A rapid review of strategies to support learning and wellbeing among 16-19 year old learners who have experienced significant gaps in their education as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic

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The COVID-19 pandemic caused a significant disruption to all levels of education. Although the education of learners of all ages has been affected, 16-19 year old learners are at a crucial time in their lives as they transition into further study or employment. Both national and international initiatives will therefore be needed to support schools and colleges in helping 16-19 year old learners catch up on missed learning. A number of catch-up strategies have been suggested and include summer schools, extended school days, tutoring programmes and other practices. It is also important to consider young people’s mental health in the context of COVID-19.

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We looked for evidence across the two questions.

2 parts to the question:

Question 1:
What methods of support for 16–19 year-old learners are successful in enabling individuals to progress with their learning?

Question 2:
What methods of support are beneficial in improving 16-19 year old learners wellbeing in post-16 settings?
Question 1: Progressing with learning

Searches identified:
• 12 systematic reviews (3-19 years / pre COVID-19)
• 1 rapid review, 1 protocol, (16-19 years / post COVID-19)
• 4 broader UK organisational reports (includes sections on 16-19 years / post COVID-19)

Question 2: Student wellbeing

Searches identified
• 3 systematic reviews, 1 rapid review (16-19 years / pre COVID-19)
• 2 rapid reviews (16 to 19 years/ post COVID-19)
• 2 broader UK organisational reports (includes sections on 16-19 years / post COVID-19)
There was no direct systematic review evidence found to enable an evaluation for strategies to support learning for 16-19 year old learners following the COVID-19 pandemic.
Key Findings

Question 1: Progressing with learning

Pre-COVID evidence for several methods demonstrated a positive impact for 3-18 year old learners to enable them to progress with their learning

- Additional tutor support
  - one to one tuition
  - small group tuition
  - mentoring
  - learner-led peer support sessions

- Additional hours of tuition
  - extension of the teaching day
  - additional teaching during school holidays
  - specific summer interventions
Key Findings

Question 1: Progressing with learning

- Additional maths and English tuition
  - Maths and English literacy in the classroom
  - Writing interventions for English literacy
  - Embedding Level 2 maths in vocational studies

- Metacognition and self-regulation
  (knowledge and thought processes regarding one’s own learning)

- Scholarships, financial aid, college information
  - high potential but low-income learners progress to higher education in the USA
Key Findings

Question 1: Progressing with learning

The evidence showed **no benefit** in **withdrawing students from core lessons** for **additional English tuition**

There was **no evidence found** to enable the evaluation of **whole group additional tutor support** and **online additional tutor support**
No direct systematic review evidence directly investigating methods of support post COVID-19 for improving 16-19 year old learners wellbeing in post-16 settings was found.
Question 2: Student wellbeing

Pre-COVID evidence found several methods to be beneficial in improving student wellbeing

- screening and effective referral pathways to clinical treatment for older teenagers and those in sixth form colleges

- counselling, physical activity and interventions aiming to improve sleep across all the key-stages
Question 2: Student wellbeing

- Mindfulness interventions have shown to be successful in improving wellbeing for a wide range of learners including 4-15 year olds, and youth in sixth form colleges.

  The **strongest evidence** on the beneficial impact of **mindfulness** exists in **postsecondary education**.

  **Mixed evidence** was found for **therapy-based prevention programmes** and **social and emotional learning**.

  **No evidence** found for evaluating family and friends support.
Evidence for strategies to support learning and wellbeing for 16-19 year old learners who have experienced significant disruption in their education is from studies conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic has brought together a unique set of conditions, not only involving disruption to education, but also to environmental, economic, social and emotional areas of young people’s and their families’ lives. It is not possible to say whether an intervention that was found to be successful in relatively “normal” circumstances will be as successful in these difficult times.
Although supported by a limited volume of evidence, targeting support activity at learners from the most deprived socio-economic backgrounds has a significant positive impact on their progress.

Further research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions introduced to support learning and wellbeing of 16-19 year old learners affected by the pandemic.
Limitations of the available evidence

Poor reporting of methods so the quality of most of the work informing this rapid review has been given a low quality score.

Majority draws on pre-pandemic evidence from younger populations.

The organisational reports were not quality appraised; the value of their recommendations and policy proposals is inferred by the reputation for knowledge and professional expertise attached to the organisations themselves.
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The WC19EC and authors of this work declare that they have no conflict of interest.