirus recovery in Her Majesty's Court and Tribunal Service

It comes as Her Majesty's Court and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) publishes a recovery plan that charts the progress made during the emergency and sets out the road to recovery.

In March, [almost half of all courts](#) were closed and [jury trials were paused](#) to minimise social interaction between court users. Since then, court staff, legal professionals, and the judiciary have collaborated to prioritise cases and keep the justice system running throughout the lockdown.

Up to [90% of hearings](#) in this period involved remote access. Video technology has been bolstered across all courts, and – using public health advice – measures have been put in place to safely [resume jury trials](#) in [26 courts](#) since June.

This has meant that, throughout the lockdown, domestic abuse victims could obtain protection orders, children could be safeguarded, and dangerous suspects have not been released from jail as their remand expired.

The success of these measures means we can begin to ramp up the work of the courts – building on what we have achieved. The recovery plan, [published today](#), sets out our approach to get back up to speed.

The Lord Chancellor, Robert Buckland QC MP, said:

The Prime Minister was right when he said that the whole country needs to prepare for an extended period of managing the threat of the virus and this demands a new perspective on the way we deliver justice.

His spending commitment yesterday shows just how serious we are taking this as a government. We have set aside £142 million to improve more than 100 courts across the country, give 750 more court rooms remote capability.

This will more than double the maintenance budget meaning that, combined with the £48 million already set aside this year, it will be the biggest single investment in the courts and tribunals estate in over a decade.

This will create jobs, increase capacity, and improve the court estate – building on the developments we have made throughout the pandemic to deliver a more efficient and effective court service.

Our courts have been recognised globally for their response to this unprecedented crisis, and those who have worked so hard to deliver this should take pride in how far we have come in a short amount of

time.

We should be proud of this but there is work to be done to get back on track. While the number of outstanding cases is not extraordinary, the context and the rate of increase is. Beyond this week's investment, I am looking at several options to ensure that our courts can continue to run.

I have already identified 10 additional sites for so-called Nightingale courts to allow for better social distancing; we are looking at whether courts will need to stay open for longer to increase the number of cases that can be heard safely on any given day; the standard of video technology continues to improve, with new tech being rolled out across all courts from this week; and I am exploring means of getting jury trials moving at pace once more.

We will of course continue to deliver our manifesto commitments – to keep the country safe from terrorism and to support all victims of crime. But I think it is important to recognise that we are at a crossroads here too.

Coronavirus will continue to have short-term implications and parts of the justice system will operate differently for some time but, in many ways, the world will never be the same.

Our challenge now must be to learn lessons from our response and address the immediate implications, while at the same time seizing any opportunities that may exist in a reality that looks very different than it did just a few months ago.

It is possible to make this recovery a renewal for justice in our country. Getting it right could mean a system that not only emerges intact from this crisis, but is fundamentally more efficient, more dynamic and more resilient – a smarter system for a different future, which is good news for all who use our courts.

[New video tech to increase remote hearings in civil and family courts](#)

- The Cloud Video Platform is being extended to civil and family courts
- Over 120 courts set to have more reliable video tech that improves remote court hearings
- Roll out is part of HMCTS recovery plan to ensure justice continues to be served

It follows the successful implementation of the Cloud Video Platform (CVP) across 60 crown courts and 93 magistrates' courts. The technology has been used in some 3,600 crown court hearings and more than 7,000 overnight remand cases heard by magistrates.

CVP can be accessed by any device that has a camera and a microphone – such as a mobile phone or tablet. Anyone can join easily, and securely, through a web browser, and sessions can be locked to make sure only appropriate parties join. Training rooms can also be set up so that sessions may be rehearsed before they go live.

Extending it to civil and family proceedings means that all courts in England and Wales will have the technology needed to hold remote hearings – giving users a safer, reliable, and more accessible service, while ensuring justice continues to be delivered.

Courts Minister, Chris Philp, said:

We have worked closely with the judiciary to continue thousands of hearings during the pandemic.

This new system will bolster our efforts to prioritise urgent cases and increase our capacity to hear them remotely – ensuring justice is delivered effectively and safely.

Today's (1 July 2020) announcement forms part of the wider [HMCTS recovery plan](#), which sets out how courts will tackle the expected increase in outstanding cases following the pandemic in a safe way. Plans include:

- Increasing capacity by identifying several new 'Nightingale' court sites to increase capacity
- Assessing whether there is a need to extend operating hours
- Determining how best to hold jury trials in a socially distanced way

Thanks to dedicated HMCTS staff and the judiciary, the number of criminal, civil and family cases involving remote technology has increased by 90% since the pandemic began. This has meant that domestic abuse victims could continue to obtain protection orders, children could be safeguarded, and dangerous suspects would not be released from jail as their remand expired.

The CVP roll out will ensure that these vital cases continue to be heard safely and securely. The extension to county courts will take place over the next few months to cover every civil and family court site.

CVP is being rolled out to further Crown and Magistrates' courts this month, and it's scheduled to be available in all our criminal courtrooms by the end of July.

Notes to editors