

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP**  
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

25<sup>th</sup> August 2020

*Dear Constance,*

**RE: SUPPORT FOR POST-16 EDUCATION.**

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of your concerns regarding post-16 education and how it is being supported through the Coronavirus outbreak; your comments upon which I have read with great interest.

I know teachers and students alike will be concerned about the impact that Coronavirus is having on further education (FE). Indeed, it is vital that the sector emerges in a strong position, as we will rely on FE to teach the skills that our economy will need to fully recover.

I understand Ministers have frequently engaged with FE providers to monitor the level of training that they are able to deliver and have been actively working with them to address issues. Guidance for FE providers on how they should operate during Coronavirus is regularly updated and can be found here:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-further-education-provision/maintaining-education-and-skills-training-provision-further-education-providers](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-further-education-provision/maintaining-education-and-skills-training-provision-further-education-providers).

A range of flexibilities have been introduced, including encouraging online delivery, allowing furloughed apprentices to continue the 'off-the-job' training element of their apprenticeship, and increased flexibility around end point assessments, so that as many learners as possible can successfully complete their courses. In addition to this, Ministers have confirmed that grant funded providers will continue to receive their scheduled monthly profiled payments for the remainder of the 2019/20 funding year, and funding allocations for 2020/21 have been confirmed.

For students, it is important that employers, especially small businesses, can take on new apprentices this year. I am pleased, therefore, to hear that Ministers will continue to support them to ensure this can continue. In addition, a new online 'Skills Toolkit' has been launched to provide free, high quality digital and numeracy courses - the skills most sought after by employers. This can be found here:

[www.nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/find-a-course/the-skills-toolkit](http://www.nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/find-a-course/the-skills-toolkit).

I was encouraged that, on the 30<sup>th</sup> June, the Prime Minister announced an 'Opportunity Guarantee' so that every young person has the chance of an apprenticeship, or an in-work placement, to ensure they can maintain the skills and confidence they need to find the job that is right for them. FE will play a critical part in the delivery of that guarantee and further information on how it will operate will be published shortly.



On the issue of universities, our universities contribute hugely to the economy and more widely to society and I understand the concerns you raise about their finances. Universities are at the core of our response to COVID-19, not only leading on research into potential cures and vaccines, but also as a fundamental part of the knowledge economy which will be so vital to national recovery.

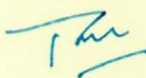
I am pleased therefore that Ministers have announced measures to support students and universities through these difficult times.

An estimated £2.6 billion of tuition fee payments will be brought forward to help universities better manage financial risks over the autumn. This will have no impact on students. As well as this, a further £100 million of public funding will be brought forward to this academic year to help protect vital university research activities.

Ministers have also confirmed that education providers are eligible to apply for the broader COVID-19 support packages, including business loan support schemes, which the Office for Students estimates could be worth at least £700 million to the sector. Further guidance has been published about how providers should access the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to safeguard staff jobs, in particular stating that any grant from the scheme should not duplicate other sources of public funding where these are being maintained, such as UK home student tuition fees.

Further details about the support for universities can be accessed here:  
[www.gov.uk/government/news/government-support-package-for-universities-and-students](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-support-package-for-universities-and-students).

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

*With best wishes*  


**TOM PURSGLOVE MP**  
**MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT**  
**CORBYP & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**