

# ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP on MODERN LANGUAGES



Chair: Nia Griffith MP (Lab); Co-Chair: Baroness Coussins (CB);  
Vice-Chairs: Tonia Antoniazzi MP (Lab); Lord Dykes (CB); Baroness  
Garden of Frognal (LD); Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury (Con).

## APPG on Modern Languages submission to the Covid-19 Inquiry

The APPG on Modern Languages wishes to submit the following evidence to the Covid-19 Inquiry, highlighting a series of issues relating to languages and communication in the fields of health, education, justice, and international relations, with relevance to Modules 1, 3 and 5 of the Inquiry (Module: Resilience and preparedness; Module 3: Impact of Covid-19 on healthcare systems; and Module 5: Government procurement). This evidence informed regular questions and contributions to Ministers made by Baroness Coussins through the pandemic.<sup>1</sup>

NB. The full list of documents being submitted is listed in the List of Appendices at the foot of this document.

### 1. Health:

1.1 The absence or delay of provision of public health messaging in languages other than English may have been a contributing factor to the disproportionate levels of infection and death among specific populations (e.g. asylum seekers, BAME).

#### Relevance to Inquiry Modules:

**Module 1: Resilience and preparedness (re: evidence indicating a systemic lack of preparedness with regard to achieving optimal health outcomes through best practice deployment of public health messaging in languages other than English).**

**Module 3: Impact of Covid-19 on healthcare systems**

**Module 5: Government procurement (re: systems for procuring appropriate and effective language services in the NHS)**

Language and communication barriers are recognised as a contributing factor to the worse risk and outcomes among BAME populations.<sup>2 3</sup>

- The 2023 report by the Race Equality Foundation, UCL and Doctors Of The World<sup>4</sup> states that BAME groups were between 5% and 88% more likely to be infected by the virus and after two years were still three to five times more likely than White British adults to remain unvaccinated; and that “the lack of specific outreach and promotion programmes and the

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix 1.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix 2: Public Health England, 2020. Disparities in the risk and outcomes of COVID-19. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/908434/Disparities\\_in\\_the\\_risk\\_and\\_outcomes\\_of\\_COVID\\_August\\_2020\\_update.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/908434/Disparities_in_the_risk_and_outcomes_of_COVID_August_2020_update.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Appendix 3: Public Health England, 2020. Beyond the data: Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on BAME groups. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/892376/COVID\\_stakeholder\\_engagement\\_synthesis\\_beyond\\_the\\_data.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/892376/COVID_stakeholder_engagement_synthesis_beyond_the_data.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Appendix 4: Race Equality Foundation, UCL and Doctors of the World, 2023. Not by choice – the unequal impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on disempowered ethnic minority and migrant communities. <https://raceequalityfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Not-by-choice.pdf>

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lack of prioritisation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic people has contributed to this unequal take-up”.

Although it was already known that language barriers contribute to generally lower take up of vaccines in BAME groups<sup>5</sup>, and alarm among health professionals was widespread as early as April 2020<sup>6</sup>, there was an apparent lack of preparedness to provide effective translations, including culturally-appropriate amendments, to reach all communities:

- In June 2020, Public Health England stated that the 119 phone line offered translations in “over 200 languages” and the COVID-19 App was made available in 12 languages and adopted more use of images.<sup>7</sup>
- Also in June 2020, the Cabinet Office informed Baroness Coussins that its strategy for communications in other languages included “ethnic and specialist media outlets” and “spokespeople from relevant communities” and partnerships.<sup>8</sup>
- However, the Cabinet Office also stated that translations were confined to only nine core languages with “other information” in an additional five.<sup>9</sup>
- The APPG noted a BBC report in July 2020 that found translation of guidance was delayed for weeks<sup>10</sup>, and that dissemination of information relied on local authorities who were not able to “keep up with the rapid changes of guidance”.<sup>11</sup>
- The APPG noted that the ineffectiveness of the approach was apparent in areas such as Bradford where the BBC found severe confusion among multilingual populations stemming from a lack of official communication and an apparent link to risky behaviours, outbreaks, and extended lockdown periods.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Appendix 5: Forster et al., 2016. Ethnicity-specific factors influencing childhood immunisation decisions among Black and Asian Minority Ethnic groups in the UK: a systematic review of qualitative research. *J Epidemiol Community Health*. 71(6). 544-549 (As quoted in SAGE, 2020: Factors influencing COVID-19 vaccine uptake among minority ethnic groups - 17 December 2020.) <https://jech.bmi.com/content/71/6/544>

<sup>6</sup> “Language issues and deprivation may result in [people from minority backgrounds] struggling to access healthcare, which is even more challenging since our practice doors closed.” Dr Shaba Nabi writing for Pulse Magazine, 17 April 2020. <https://www.pulsetoday.co.uk/views/coronavirus/some-covid-19-victims-are-more-equal-than-others/>

<sup>7</sup> Appendix 6: Public Health England, 2021. Public Health England and NHS Test and Trace: our role in the Roadmap out of lockdown. Delivery plan April to June 2021. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1011020/NHS\\_Test\\_and\\_Trace\\_delivery\\_plan.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1011020/NHS_Test_and_Trace_delivery_plan.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Appendix 7: Correspondence Baroness Coussins and Cabinet Office, June 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> BBC News reported new advice published in May 2020 was still not translated by the end of July: BBC News, 28 July 2020. Coronavirus: Safety fears over lack of translated virus advice. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-53537062>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> BBC News, 21 December 2020. Covid: Language barrier in Bradford 'putting lives at risk'. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leeds-55230653>

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The APPG noted an apparent policy contradiction in Government's Quarterly report on progress to address COVID-19 health inequalities (October 2020) in that its 12<sup>th</sup> Recommendation was "improving public health communication" to "hard to reach groups" including "people from ethnic minority backgrounds"; but also included a footnote that "translation into foreign languages is discouraged except in extraordinary circumstances because it conflicts with the government's approach to integration which relies on English language use".<sup>13</sup>

The APPG agrees with the analysis of Burns et al.<sup>14</sup> of the need for health care which is inclusive of migrants and asylum seekers, including co-designing interventions and messaging and addressing issues of trust between some migrant communities and public authorities.

The APPG notes that the provision of public service interpreters in spoken languages other than English (as distinct from British Sign Language) are not covered by the provisions of the Accessible Information Standard. We agree with Health Watch England's call for the Accessible Information Standard to cover people with limited English, noting that their data shows "people who speak little or no English struggle to access language-based interpreters".<sup>15</sup>

**The APPG encourages the Inquiry to underline the crucial importance of effective translations and locally-specific communication strategies for conveying public health messages, and to recognise that the lack of preparedness in this area contributed to higher infection rates among BAME communities.**

**We recommend a review into the policy that translations discourage integration of communities in order to ensure effective deployment of translations in emergency situations are expedited.**

**We recommend a review of preparedness for future emergency responses to ensure they are migrant-inclusive.**

**We recommend that the Accessible Information Standard should be amended to cover people who speak English as an additional language.**

## 1.2 The use of public service interpreters and language services in Test and Trace

### Relevance to Inquiry Modules:

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<sup>13</sup> GOV.UK, 3 December 2021. Final report on progress to address COVID-19 health inequalities. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/final-report-on-progress-to-address-covid-19-health-inequalities/final-report-on-progress-to-address-covid-19-health-inequalities#fn:66>

<sup>14</sup> Appendix 8: Burns et al., 2022. The Lancet. Migrant-inclusive healthcare delivery in the UK: Lessons learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic. [www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S2666-7762%2822%2900201-0](http://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S2666-7762%2822%2900201-0)

<sup>15</sup> Appendix 9: Health Watch England, 2022. The Accessible Information Standard. Findings from our evidence review. February 2022.

[https://www.healthwatchkingston.org.uk/sites/healthwatchkingston.org.uk/files/20220216%20-%20Evidence%20review%20-%20Accessible%20Information%20Standard\\_0.pdf](https://www.healthwatchkingston.org.uk/sites/healthwatchkingston.org.uk/files/20220216%20-%20Evidence%20review%20-%20Accessible%20Information%20Standard_0.pdf)

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**Module 1: Resilience and preparedness (re: evidence indicating a systemic lack of preparedness with regard to achieving optimal health outcomes through best practice deployment of public health messaging in languages other than English).**

**Module 3: Impact of Covid-19 on healthcare systems**

**Module 5: Government procurement (re: systems for procuring appropriate and effective language services)**

Test and Trace operated primarily as an English-only service despite apparent arrangements to make language services available.

- The National Audit Office reported that no equality assessment had been carried out by June 2020<sup>16</sup>, but that Test and Trace had stated that “its call centres offer a language interpreter service”, information which was repeated in Parliament by Ministers<sup>17</sup>.
- However, the APPG noted a Sky News report<sup>18</sup> that Test and Trace staff considered it to be an “English only service” and that DHSC claims that translations in up to 130 languages were available were “brazen” and “bizarre”.

The APPG noted that Sky News quoted a contact tracer complaining that half of their recent calls were to individuals who did not have English as a first language, making the link to the “spate of outbreaks in meat packing factories, many of which employ large numbers of migrant workers”.<sup>19</sup> This indicates that, at least in certain scenarios, a disproportionate number of Covid contacts did not speak English and that a strategy including translation and interpreting services would have been crucial to reaching them.

The APPG noted that local authorities published advice (in English) that non-English speakers should dial 119 (or the COVID19 App) if they needed to contact Test and Trace in another language<sup>20</sup>. As the function of Test and Trace was to contact people proactively, putting the onus on them to contact another service to receive the information in another language is unlikely to be effective.

**The APPG urges the Inquiry to note that non-English speaking and migrant groups should have been identified as a priority for Test and Trace and that stated efforts to reach them appeared to fail on the ground.**

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<sup>16</sup> Appendix 10: National Audit Office, 2020. The government’s approach to test and trace in England –interim report. <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/The-governments-approach-to-test-and-trace-in-England-interim-report.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> For example, Nadine Dorries MP statement to the House of Commons, ‘Written question: Coronavirus: Disease control’, 3 July 2020, 59179). <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-06-12/59179>

<sup>18</sup> Sky News, 25 June 2020. ‘English-only’ test and trace failing to contain virus. <https://news.sky.com/story/english-only-test-and-trace-failing-to-contain-virus-12014530>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> For example, Appendix 11: City of Westminster, 2020. NHS Test and Trace FAQs. <https://www.westminster.gov.uk/media/document/test-and-trace-fags>

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**We also urge the Inquiry to investigate the disparity between stated provision of language services through Test and Trace as pronounced by the service itself and Ministers, and the reality on the ground.**

## 1.3 Specific issues re: asylum seeker provisions

### Relevance to Inquiry Modules:

**Module 1: Resilience and preparedness (re: evidence indicating a systemic lack of preparedness with regard to achieving optimal health outcomes through best practice deployment of public health messaging in languages other than English).**

**Module 3: Impact of Covid-19 on healthcare systems**

**Module 5: Government procurement (re: systems for procuring appropriate and effective language services)**

It is unclear to what extent appropriate communications were available to asylum seekers via the Migrant Help service. Although 12 languages were available in May 2020, by June none of the updated guidance had been updated. (WQ).

The APPG notes research<sup>21</sup> showing that language barriers and communication problems were the most highly cited obstacle in asylum facilities and refuge centres, and that this is particularly problematic because of other inherent risk factors such as hygiene in shared infrastructure, social distancing and the high turnover of inhabitants.

In the UK, Burns et al. (2022)<sup>22</sup> show that communication barriers contributed to worse outcomes among asylum seekers and other underserved migrant communities.<sup>23</sup>

**We recommend that a review is undertaken of the preparedness of the UK asylum system with regard to effective communication in health emergencies.**

## 1.4 Public service interpreters: guidance, support and provision of PPE

### Relevance to Inquiry Modules:

**Module 1: Resilience and preparedness (re: evidence indicating a systemic lack of preparedness with regard to achieving optimal health outcomes through best practice deployment of public health messaging in languages other than English).**

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<sup>21</sup> Appendix 12: Führer et al., 2022. BMJ. COVID-19 pandemic in shelters for asylum seekers: a scoping review of preventive measures. <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/12/4/e058076>

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Appendix 13: Burns et al., 2022. The Lancet. Migrant-inclusive healthcare delivery in the UK: Lessons learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanep/article/PIIS2666-7762\(22\)00201-0/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanep/article/PIIS2666-7762(22)00201-0/fulltext)

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## Module 3: Impact of Covid-19 on healthcare systems

## Module 5: Government procurement (re: systems for procuring appropriate and effective language services, and procurement of PPE for public service interpreters)

The APPG is concerned that interpreters working in the NHS, most of whom are freelance and are provided by language service providers, appear unlikely to have been systematically provided with PPE by the commissioning Trusts.

- While guidance for providing BSL interpreters with PPE was clear<sup>24</sup>, it was less so for interpreters in other languages.
- There is evidence that language services providers to NHS Trusts sometimes relied on the interpreters themselves supplying their own PPE<sup>25</sup>
- In contrast, the government funded the provision of 250,000 clear face masks for BSL interpreters.<sup>26</sup>

**The APPG believes that if the provision of public service interpreters and translations in all languages were included in the Accessible Information Standard, associated inconsistencies in the provision of guidance, support and equipment such as PPE would be more easily identified and resolved.**

## 2. Education:

### 2.1 Bilingual/EAL students studying 'other languages' were unfairly impacted through provision and centre-assessed grade (CAG) grading.

#### Relevance to Inquiry Modules:

#### Module 1: Resilience and preparedness (re: evidence indicating a systemic lack of preparedness with regard to protecting students' access to GCSEs and A levels).

#### Module 5: Government procurement (re: procurement of assessment via awarding bodies)

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<sup>24</sup> Appendix 14: ASLI et al., 2020. Guidelines for Booking Interpreters in Healthcare Settings during the COVID-19 Pandemic June 2020 <https://asli.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Best-Practice-for-Booking-Interpreters-in-Healthcare-settings-during-Covid-19-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> "During this [pandemic] period, we searched for interpreters who were healthy, open to travel for bookings and had access to PPE (personal protective equipment)". Language Direct, 25 January 2021. Personalised Medical Interpretation Services at Language Direct. <https://www.languagedirect.org/personalised-medical-interpretation-language-direct/>

<sup>26</sup> GOV.UK, 5 September 2020. Government delivers 250,000 clear face masks to support people with hearing loss. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-delivers-250000-clear-face-masks-to-support-people-with-hearing-loss>

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Entries in GCSEs and A levels in ‘less taught languages’ fell sharply during the pandemic – in contrast to French, German and Spanish<sup>27</sup>. The impact of this can be seen today: A level entries in 2023 are just two thirds of the pre-pandemic average.<sup>28</sup>

Many students studied these languages in supplementary (‘Saturday’) schools; before the pandemic these students would enter the exam through their mainstream school; however the system of centre-assessed grades prevented many mainstream schools from issuing a grade for subjects they were not teaching themselves.

The APPG heard from many stakeholders alarmed that entire cohorts of students would miss out on their qualifications, and that mainstream schools were either not willing or not able to assist. Official guidance was often unhelpful for this group and candidates were charged high fees as private candidates.<sup>29</sup>

The APPG submitted responses to Ofqual consultations in April 2020 and January 2021 focussing on this issue.<sup>30</sup> Also in 2021, Baroness Coussins wrote to the Chair of Ofqual to encourage systems to be put in place to avoid a repeat of the situation<sup>31</sup>.

The APPG noted non-statutory guidance published by ASCL to help mainstream schools facilitate the awarding of GCSEs and A levels in less taught languages, by working more closely with supplementary schools where appropriate.<sup>32</sup>

**The APPG believes this exposes a lack of resilience in ensuring students of less taught languages are supported to have access to examinations and grades in a pandemic context and that this constitutes systemic inequity for bilingual and children with English as an additional languages.**

**The APPG recommends that the issues and recommendations it raised in its consultations to Ofqual in April 2020 and January 2021 are acted upon by the DfE, Ofqual, awarding bodies and other relevant authorities, and that ASCL’s guidance for collaboration between mainstream and supplementary schools is taken up more widely.**

## 2.2 Unclear messaging on the curriculum from the Department for Education

### Relevance to Inquiry Modules:

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<sup>27</sup> See Appendices 15, 16 and 17 (JCQ figures).

<sup>28</sup> See Figure 5 in Appendix 18. JCQ.

<sup>29</sup> See for example Appendices 19.1, 19.2 and 19.3: evidence collected by the Polish Education Society and shared with the APPG on Modern Languages showing the extent of the confusion surrounding the cancellation of examinations in April 2020 and the numbers of candidates affected in a sample of schools and examination centres.

<sup>30</sup> Appendices 20 and 21.

<sup>31</sup> Appendix 22.

<sup>32</sup> See Appendices 23 and 24.

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## **Module 1: Resilience and preparedness (re: evidence indicating a systemic lack of preparedness with regard to protecting students' access to GCSEs and A levels).**

On 2 July 2020, the DfE published *Guidance for full opening: schools*, which included a list of subjects expected to be taught in primary schools, which omitted modern languages (despite languages being a statutory Key Stage 2 subject).

The APPG almost immediately received reports from stakeholders that schools used this guidance as a reason to cancel languages provision.<sup>33</sup>

Following Ministerial clarification<sup>34</sup> that languages remained a statutory part of the curriculum, it was left to subject associations, unions and teacher groups to reassure teachers.

**The APPG believes there is a high risk that many primary schools took the guidance at face value and reduced or discontinued languages provision at Key Stage 2 as a result. In January 2021, one in five primary schools had suspended language teaching due to the pandemic<sup>35</sup>; and 66% of primary schools reported Covid-19 restrictions were impacting their languages provision.<sup>36</sup>**

**The APPG urges the Inquiry to recognise that in pressurised situations, unclear messaging from the DfE and other authorities can lead to provision being discontinued, especially in the case of vulnerable subjects like languages. Messaging should be clear and not be open to misinterpretation.**

### **2.3 Covid-19 exacerbated existing challenges facing languages:**

#### **Relevance to Inquiry Modules:**

**Module 1: Resilience and preparedness (re: lack of a strategic approach to ensure resilience of the subject).**

**Module 5: Government procurement (re: procurement of assessment via awarding bodies)**

#### **2.3.1 International experiences were interrupted for schools (trips and recruiting language assistants) and universities (year abroad, Horizon 2020 and recruiting lecturers).**

- In 2021, 64% per cent of primary schools and 38% of state secondary schools had no international activities within their school, a huge increase on previous years.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> For example, Appendix 25.

<sup>34</sup> Statement on 'Education settings: Autumn opening', HL Hansard, 8 July 2020, col 1200.  
<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2020-07-08/debates/4BE114EB-BA72-493A-9BF7-93C214C403A1/EducationSettingsAutumnOpening#contribution-6FDAD4B3-B9C7-4DD9-A3BA-ADF48CDE2C99>

<sup>35</sup> Appendix 26: British Council, 2021. Language Trends 2021.  
[https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/language\\_trends\\_2021\\_report.pdf](https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/language_trends_2021_report.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> Appendix 27: British Council, 2022. Language Trends 2022.  
[www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/language\\_trends\\_report\\_2022.pdf](http://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/language_trends_report_2022.pdf)

<sup>37</sup> Appendix 26: British Council, 2021. Language Trends 2021.  
[https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/language\\_trends\\_2021\\_report.pdf](https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/language_trends_2021_report.pdf)



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- QAA's Year Abroad Guidelines (29 May 2020) shows the many and varied issues and complications regarding Covid and the year abroad for universities.
- Trends show that international experiences were already under pressure following the UK's exit from the European Union.<sup>38</sup>

### 2.3.2 The shift to online learning has been complicated for a subject centred on communicative skills.

- In particular, the development of the 'virtual year abroad' was welcome but challenging, and seen to reduce the attractiveness of the subject at degree level.<sup>39 40</sup>

### 2.3.3 The pandemic's impact on language provision disproportionately affected deprived areas.<sup>41</sup>

- This exacerbates the established trend that socioeconomic disadvantage is correlated with restricted access to languages at school.<sup>42 43</sup>

### 2.3.4 Oral exams were not included in the GCSEs in 2021. The APPG considers this, alongside the loss of international experiences, removed much of the real-world attraction of language learning from prospective students.

### 2.3.5 The effect of the disruption appears to have affected the 2023 A level cohort (who chose their options during lockdown):

- There was a large fall in the number of A level entries in 2023 for Spanish (-12.7%), French (-12.5%), and German (-17.2%).<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Appendix 28: British Council, 2023. Language Trends 2023.

[www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/language\\_trends\\_england\\_2023.pdf](http://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/language_trends_england_2023.pdf). Percentage showing no international engagement: Primary 46% (2018) to 62% (2023); state secondary 11% (2018) to 36% (2023); independent secondary 3% (2018) to 9% (2023).

<sup>39</sup> Appendix 29: University Council of Modern Languages, 2020. Virtual Mobility Principles. <https://university-council-for-languages.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/UCML-Virtual-Mobility-Statement.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> Appendix 30. Internal APPG ML memo: Covid and the year abroad.

<sup>41</sup> Appendix 26: British Council, 2021. Language Trends 2021.

[https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/language\\_trends\\_2021\\_report.pdf](https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/language_trends_2021_report.pdf). For example: "71% of state schools in the most deprived areas reported a 'big negative impact' on language learning [as a result of lockdown]; 52% of state schools in the most affluent areas reported the same. By comparison just 16% of independent schools reported a 'big negative impact'."

<sup>42</sup> Appendix 31: CfBT, 2015. Language Trends 2014/2015.

[https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/language\\_trends\\_survey\\_2015.pdf](https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/language_trends_survey_2015.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> Appendix 32: British Council, 2018. Language Trends 2018.

[https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/language\\_trends\\_2018\\_report.pdf](https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/language_trends_2018_report.pdf)

<sup>44</sup> Ofqual, 1 June 2023: Provisional entries for GCSE, AS and A level: summer 2023 exam series

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/provisional-entries-for-gcse-as-and-a-level-summer-2023-exam-series/provisional-entries-for-gcse-as-and-a-level-summer-2023-exam-series#as-and-a-level-entries>

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- This puts provision of languages in Higher Education at further risk (where acceptances to modern languages degree courses fell by 36% from 2011 to 2020).<sup>454647</sup>

This adverse impact is important as language skills are shown to be linked to better employment prospects, exports, international relations, security and soft power, social inclusion and health<sup>48</sup>.

**The APPG is concerned that the cumulative impact of lockdown measures on languages provision in schools and universities has not been considered, or addressed, holistically.**

**The DfE should recognise that lockdown measures had a more severe impact on modern languages provision than most other subjects; and exacerbated pre-existing challenges facing the subject.**

**The APPG urges the Inquiry to recommend remedial measures to shore up languages and other subjects similarly affected with targeted support, as set out in the proposals by the British Academy, ASCL and the APPG on Modern Language for the 2021 Comprehensive Spending Review 2021.**<sup>49</sup>

### 3. Justice:

#### 3.1 Impact on the courts (use of public service interpreters in virtual proceedings)

##### Relevance to Inquiry modules:

**Module 1: Resilience and preparedness (re: need for more evidence on the impact of remote court hearings and use of public service interpreters in these settings).**

**Module 5: Government procurement (re: systems for procuring appropriate and effective language services in the courts)**

**Lockdown measures prompted a large shift towards remote court hearings<sup>50</sup> even though this may carry risks:**

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<sup>45</sup> UCAS, 4 February 2021. Students turn to technology with university choices.

<https://www.ucas.com/corporate/news-and-key-documents/news/students-turn-technology-university-choices>

<sup>46</sup> Appendix 33: UCML and The British Academy, 2021. Report on Granular Trends in Modern Languages in UCAS Admissions Data, 2012-18. <https://university-council-for-languages.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/UCML-BA-UCAS-Granularity-Report.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> Appendix 34: UCML and AULC, 2021. Survey of Language Provision in UK Universities in 2021. <https://university-council-for-languages.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/UCML-AULC-Survey-2021-Report.pdf>

<sup>48</sup> Appendix 35: APPG on Modern Languages, 2019. A National Recovery Programme for Languages. <https://nationalrecoverylanguages.weebly.com/>

<sup>49</sup> Appendix 36: The British Academy, ASCL and APPG on Modern Languages, 2021. The future of languages in the UK: Submissions by the British Academy, ASCL and the APPG on Modern Languages to the Comprehensive Spending Review 2021.

<sup>50</sup> House of Lords. 'Written question: Courts: Coronavirus', 18 June 2020, HL5587. <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-06-11/HL5587>

# ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP on MODERN LANGUAGES



Chair: Nia Griffith MP (Lab); Co-Chair: Baroness Coussins (CB);  
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- A series of major reports found significant concerns about the suitability of remote interpreting in court cases, with examples of misunderstandings, delays, poorly-performing technology, missed verbal and non-verbal cues.<sup>51 52 53</sup>
- Despite these significant concerns, the sector expects the use of remote interpreting to keep growing especially in less high-stakes scenarios.<sup>54</sup>

**The APPG recommends that the Ministry of Justice should caution against any systematic trend towards more widespread use of remote interpreting for the courts without significant research being carried out to ensure such failings are not replicated.**

The APPG notes that the Chartered Institute of Linguists provided the Ministry of Justice with guidance for using video mediated interpreting in court<sup>55</sup>, and produced guidance jointly with the Association of Translation Companies for best practice in remote interpreting<sup>56</sup>.

**The APPG recommends that where remote interpreting is appropriate, provisions should be made for more professional technology set-ups, and clear, systematic guidelines.**

## 4. International relations and development:

### 4.1 Impact on the British Council and the UK's soft power and international relations

#### Relevance to Inquiry modules:

**Module 1: Resilience and preparedness (re: vulnerability of the British Council when faced with pandemic).**

**Module 5: Government procurement (re: systems to ensure the instruments for the deployment of the UK's soft power and influence are sufficiently robust and protected)**

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<sup>51</sup> Appendix 37: Nuffield Family Justice Observatory, 2020. Remote hearings in the family justice system: a rapid consultation. [www.nuffieldfjo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/nfjo\\_remote\\_hearings\\_20200507-2-.pdf](http://www.nuffieldfjo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/nfjo_remote_hearings_20200507-2-.pdf)

<sup>52</sup> Appendix 38: The Legal Education Foundation, 2021. Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on tribunals The experience of tribunal judges. <https://research.thelegaleducationfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/FINAL-Tribunal-Judges-Survey-Report-02-June-2021-.pdf>

<sup>53</sup> Appendix 39: Magistrates' Association, 2022. Magistrates' courts and Covid-19. <https://www.magistrates-association.org.uk/Portals/0/Magistrates%27%20Courts%20and%20Covid-19%20SCREEN.pdf>

<sup>54</sup> Mission Translate, 4 June 2020. How Has Legal Interpreting Been Impacted by the COVID-19 Restrictions? <https://missiontranslate.com/how-has-legal-interpreting-been-impacted-by-the-covid-19-restrictions/>

<sup>55</sup> Appendix 40: Chartered Institute of Linguists, 2020: Mini Guide for video mediated interpreting (VMI) in Court

<sup>56</sup> Appendix 41: Association of Translation Companies and Chartered Institute of Linguists, 2020. Remote Interpreting Best Practice Checklists. <https://www.ciol.org.uk/sites/default/files/Interpreting%20Checklist-FNL.pdf>

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The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the British Council was critical. For many months, uncertainty surrounded the organisation's future and the Government addressed funding shortfalls in piecemeal fashion<sup>5758</sup>.

The importance of the British Council for the UK's soft power and international relations will be well known to the Inquiry (set out for example through the Lords Committee on Soft Power and the UK's Influence<sup>59</sup>).

Furthermore, the British Council should be recognised for playing an important role in the UK's domestic education sector, in particular in the field of languages and international experiences, in schools and universities, many of whom campaigned for the British Council's funding during 2020.<sup>60</sup>

**The APPG recommends that the British Council should be considered an integral part of the UK's international relations and that the sustainability of its UK activities and international offices should not be dependent on the commercial success, or otherwise, of its IELTS business, and provisions should be put in place to guarantee the British Council's non-commercial operations in any future pandemic or similar emergency.**

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Modern Languages  
30 August 2023

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<sup>57</sup> Appendix 42: Lord Ahmad to Baroness Coussins, 2 June 2020.

[https://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2020-0288/letter\\_from\\_Lord\\_Ahmad\\_of\\_Wimbledon\\_to\\_Baroness\\_Coussins.pdf](https://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2020-0288/letter_from_Lord_Ahmad_of_Wimbledon_to_Baroness_Coussins.pdf)

<sup>58</sup> See also Motion on 'Covid-19: International response', HL Hansard, 18 May 2020, col 948

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2020-05-18/debates/CB3998AB-7D77-4442-A8FE-E021202AF19C/Covid-19InternationalResponse#contribution-442E257C-4AE9-48C2-83C6-AEC00F38DD7E>

<sup>59</sup> House of Lords Soft Power Committee <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/292/soft-power-committee>

<sup>60</sup> For example Appendix 43 : UCML open letter in support of the British Council, May 2020.

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## List of Appendices

### Appendix 1

List of parliamentary contributions by Baroness Coussins related to issues set out in the APPG on Modern Languages submission to the Covid-19 Inquiry. For reference only.

Location: Secretariat, APPG Modern Languages.

### Appendix 2

Public Health England, 2020. Disparities in the risk and outcomes of COVID-19.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/908434/Disparities\\_in\\_the\\_risk\\_and\\_outcomes\\_of\\_COVID\\_August\\_2020\\_update.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/908434/Disparities_in_the_risk_and_outcomes_of_COVID_August_2020_update.pdf)

### Appendix 3

Public Health England, 2020. Beyond the data: Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on BAME groups.

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### Appendix 4

Race Equality Foundation, UCL and Doctors of the World, 2023. Not by choice – the unequal impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on disempowered ethnic minority and migrant communities.

<https://raceequalityfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Not-by-choice.pdf>

### Appendix 5

Forster et al., 2016. Ethnicity-specific factors influencing childhood immunisation decisions among Black and Asian Minority Ethnic groups in the UK: a systematic review of qualitative research. *J Epidemiol Community Health*. **71**(6). 544-549 (As quoted in SAGE, 2020: Factors influencing COVID-19 vaccine uptake among minority ethnic groups - 17 December 2020.)

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Public Health England, 2021. Public Health England and NHS Test and Trace: our role in the Roadmap out of lockdown. Delivery plan April to June 2021.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1011020/NHS\\_Test\\_and\\_Trace\\_delivery\\_plan.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1011020/NHS_Test_and_Trace_delivery_plan.pdf)

### Appendix 7

Correspondence Baroness Coussins and Cabinet Office, June 2020.

Location: Secretariat, APPG on Modern Languages

### Appendix 8

Burns et al., 2022. The Lancet. Migrant-inclusive healthcare delivery in the UK: Lessons learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic. [www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S2666-7762%2822%2900201-0](http://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S2666-7762%2822%2900201-0)

### Appendix 9

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Appendix 10

National Audit Office, 2020. The government's approach to test and trace in England –interim report.

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Appendix 11

City of Westminster, 2020. NHS Test and Trace FAQs.

<https://www.westminster.gov.uk/media/document/test-and-trace-faqs>

Appendix 12

Führer et al., 2022. BMJ. COVID-19 pandemic in shelters for asylum seekers: a scoping review of preventive measures. <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/12/4/e058076>

Appendix 13

Burns et al., 2022. The Lancet. Migrant-inclusive healthcare delivery in the UK: Lessons learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanepi/article/PIIS2666-7762\(22\)00201-0/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanepi/article/PIIS2666-7762(22)00201-0/fulltext)

Appendix 14: ASLI et al., 2020. Guidelines for Booking Interpreters in Healthcare Settings during the COVID-19 Pandemic June 2020 <https://asli.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Best-Practice-for-Booking-Interpreters-in-Healthcare-settings-during-Covid-19-FINAL.pdf>

Appendix 15

Analysis of A level and GCSE entries in languages, provided to the APPG on Modern Languages by Alcantara Communications, 2020.

Location: Secretariat, APPG on Modern Languages

Appendix 16

JCQ, 2020. GCSE Other Modern Foreign Languages Entries Summer 2019-20.

[www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/GCSE-Other-MFL-entries-2019-2020.pdf](http://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/GCSE-Other-MFL-entries-2019-2020.pdf)

Appendix 17

JCQ, 2020. GCE A/AS Other Modern Language Entries June 2019-20

[www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/GCE-Other-Modern-Foreign-Language-Entries-Summer-2020.pdf](http://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/GCE-Other-Modern-Foreign-Language-Entries-Summer-2020.pdf)

Appendix 18

JCQ, 2023. GCE A level trends – Summer 2023, UK

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/GCE-Trends-2023.pdf>

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## Appendix 19.1

Letter from Polish Education Society to the National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education.  
29 April 2020.

Location: Secretariat, APPG on Modern Languages

## Appendix 19.2

Polish Education Society, 2020. Data for parliamentary consultation regarding exams/Covid-19

Location: Secretariat, APPG on Modern Languages

## Appendix 19.3

Summary of the information received from Polish exam centres. April 2020.

Location: Secretariat, APPG on Modern Languages

## Appendix 20

APPG on Modern Languages, 2020. Response to Ofqual's Consultation on exceptional arrangements for exam grading and assessment in 2020 from the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Modern Languages (APPG MFL).

Location: Secretariat, APPG on Modern Languages

## Appendix 21

APPG on Modern Languages, 2021. Response to Ofqual's Consultation on how GCSE, AS and A level grades should be awarded in Summer 2021 from the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Modern Languages (APPG MFL).

Location: Secretariat, APPG on Modern Languages

## Appendix 22

Letter from Baroness Coussins (Co-Chair, APPG on Modern Languages) to Ofqual Chair, 2021.

Location: Secretariat, APPG on Modern Languages

## Appendix 23

ASCL, 2021. Guidance on supporting entries for 'community' GCSE language Awards for summer 2021

Location: Secretariat, APPG on Modern Languages

## Appendix 24

ASCL, 2021. Supporting Students with Home, Heritage and Community Languages: Information on supporting students entering for home, heritage and community language qualifications.

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## Appendix 25

APPG on Modern Languages, 2020. Internal memo re: DfE Primary guidance.

Location: Secretariat, APPG on Modern Languages

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Appendix 29

University Council of Modern Languages, 2020. Virtual Mobility Principles.

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Appendix 30

Internal APPG ML memo: Covid and the year abroad.

Location: Secretariat, APPG on Modern Languages

Appendix 31

CfBT, 2015. Language Trends 2014/2015.

[https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/language\\_trends\\_survey\\_2015.pdf](https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/language_trends_survey_2015.pdf)

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British Council, 2018. Language Trends 2018.

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Appendix 33

UCML and The British Academy, 2021. Report on Granular Trends in Modern Languages in UCAS Admissions Data, 2012-18.

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UCML and AULC, 2021. Survey of Language Provision in UK Universities in 2021. <https://university-council-for-languages.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/UCML-AULC-Survey-2021-Report.pdf>

Appendix 35

APPG on Modern Languages, 2019. A National Recovery Programme for Languages.

<https://nationalrecoverylanguages.weebly.com/>

Appendix 36

The British Academy, ASCL and APPG on Modern Languages, 2021. The future of languages in the UK: Submissions by the British Academy, ASCL and the APPG on Modern Languages to the Comprehensive Spending Review 2021.



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## Appendix 37

Nuffield Family Justice Observatory, 2020. Remote hearings in the family justice system: a rapid consultation.

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## Appendix 38

The Legal Education Foundation, 2021. Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on tribunals The experience of tribunal judges.

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## Appendix 39

Magistrates' Association, 2022. Magistrates' courts and Covid-19.

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## Appendix 40

Chartered Institute of Linguists, 2020: Mini Guide for video mediated interpreting (VMI) in Court.

Location: Secretariat, APPG on Modern Languages

## Appendix 41

Association of Translation Companies and Chartered Institute of Linguists, 2020. Remote Interpreting Best Practice Checklists.

<https://www.ciol.org.uk/sites/default/files/Interpreting%20Checklist-FNL.pdf>

## Appendix 42

Lord Ahmad to Baroness Coussins, 2 June 2020.

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## Appendix 43

UCML open letter in support of the British Council, May 2020.

Location: <https://university-council-for-languages.org/british-council/>