

FE Week

DON'T DO A DEAL AT LOW QUALITY PRICE

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NO MODELLING FOR REGISTER SIZE

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Kirsty Wark

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NHS defends apprenticeship brokerage fees

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The NHS has defended controversial new plans to charge a brokerage fee to training providers that win levy-funded apprenticeship contracts.

FE Week has seen two examples of the health service preparing to charge providers around one per cent of the value of their contracts, raising concerns that it might be included in the levy price, a practice the Skills Funding Agency has banned.

Our understanding of funding rules is that these charges will be allowable if they aren't included in the negotiated levy price, but brokerage fees are nevertheless a controversial topic.

The NHS apprenticeship levy pot is estimated to be worth around £200 million per year nationally, and £27 million in London alone, which means its brokerage charges could reach up to £2 million if they're spread across the country.

John Hyde, executive chairman of the specialist training and apprenticeship provider Hit Training, said the SFA must investigate "a clear example here of a breach of their rules", adding: "they need to step in straight away, otherwise it opens the door for all sorts of other people."

"If the NHS can get away with it, then why can't other multi-national companies get away with it?" he asked.

The NHS London Procurement Partnership is planning to enforce a one per cent "management charge", based on the value of work it wins on behalf of providers looking to deliver apprenticeships.

A spokesperson told FE Week that management charges are "a common way of covering the costs of running a framework or DPS once it has been established".

"These charges are well-established methods of supporting the public sector to manage contracts."

From April 3, the LPP will manage apprenticeships in the capital through its electronic dynamic purchasing system, which it will use to buy services through an "open market" of potential suppliers.

The membership body, founded and funded by NHS organisations, hosted events in London for suppliers wishing to apply to join its DPS on March 8, 13 and 14 this year.

On a slide shown at one of the conferences and seen by FE Week, it explained details of a "management charge" that "must be incorporated into the overall commercial bid response to any invitation to tender".

This slide confirmed the charge would amount to "one per cent of all charges" based on the "value of work won under the DPS", and would cover "management and further administration by LPP of the overall DPS and associated documentation with surplus being fed back to members".

It will be the supplier's responsibility "to decide to what extent this cost is passed onto the contracting authority".

In a separate case, NHS Shared Business

What is 'Activity Based Income'?

NHS
London Procurement Partnership

- 1% based on value of work won under the DPS
- Covers management and further administration by LPP of the overall DPS and associated documentation with surplus being fed back to members.
- The level of management charge (1% of all charges) must be incorporated into the overall commercial bid response to any invitation to tender but it is the responsibility of the Supplier to decide to what extent this cost is passed to the Contracting Authority.

➤ The 1% ABI does not need to be detailed within the offer response to individual ITTs the bidder must ensure that their tender response is inclusive of the ABI fee.

All suppliers on the DPS to register on my.lpp portal

The slide photographed in an NHS LPP event in London in March, and shared with FE Week by a concerned provider

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NHS
Shared Business Services

How NCIS will operate

- NHS SBS will charge the offer an NCIS Fee currently set at a minimal % of the annual turnover of sales (inclusive of Value Added Tax at the prevailing rate) in relation to orders placed by its customers against the contracted supplier. The 0.95% NCIS Fee will not be increased throughout the period of the agreement.
- The NCIS Fee will be invoiced by NHS SBS (based on the information provided) on a quarterly basis. The first of such payments (or proportionate part) being for the period commencing on the date as stated in the Framework agreement and ending on the day preceding the next month (as defined in the Framework agreement).
- The NCIS fee will be due as follows:
 - In UK pounds sterling; and
 - To be paid electronically via the Banks Automated Clearing Service (BACS)
 - Inclusive of Value Added Tax at the prevailing rate

A section from NHS SBS documentation which can be downloaded from the organisation's website

Services, a national joint venture between the Department of Health and the information technology consultancy Sopra Steria, plans to charge providers 0.95 per cent on a quarterly basis for all business it secures through what is being described as "a new framework" for the provision of apprenticeship training services.

This will be its primary contracting vehicle for levy-paying public sector employers to purchase apprenticeship training services.

It will run from May for four years, and is inviting providers registered on the Skills Funding Agency's register of apprenticeship training providers to apply.

A spokesperson told FE Week that the system had been developed to "provide NHS – and other public sector – organisations with the means to procure high-quality and

compliant services quickly and easily, while at the same time offering suppliers access to a significant market and thousands of potential customers".

The spokesperson insisted that the charge to providers is "to cover the up-front investment of establishing an Official Journal of the European Union-compliant framework, and the costs associated with the ongoing management of the contract".

He continued: "It means that, for example, if a supplier wins a place on the framework, they would pay £95 for every £10,000 they receive in orders."

In February, the SFA officially ruled that public funds could not be used to pay brokers' fees through its final rules for apprenticeship funding.

Its decision represented a win for FE Week,

after our investigation in April 2016 exposed brokers who were charging up to five per cent of every deal just to match subcontractors with government-funded providers.

Asked whether the SFA had approved the management fee for apprenticeship procurement in London, the partnership's spokesperson said the agency had been "invited to take part" in the development of the digital procurement service, but had declined to do so.

An SFA spokesperson said: "Under current SFA rules, main providers are not allowed to use government money to pay brokers' fees. We will take action against any provider we find has broken these rules."

"SFA is strengthening the rules so that from May 1, 2017 no government money can be used to pay brokers' fees."

London council upset Lewisham Southwark College may join NCG

JUDE BURKE
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A London borough council is unhappy over a planned merger between a local college and a group whose headquarters is 300 miles away from the capital.

Lewisham Southwark College and Newcastle-based NCG have opened a consultation on a proposed merger, 18 months after a potential partnership was first mooted.

The link-up was the college's preferred option, and it rejected a possible merger with a much closer college after the Central London area review.

But a spokesperson for the London borough of Lewisham told FE Week it was "disappointed" with the outcome.

The council "would have preferred to see Lewisham Southwark College find a more local London partner", it said.

"Our interest is ensuring that Lewisham young people and adults get education and training to equip them for the highly competitive London labour market," she added.

Lewisham Southwark College, which was given a grade three rating in its most recent Ofsted inspection, and NCG insisted that a merger would "strengthen and further develop" provision to "better meet the

needs of local communities in central south London".

NCG's group structure is organised so that each college has "significant autonomy", a spokesperson for both said.

"The LSC college board will retain local accountability for key areas of operation, including the overall quality of provision, student experience, curriculum development and engagement with local stakeholders, while NCG provides the expertise and balance sheet strength to allow the local principalship to focus wholly on improving quality of education for their local communities," she said.

News of the planned merger between the London college, which is led by former Newcastle College principal Carole Kitching, and NCG first emerged in March 2016 – although talks began in autumn 2015.

The current consultation runs until April 21, with the merger expected to go ahead in August.

According to the consultation document, the proposal would be "extremely beneficial to both organisations".

Lewisham Southwark College would be able to "fulfil the next stage of its strategic objectives, while retaining its successful local identity" through the merger, it said.

Meanwhile, NCG would be able to "use LSC's London-specific expertise and

specialisms to benefit the wider group".

The report from the central London area review, published in February, showed that Lewisham Southwark College had also mooted a merger with nearby Lambeth College – although the NCG proposal was LSC's "preferred option".

According to the report, the NCG merger would allow LSC "to accelerate their plans to grow their delivery of apprenticeships for London employers, by leveraging the expertise and resources across the group".

But a partnership with Lambeth "would maintain the college's current specialisms", which included "a focus to meet the needs of adults with low basic skills or an ESOL need".

"This is recognised by both [Lambeth and LSC] as being a key part of meeting the needs of the communities they serve," it said.

NCG, which was rated 'good' in its most recent Ofsted inspection report published in September, counts three FE colleges, one sixth form college and two independent training providers as its members.

These are Newcastle College, Newcastle Sixth Form College, West Lancashire, Kidderminster College, Rathbone and Intraining.

As reported by FE

Week in February, Carlisle College is due to become the fifth college member of NCG in April, after it rejected a proposal from the Cumbria area review to pair up with nearby Lakes College.



Consultants do roaring trade on third-party RoATP bids

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Consultants are raking in thousands of pounds writing bids for training providers desperate to make it onto the new register at the second time of asking.

Numerous major apprenticeship providers, including at least 21 colleges with a combined current allocation of £44 million, found themselves left off the register of apprenticeship training providers when it was published on March 14.

Such was the outcry, the Skills Funding Agency has agreed to a second round of applications, to close on April 7.

In total, the SFA approved 1,708 bodies, from a total of 2,327 applications. Since then, a number of third-party organisations have emerged, claiming a high success rate at helping providers write bids, and charging high fees for their second-chance services.

East Essex Vocational Training, an established education management company, boasted of a 99 per cent success rate on its RoATP applications in its March 19 newsletter.

"The work required for RoATP differed – some providers just wanted us to check through their bid," said managing director Steve Lawrence. "Others asked us to write the basis of their bid and finished it themselves, and we did the whole thing for

others."

He told FE Week that the cost of the service "varied from as low as £150 to £1,800 depending on the amount of time it took".

He added: "We've heard back from about 100 cases we helped, and 99 per cent of those were successful."

In October, the Yorkshire-based Education and Skills Consultancy sold its services with a message on its website, that warned: "If you want to continue to deliver after May 2017, you need to get on RoATP. We'll be supporting organisations through the application process".

Its managing director James Hart told FE Week that his company's bid writers

worked on around 40 applications during the window for RoATP entries from October 24 and November 25, claiming that only two had failed.

Mr Hart said the flat rate charged for applications was £1,000 plus VAT, although "there might be additional costs".

He suggested that, particularly for smaller training providers, his experience could be useful.

"Over the last five years, the SFA hasn't asked them to put pen to paper on a tender, and now all of a sudden they are expecting them to have the capability and capacity themselves to write something that they never had experience of doing," he said.

Sally-Ann Baker, managing director of London-based Bidright UK, said she found it "incredible" how many "silly mistakes" providers had made with applications.

Her company was approached by 25 to 30 providers on RoATP and took on 12 cases, all of which were successful. Its fixed rate is £2,000 plus VAT.

Laura Shepherd, senior consultant at Yorkshire-based Carley Consult, said her firm worked with nine providers, eight of which made it onto RoATP.

"We work on a rate of £495 a day, but it would depend on if we know the provider or not," she said. "It ranged between a couple of days and a week."



NEWS

Positive Outcomes' collapse is anything but, after 4,700 apprentices lose out

JUDE BURKE
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Another major provider has gone bust out of the blue this month, leaving around 4,700 learners in the lurch after its contract was pulled by the Skills Funding Agency.

The Derbyshire-based Positive Outcomes Ltd, which was chaired by the former SFA chief executive Geoff Russell, entered administration on March 17, leaving thousands of apprentices fearing for their futures.

The company was slapped with a notice of serious breach by the SFA for financial control

back in November, even though it had been rated 'good' across the board after its most recent Ofsted inspection, in a report published in July.

It had an apprenticeships allocation of more than £11 million in 2016/17, but did not make it onto the SFA's new register of apprenticeship training providers published last week.

One apprentice, 17-year-old Ricardo Pereira, told FE Week that he was "panicking to be honest, trying to figure out what to do", and said no-one had been in touch with him to arrange a place with an alternative provider.

Ricardo, who had been studying a level two apprenticeship in business administration, and who was due to take exams at the end of March, said he'd been told about Positive

Outcomes' demise in an email from his training adviser.

"From what I know, no one was going to send us an email or communicate to us at all – it was just the training adviser felt responsible," he said.

He said he'd been in touch with other learners at Positive Outcomes and "they told me the same, they don't know what's going on".

Another learner, who commented on the day it went into administration, said: "Supposed to finish my apprenticeship in four weeks... have not been told how long it will take for them to change, or if I will need to be staying any longer. Very bad communication."

Staff at Positive Outcomes, which had offices in London, Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol and Nottingham, but was based in South Normanton in Derbyshire, were told on March 17 that the company had gone into administration with the loss of all jobs.

Kelly Ball, its joint managing director, released a statement on behalf of the board which said: "Unfortunately, after 20 years of trading, it is with deep regret that Positive Outcomes has had to file for administration with immediate effect."

The board had "worked tirelessly" to prevent such an outcome, and had tried to "find a suitable buyer for the business", it said.

"However, this unfortunately was not possible, resulting in the board having no alternative but to cease trading."

An email dated March 17, seen by FE Week, from the firm handling the company's administration, FRP Advisory, confirmed this the collapse had been due to the SFA pulling its funding.

"As a result of the termination of the contract with the SFA, the directors had no choice but to make the difficult, but legally necessary, decision that the company should cease trading immediately and all staff be made redundant", it said.

Positive Outcomes' former chief executive, Chris Longmate, stepped down in January after eight years in the role.

FE Week asked the provider's joint managing directors, Kelly Ball and Ryan Longmate, about the financial notice in November, but they refused to comment.

The Department for Education also refused to provide further details about the notice or the SFA's reasons for terminating the provider's contract.

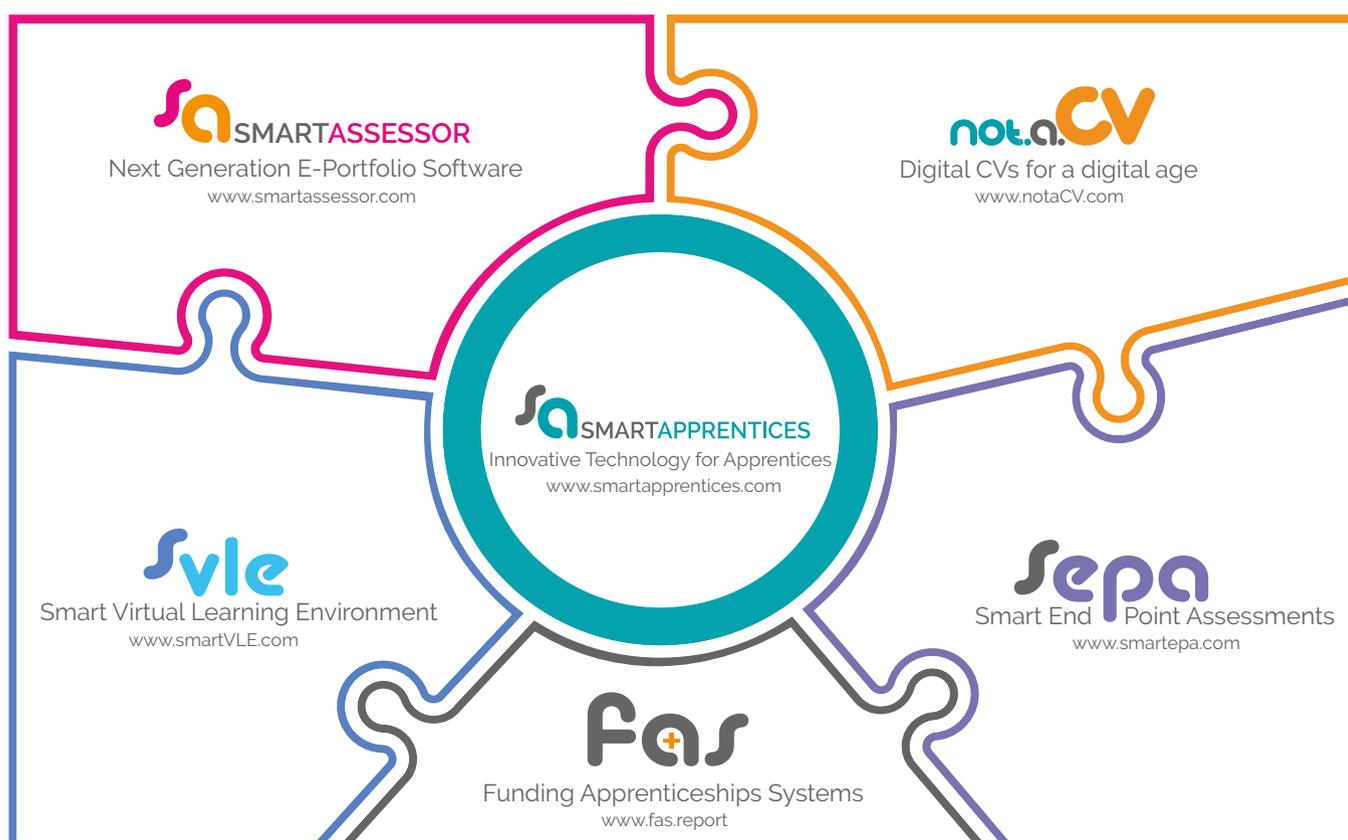
A spokesperson for the department said: "We are working to ensure learners' programmes are not disrupted following our termination of Positive Outcomes' contract.

"We will work with employers through the National Apprenticeship Service to ensure a smooth transfer process."



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EDITOR ASKS

Amanda Spielman: a chief inspector calls

With ‘inadequate’ verdicts fatally undermining many FE providers, the stakes have never been higher on Ofsted inspections. The new boss, Amanda Spielman, admits this places huge pressure on her inspectors, and didn’t rule out reintroducing a capacity-to-improve caveat for certain providers.

The new register of apprenticeship training providers has brought the dire consequences of a grade four verdict from Ofsted into sharp focus.

The Skills Funding Agency has a long-established policy of cancelling contracts with independent training providers that are rated ‘inadequate’ overall, and in many cases it effectively forces them to close.

A new rule that bars any provider with a grade four rating for apprenticeship provision from being listed on the RoATP has further heightened anxieties around inspections.

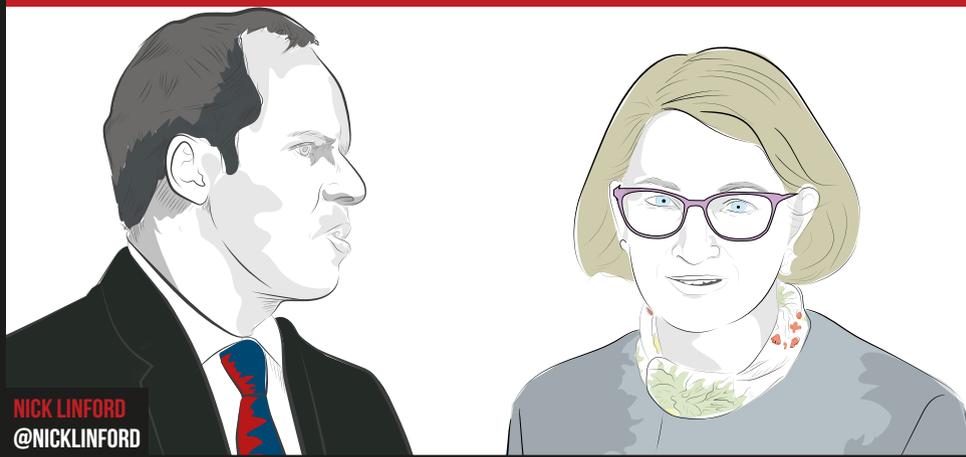
FE Week understands that Ofsted is

“You always have that incredibly difficult grey area around any dividing line

looking at whether these fears could be eased with the reintroduction of a distinction between grade fours with “capacity to improve” and terminal cases.

Ms Spielman didn’t rule the idea out,

EDITOR ASKS...



and told me that she is “looking at how our judgements work in the context of the consequences”.

Reflecting on the pressures, she added: “There is no question it puts very considerable responsibility on inspectors to know such high consequences hang on their judgements.”

She also conceded that “it puts a lot of pressure on the system” for the government to be using Ofsted’s judgements in this way.

She insisted she understands the fine lines, which are often due to the nature of human judgements, between a grade three and a four.

“At the end of the day, it is about that irreducible level of imprecision that must always be associated with any human decision,” she confessed.

“Our inspection judgements are designed in ways that constrain and minimise that as far as we can, but you always have that incredibly difficult grey area around any dividing line, and a lead inspector has to make a judgement,” she said.

And where one finds “something that is

really close to a borderline, there may be places where a competent inspector might absolutely properly come one side or the other of a dividing line, and neither would be wrong”.

“We are absolutely confident that we have inspectors with relevant experience and expertise

Inspection capacity concerns

There are currently 793 apprenticeship providers in scope for inspection, but RoATP is already nearly doubling that, with 1,473 organisations given the green light from May. That number is furthermore likely to rise to over 2,000 as more applications are invited.

I asked Ms Spielman what her gut feeling was on the impact all the extra providers would have on Ofsted.

She was bullish in reply: “I’ve said I’m going to do evidence, not gut feel. It’s clear there are a lot of would-be new entrants, a lot of people with very limited experience, and potentially quite a lot of fragmentation.

“What that will actually translate into in terms of gets contracts and actually starts providing apprenticeships isn’t entirely clear. I suspect a lot of those registrations will be optimistic things that may never translate into actual learners on the ground.”

After I speculated that the inspectorate must be pushing back very hard for more resources, Paul Joyce, its deputy director for FE and skills, interjected, saying: “The negotiations we have with DfE are very much along the lines that you say, so clearly I am worried about the number of providers that we may have to inspect”.

Ms Spielman agreed.

Many apprenticeship providers have meanwhile complained to me about inspectors who have lacked sufficient empathy or experience to form sound judgements, but she insisted she was “absolutely confident that we have inspectors with relevant experience and expertise”.

Pressed over whether Ofsted is the right organisation to assess an employer-led apprenticeship system, she said: “I don’t think we’ve got any pushes about shifting responsibilities.”

Higher-level apprenticeships

Mr Joyce exclusively revealed to FE Week in December that talks had begun between Ofsted and the government over extending the inspectorate’s remit to cover degree apprenticeships.

These are currently only inspected by the Quality Assurance Agency, which oversees all university-level provision, and he told me that the DfE would soon be producing an accountability statement for apprenticeships “that will clearly define who does what and where”.

Challenges with post-merger inspections

Increasing numbers of colleges are merging following the area reviews. These resulting goliaths are often based miles apart, and offer a bewildering variety of provision, prompting the obvious question of how Ofsted arrives at an overall judgement for such a complicated beast.

“The most useful way of reporting on a large, diversified, multi-site college is not necessarily the same as a smaller one,” insisted Ms Spielman.

Mr Joyce tackled the matter of adding variety to inspection timescales, and varying the numbers of inspectors involved – for example when dealing with institutions that go from tiny ITPs to huge merged bodies like NCG.

“It’s clear there are a lot of would-be new entrants

“It does vary between size,” he said. “We have different sizes, moving from a team of four inspectors to a team of perhaps 13.”

His boss interjected, saying it was too early to say whether wider reform was needed, but she conceded that “we are doing a piece of strategy work looking across all our remits”.

He also pointed out that plans to introduce “campus level” inspections, which would involve different reports for separate local college campuses that exist within a large merger, are under “active” consideration with the DfE.



Amanda Spielman

NEWS

England is the only top skills country to have EPA-only apprenticeships

BILLY GAMDEN
@BILLYGAMDEN

Of the eight countries with the strongest vocational education systems, England is the only one which will have end-point assessment-only apprenticeships, according to new research.

A new report entitled 'The role of qualifications and end-point assessment in apprenticeships' looks at the way apprenticeships are delivered across England, Germany, Switzerland, France, Denmark, Austria, Canada and the Netherlands.

Its authors claim that EPA is not sufficient in itself to measure an apprentice's worth, and use it to call for a "hybrid" approach.

The document was commissioned by Semta, a charity that represents around 150,000 engineering employers and owns the awarding organisation EAL.

Amongst its findings are the fact that "all the countries discussed in this report, apart from the Netherlands, require apprentices (to a greater or lesser degree) to pass written examinations as well as tests of their practical competence at the end of their training".

Crucially, however, "none of the countries" apart from England have any frameworks

that rely totally on EPA, which it says "comes in many shapes and sizes".

In the other countries, "evidence for making assessment judgements is derived from both the workplace and the off-the-job setting and usually carries equal weight".

Graham Hasting-Evans, the managing director of awarding organisation NOCN, told FE Week that the report was cause for concern..

"While recognising that an EPA is an important way of testing the apprentices, we have always believed the on-programme and gateway assessments are also important," he said.

"We live in a global skills market and we want our apprenticeship standards to be recognised as world class. Therefore, it is concerning that we now look out of step with other major economies."

Led by Lorna Unwin, a professor emerita for vocational education at the UCL Institute of Education, the academics cast doubt on the government's decision to rely totally on EPA to formally recognise an apprentice's competence.

The practice is a major break from the UK's former method of continuous assessment, and was recommended in 2012 during entrepreneur Doug Richard's review of apprenticeships.

This new report claims that the

government's decision to ditch the requirement for apprenticeships to include a recognised qualification rightly draws public criticism.

Researchers found nationally recognised and validated forms of accreditation were "regarded as important and apprentices receive some form of certificate or diploma" in all the other countries surveyed.

They also found England was the only country in which the content of an apprenticeship could be set by employers.

Professor Unwin told FE Week that this new reliance on EPA was particularly concerning due to the impact on apprentices' "labour market mobility and future access to further and higher education".

She added: "It is clear from this research that if an apprenticeship is to have credibility

and worth for both individuals and employers, it must end up with a recognised qualification."

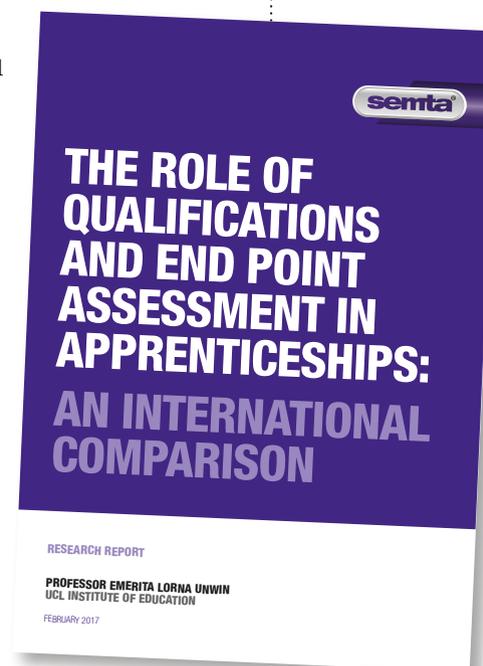
In August, the Institute for Public Policy Research said that removing the requirement for apprenticeships to include a recognised qualification could "harm young people who will need transferable qualifications in an increasingly flexible jobs market".

The think-tank called on the government to consider reintroducing a nationally recognised qualification as a part of all apprenticeships.

Ann Watson, the chief executive of Semta, said:

"The government talks of apprenticeships as a ladder of opportunity – but by focusing solely on one end-point assessment as the measure of an apprentice's worth, we risk kicking the ladder away."

The Department for Education was unable to comment at the time of going to press.



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Amendment to Technical Education Bill could see learner loans refunded

PAUL OFFORD
@PAULOFFORD

A Liberal Democrat peer has launched a bid in parliament to protect learners from being left with huge loans and no qualifications after a series of providers have recently gone bust.

Lord Storey, his party's education spokesperson, has tabled an amendment to the Technical and Further Education Bill that's currently being debated in the Upper House.

It would require all FE providers to maintain contingency funds, to protect students in case they fold.

It states that any "which charge fees to students for tuition, must set up a contingency fund", which "must contain sufficient funds to

reimburse students, where an FE body closes, for the proportion of the fee charged for the remaining period of tuition".

It adds that providers "must not use the contingency fund for purposes other than those outlined".

Lord Storey told FE Week that he had been inspired to table the amendment after two distressed students whose provider went bust got in touch.

FE Week reported in January that the Skills Funding Agency was investigating the demise of the London-based provider John Frank Training after it went into liquidation.

Its sudden collapse that meant up to 500 students were left with hefty debts for advanced learner loans they had taken out to fund JFT studies.

The government is still refusing to write

these off – a state of affairs FE Week aims to fight with its #SaveOurAdultEducation campaign.

We have since reported that many more learners were left in a similar position after Hampshire-based Edudo Ltd and Darlington-based Focus Training & Development Ltd folded.

FE Week is calling for their loans to be written off, and for those of any blameless adult learners left unable to complete their courses when their training provider goes bust.

Lord Storey told FE Week that he supports the campaign, saying: "There's a moral imperative to put as much pressure on the government as we can, to get the FE loans money written off.

"I've lodged questions asking the government to update us on what is happening with this, and hopefully my amendment will help to protect future students.

"This started when a couple of students got in touch with me from a provider that went bust. They were worried about the fact that they had lost their loans money. It's an issue I've since been pursuing ever since."

The peer tabled a parliamentary question on March 13, asking: "In the light of JFT going into liquidation on November 30, 2016, what support is being given to students to recoup their loans."



A Department for Education spokesperson said: "Our priority remains supporting the learners affected by John Franks, Edudo Ltd and Focus Training & Development Ltd to complete their learning with minimal disruption.

"We are currently working hard to match up these learners with suitable courses offered by different providers.

"Should a provider no longer be delivering training we want those with advanced learner loans to be given an opportunity to complete their learning with an alternative provider.

"Our priority is helping affected learners to transfer as soon as possible."

The spokesperson refused to say how many former learners still have loans and no courses.

Former JFT learner Asim Shaheen, 49, who was unable to complete a hospitality and catering course funded by a loan he took out for over £8,000, said: "It's really good news the House of Lords is looking seriously at our case.

"The government needs to put a serious action plan in place and all pressure put on them is hugely appreciated."



Lord Storey

The whole FE sector is behind our #SaveOurAdultEducation campaign

PAUL OFFORD
@PAULOFFORD

Who's who of major FE organisations have thrown their support behind FE Week's #SaveOurAdultEducation campaign.

Big names on the list include the Association of Colleges, the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, and HOLEX.

The Labour party also added its backing, while the leader of the Liberal Democrats Tim Farron confirmed his support with a personal comment.

The campaign also has the official support of the National Union of Students, the University and College Union, the public service union UNISON, the Public and Commercial Services Union, and the Association of School and College Leaders.

#SaveOurAdultEducation was launched in February at parliament and has three simple demands.

First, we want the government to consult on a proper adult education strategy, one which won't disappear under the political weight of apprenticeships and devolution.

Sue Pember, the country's former top skills civil servant who now leads HOLEX, said:

"We are fully behind this campaign.

"It's vitally important the Department for Education takes the lead and works with other government departments to secure a joint position on lifelong learning."

Shakira Martin, the NUS vice-president for FE, said: "Adult education is such an important part of FE.

"It desperately requires a comprehensive strategy that puts the needs of learners at its core."

The second demand is for the widespread introduction of FE maintenance grant loans for adult learners, to make retraining easier for older people by covering living costs while studying.

AELP boss Mark Dawe said: "Brexit means adult learning is now an economic imperative.

"There should be a coherent adult education strategy and it is why the latest proposals for FE maintenance loans should just be a first step to making them more widely available."

The March budget finally confirmed that maintenance loans would be available to certain learners, a year after the government first consulted on the issue.

The chancellor Philip Hammond said maintenance loans would be available "for those undertaking higher-level technical qualifications at the new institutes of technology and national colleges", set to be

introduced in 2019/20.

The AoC chief executive David Hughes backed the campaign, adding: "Access to adult learning now needs a renewed focus.

"When the UK leaves the EU, it will be vital to the economy that adults are able to train and retrain to tackle the skills gaps. However, many are deterred from studying due to the cost of undertaking a course."

Shadow skills minister Gordon Marsden said: "#SaveOurAdultEducation is crucial to highlight years of neglect in adult education. Simply focusing on 16- to 19-year-olds won't deliver what we need."

According to government figures, there are around 1.5 million fewer adults aged 19 or over participating in FE than there were a decade ago, when the figure stood at 3.75 million.

Mr Farron said: "This is a hugely important campaign. We want to see the best education and employment opportunities for all. This must include being able to access high quality education at any age."

"The government must come up with a proper well resourced plan for the future of adult education before it disappears entirely," said UNISON's head of education Jon Richards.

University and College Union general secretary Sally Hunt said: "If the government really wants to put skills at the heart of its industrial strategy, adults must be able to learn throughout their lives."

The government's industrial strategy green paper, unveiled in January, committed to exploring "ambitious new approaches to encouraging lifelong learning".



Malcolm Trobe, interim general secretary of the ASCL, said: "This excellent campaign identifies three key measures which would make lifelong learning considerably more secure and accessible."

The third demand is to get advanced learning loans debt written off where adult learners are unable to complete courses if training providers go bust (see story above).

PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka said: "This is an important campaign, we must continue to fight for adult education to be afforded the status it deserves."



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INVESTIGATES

The Register of Apprenticeship Training

MPs queue up to blast register omissions

JUDE BURKE
@JUDEBURKE77

Fierce criticism has flooded in from MPs concerned at the large number of colleges that have missed out on the new register of apprenticeship training providers.

The list of providers that will be eligible to deliver apprenticeships from May was published on March 14 by the Skills Funding Agency – however, a large number of major providers of apprenticeships somehow missed out, including at least 21 colleges with a combined current allocation of £44 million.

Britain's second city was left without any colleges able to deliver apprenticeships from May at all, as all four Birmingham colleges failed to get on the register.

The shadow skills minister Gordon Marsden wrote to his ministerial counterpart Robert Halfon on Wednesday demanding answers about the process, which he said left providers with “excellent track records of delivering apprenticeships” off the list.

“A number of decisions on exclusions and indeed inclusions have aroused great concern,” he said, adding that the colleges that missed out had been “left without the ability to deliver new apprenticeships from May with very few answers as to why”.

This situation “raises key questions which need urgent answers to restore confidence” in the register and the application process, he said.

He demanded to know the number of people at the SFA who had



Siôn Simon
@sionsimon

13 FE colleges in the West Midlands have been refused funding for apprenticeships for young people. I'll fight to overturn this decision.



12:59 PM - 20 Mar 2017

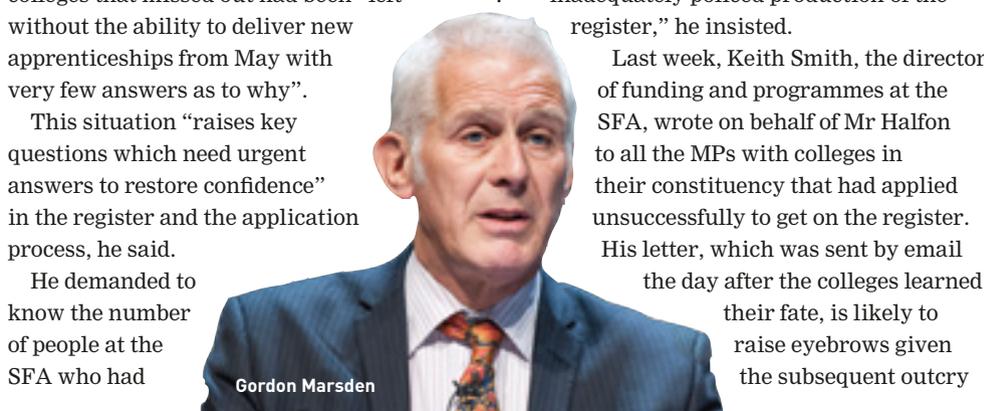
been involved in compiling the register, and the process for reconsidering applications by providers that had been turned down.

Speaking exclusively to FE Week, Mr Marsden said he understood many of the colleges had been “knocked back because of technical errors” in the applications.

“All of this points to a very rushed and inadequately policed production of the register,” he insisted.

Last week, Keith Smith, the director of funding and programmes at the SFA, wrote on behalf of Mr Halfon to all the MPs with colleges in their constituency that had applied unsuccessfully to get on the register.

His letter, which was sent by email the day after the colleges learned their fate, is likely to raise eyebrows given the subsequent outcry



Gordon Marsden



Jack Dromey



Gisela Stuart

over the register.

The absence of the four Birmingham colleges prompted two of the city's MPs – Gisela Stuart and Jack Dromey – to raise questions in parliament during education questions on Monday.

Ms Stuart, the MP for Birmingham Edgbaston, said their absence from the register was “destroying technical education for 16-year-olds in the West Midlands”.

And Mr Dromey, the MP for Birmingham Erdington, asked the minister to meet with the 10 MPs representing Britain's second city to discuss the issue.

Mr Dromey told FE Week that the decision to exclude the colleges “on the basis of the answer to one question is inexplicable”.

“The process is fundamentally flawed and it is essential that the SFA thinks again,” he said.

Roger Godsiff, the MP for Birmingham Hall Green, said the process for applying to the register “smacked of a box-ticking exercise”.

He told FE Week that the Birmingham colleges had been “given to understand that the SFA would engage with them if their application was deficient in some form” but “all of them say that the SFA didn't”.

Meanwhile, Richard Burden, the MP for Birmingham Northfield, said the omission was “shocking and out of order” – but added that it “can be nothing other than a mistake”.

Siôn Simon, the Labour candidate for mayor of the West Midlands, has launched a campaign to overturn the decision, after just three of the county's 16

colleges made it onto the register.

“This decision will all but end technical education for young people in the West Midlands as we know it,” he said.

And Wakefield MP Mary Creagh has tabled an early-day motion calling on ministers to reconsider the application process, after Wakefield College failed to get on the register despite having an apprenticeship allocation of £2 million and a ‘good’ Ofsted rating.

“It's clear that the government's attempt to improve quality of providers has been a complete shambles,” she said.

Meanwhile, Mark Dawe, AELP's chief executive, insisted that a lot of “good quality” independent providers had also been left off the register.

“Why doesn't the government trust its own regulator and inspectorate to determine what good quality is?” he asked.

Mr Dawe said that providers had been told what sections they had failed on, but not the reasons why they had failed – which meant some were “at a bit of a loss to see what they have to change to get on”.

A Department for Education spokesperson said: “All those that applied to be on the register of training providers were given a clear set of criteria in order to receive funds for apprenticeship training, ensuring they are high quality and capable of delivering the training that young people deserve.”

“We have also now reopened the register to give new organisations, and those who were not successful the first time, the chance to reapply.”

“By regularly giving new providers a chance to get on the register, we are supporting diversity, quality and employer choice.”



Mark Dawe

Learning Providers debacle gets political

The colleges that failed to make the grade

Colleges that did not get on RoATP	Total apprenticeships 16/17 allocation pre-May	Overall Ofsted	Apprenticeships Ofsted
BERKSHIRE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, THE (BCA)	£266,217	2	3
BIRMINGHAM METROPOLITAN COLLEGE	£4,674,876	3	2
BOURNEMOUTH AND POOLE COLLEGE, THE	£5,643,282	2	n/a
CITY COLLEGE COVENTRY	£1,413,996	3	3
EAST BERKSHIRE COLLEGE	£1,594,514	3	2
FURNESS COLLEGE	£1,137,651	2	2
HALESOWEN COLLEGE	£642,798	2	2
HARTLEPOOL COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION	£2,856,323	2	2
HENLEY COLLEGE COVENTRY	£704,864	3	3
HUGH BAIRD COLLEGE	£1,583,425	2	2
NORTHBROOK COLLEGE SUSSEX	£3,015,499	2	2
PROSPECTS COLLEGE OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY	£4,267,971	2	2
SOLIHULL COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY CENTRE	£2,317,834	2	2
SOUTH & CITY COLLEGE BIRMINGHAM	£1,827,786	2	2
SOUTHAMPTON CITY COLLEGE	£1,800,631	2	n/a
STEPHENSON COLLEGE	£4,557,199	2	2
WAKEFIELD COLLEGE	£1,876,396	2	2
WORTHING COLLEGE	£266,718	2	2
	£40,447,980		

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RULES AND SYSTEMS –
PREPARING FOR MAY

TUES 18 APRIL 2017, 10:00 - 15:30 GMT

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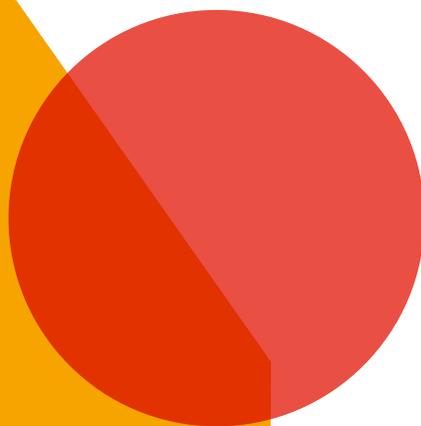
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When will you transition?

End-Point Assessment:
How will you prepare apprentices?



A City & Guilds Group Collaboration

AAC2017

COVERAGE FROM THE FE WEEK ANN

Quality and the new register dominate AAC debates in 2017

ALIX ROBERTSON
@ALIXROBERTSON4

The “new apprenticeship system is the eBay of education” and “will drive down quality”, the boss of the Association of Employment and Learning providers told delegates at FE Week’s third Annual Apprenticeships Conference.

There were further strong words from the Department for Education’s director of apprenticeships David Hill, who told providers not to “do a deal at a price you can’t deliver quality for”, setting the tone for a conference at which no punches were pulled.

FE Week’s third AAC kicked off on March 22, with a warm welcome from the BBC’s Kirsty Wark to a packed exhibition hall at the International Convention Centre in Birmingham.

Ms Wark, host for the full three days of the conference, set the scene for delegates and looked back on the first ever FE Week ACC in 2015, which she also presented.

FE Week editor Nick Linford followed her onto the stage to walk the audience through the results of a pre-conference questionnaire, designed to gauge delegates’ feelings about

the government’s reforms just over a month before the long-awaited launch of the apprenticeship levy.

Mr Linford raised the issue of quality – which would become a particular theme of the conference – showing the audience the slide pictured.

Delegates were most concerned that the quality of apprenticeships would suffer in the government’s effort to increase quantity.

The results revealed that major concerns about apprenticeship quality persist in the sector, with 87 per cent saying they were very or a little concerned at last year’s conference, and 86 per cent saying the same before the event this year.

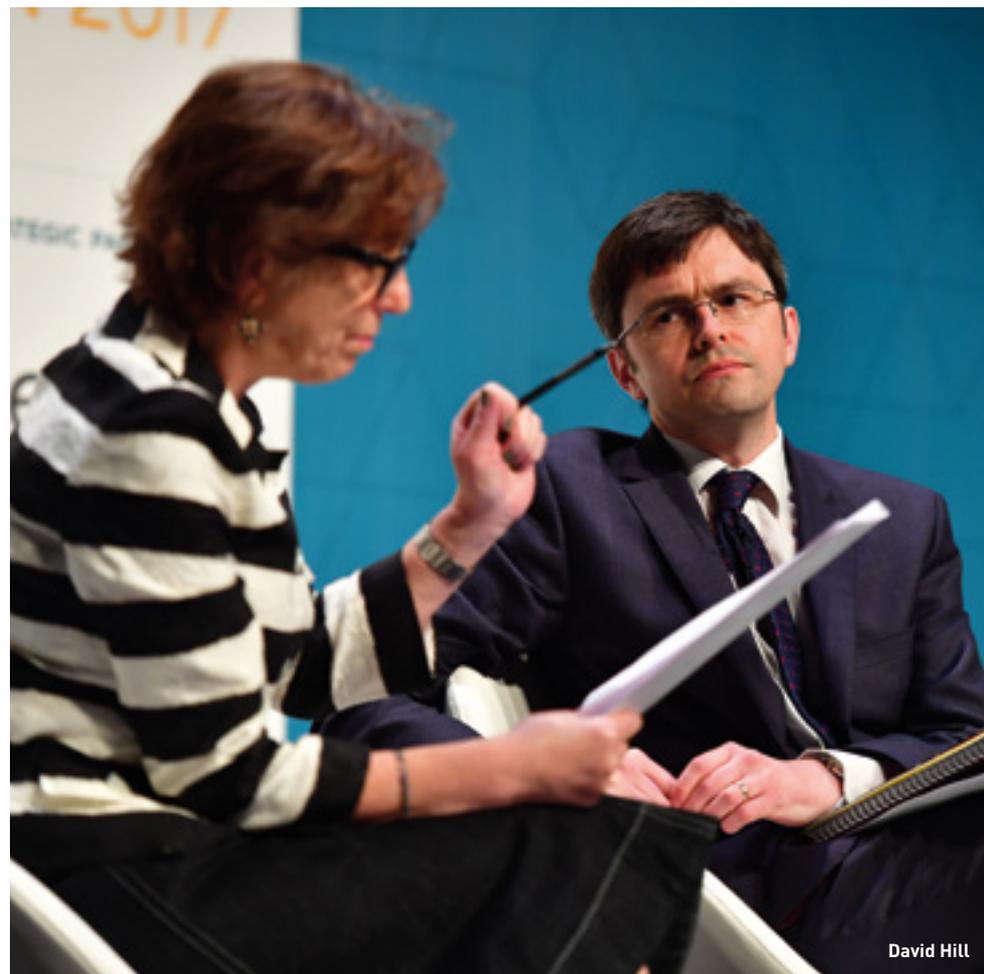
“It’s up to you to work together to ensure high quality is maintained,” Mr Linford advised the delegates.

Next up was the DfE’s Mr Hill, who updated everyone on the apprenticeship reforms, which he labeled “the most significant change in the funding of FE in a generation”.

He thanked the sector for its work in boosting both the number of apprenticeships and their successful outcomes.

“This is a period of great change for apprenticeships,” he said.

“We have an absolutely pressing



David Hill

need to improve technical skills in this country to contribute to productivity and competitiveness, and improving skills is right at the heart of the government’s emerging industrial strategy.”

Importantly, during questions after his speech, Mr Hill was asked about the risk of employers driving down the price of apprenticeships in the new system. He told providers not to “do a deal at a price you can’t deliver quality for”.

“By 2020, spending on apprenticeships in England will have doubled compared to what was spent in 2010/11,” he said.

“That is a huge opportunity to raise both the number and the quality of apprenticeships.”

He also attempted to reassure delegates in the audience on a common point of concern for many, saying that the delayed results of the non-levied allocations for small and

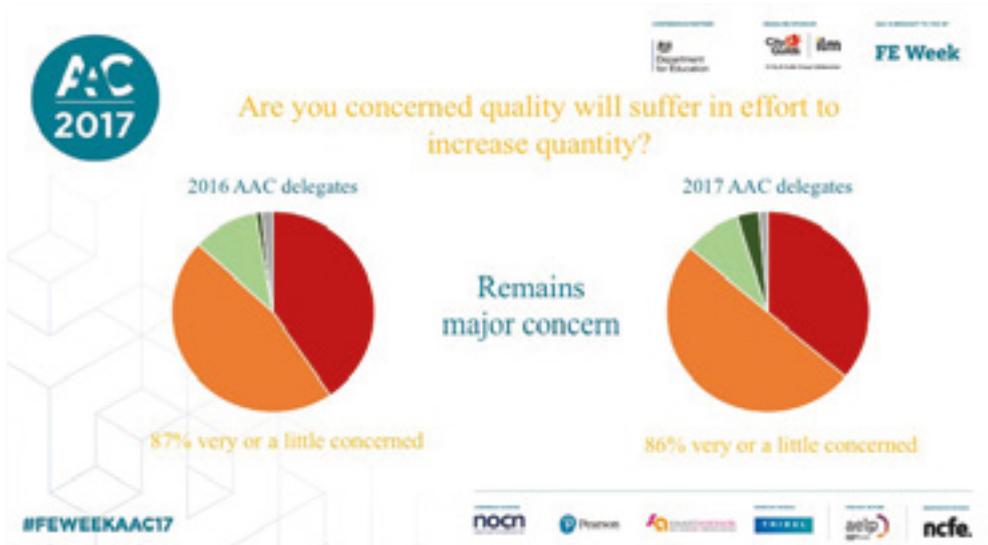
medium-sized employers are “imminent” rather than “civil-service imminent” (see page 18).

“I am absolutely sure we will make those allocations well before the first of May,” he said.

In discussing the new register of approved training providers, launched last week, he acknowledged that dozens of eligible colleges had unexpectedly not made the cut, but declined to answer a question from the host on whether keeping them off was a mistake.

He also said that the RoATP would bring more “quality and rigour” to the apprenticeships market.

Mr Hill also highlighted the need to “widen participation”, adding that the government would be publishing further guidance “for employers who are keen to create a more diverse and inclusive apprenticeship programme”.



QUAL APPRENTICESHIP CONFERENCE

Will quality suffer from a race to the bottom?

In your own words: What do AAC delegates think



Yes, I do think there will be a race to the bottom by certain organisations. I do have grave concerns about subcontracting provision that's now become prime leader, and that they will be trying to shortcut providers that do care about quality.

Sharon Rogers

Lakes College, Contracts manager



What we're finding, from the fine dining, top-end market of the hospitality industry, they want good quality training and they're prepared to pay for it. Fast food, or where profit margins are very low, they want to get as much money for their buck as they can and they are driving the price down and some providers are going in on very low prices. But we're not in that game - we're at the top end of the market, and we want to train.

John Hyde

HIT Training



Well there's no doubt that quality of apprenticeships is absolutely of paramount importance, so designing the quality into the system - irrespective of price - has to be all of our aim and objectives, otherwise we will see a race to the bottom. I think we have to see how it will all play out. My biggest concern is around how much of funds are available to make sure that all important end point assessment actually happens independently because if we don't have that happen then yes we could see a race to the bottom.

Kirstie Donnelly

Managing director, City and Guilds



No. I don't think there will be a race to the bottom. I think that employers are a lot more in tune with what a quality apprenticeship is and I think they'll recognise price associated with quality and may be more open for discussions around negotiated prices towards the top of the funding band rather than racing to the bottom.

Lindsey Whitehead

Director of apprenticeships,
Newcastle College



In terms of price, we're a levy-paying employer, so for us it's more important that we get quality. We have got a lot of levy money to spend so we want to make sure that the quality of the provision we've got is good so we're happy to pay for it. We're hoping that the model and the quality control systems that we've put in place will monitor that effectively and we'll get what we want.

Helen Boden

Apprenticeship manager from
Interserve Support Services



I think that there have always been issues around quality, and I think that where something in an employer's remit then the possibility is that they will force down price - or indeed they'll start their own organisations and force down price within their own organisations, and I think quality will suffer.

Robert Howlett

Head of faculty, South and City
College Birmingham



I think there is a good chance that apprenticeship quality will suffer, I think that the push for employers to get value for money out of their own levy tax - the risk is that it will push standards down, in my opinion.

Scott Bullock

Vice principal, Newcastle College



I think in a large number of organisations that is a risk, because training providers will be fighting themselves to offer the best deal, and I think for employers looking for value for money, some may get sucked into that particular scenario. For us at Interserve we have a very large levy bill, so the issue is perhaps how do we recover as much as possible. We're using our own internal division to actually the conversation is slightly more levelled because it's in our interests to manage quality.

Stuart Mcpherson

Quality and contracts manager,
Interserve Support Services

AAC2017

COVERAGE FROM THE FE WEEK ANN

SFA moves to allay fears over untested providers on the register

JUDE BURKE
@JUDEBURKE77

New providers with little or no track record will have to undergo “mandatory training” before they can deliver apprenticeships, the Skills Funding Agency has said.

The plans are part of a “new approach to thematic auditing and other risk based assessments and behavioural monitoring” announced by the agency’s director of funding and programmes Keith Smith at the Annual Apprenticeships Conference.

The approach, which aims to give both the SFA and employers “confidence” in the new system, could see providers lose their place on the register if they don’t pass muster.

Providers will have to be listed on the new register of apprenticeship training providers in order to deliver new apprenticeship starts from May.

The SFA’s proclamation follows an FE Week investigation which found a number of companies which had never delivered apprenticeships before were on new register, which was published on March 14.

“Any new provider will be required to attend mandatory training,” said Mr Smith. “That’s going to happen before any

apprenticeship activity starts.”

This training would cover “the important points around what it takes to be in this new system”, he said.

The new providers would all then “be case-loaded with an account manager in the agency” for “one-to-one sessions”.

He continued: “Then I expect, no later than three to six months in, that potentially when they start delivering is when we will then start to take that snapshot.

“It’s going to be a potentially a pass or fail judgement.”

In “the most serious of cases”, for instance if new providers are “taking too long to get up to speed”, he insisted the SFA “will take action immediately”.

“Now depending on what we see, and what we find from that first formal assessment will determine whether we do follow ups, will determine whether actually everything’s fantastic, and they can then default to our normal compliance regime for other types of providers,” he continued.

He insisted he is “really ambitious to make sure we don’t have too long a lag before we identify where things potentially are going wrong”, stressing: “It’s important that we have confidence, that employers have confidence, that where new entrants are coming to the market they are getting up to

speed as quickly as possible.”

Delegates should “expect to hear something more from us on this quite soon”, he added, involving “quite a rigorous process, which potentially in the worst cases is going to lead to these new providers being removed from the register”.

He concluded: “And as I’ve also said many many times, our ambitions don’t stop there. We have a lot of work planned to try to look at how we continue to raise the bar and to continue to stretch the system to deliver those high standards. We do that for one reason – the apprentice deserves it.”



Keith Smith

Lauener admits SFA ‘hasn’t modelled’ eventual register numbers

BILLY CAMDEN
@BILLYCAMDEN

There has been no modelling done by the Skills Funding Agency to predict how many providers will eventually end up on the new register of apprenticeship training providers, its boss has admitted.

Peter Lauener’s stunning revelation will be of concern to many in the sector, not least the new Ofsted boss Amanda Spielman, who admits in an exclusive interview on page 6 that she’s “worried” about the impact the register will have on her resources, given that it has already nearly doubled the number of providers that are now in line for inspection.

Speaking to FE Week following a question and answer session on the forthcoming apprenticeship reforms at this year’s Annual Apprenticeship Conference, Mr Lauener said “we do not have a modelled view” on how many providers he expects will be on the register in a few years’ time.

“We don’t have a view of how many will be on there and it is something we’ll have a better fix on over time,” he admitted. “I think it would be unhelpful to have a view at this stage, not least because we have the levy coming.”

Before the register came into force, there were 793 apprenticeship providers in scope for inspection.

Now however, the RoATP has nearly double that many providers listed, with 1,473 organisations in the frame for inspection when it goes live in May.

To heap problems on Ofsted, the RoATP

application process is due to take place four times every year, and sector figures expect this number will rise quickly, perhaps to well over 2,000.

“It is a huge challenge and we are only at the start of the conversations because there is nothing yet to inspect,” Ms Spielman has previously said. “This is about setting up

for the future.”

Despite this, Mr Lauener insisted that there is no need for the SFA to project how many providers will eventually make it onto the register.

“We don’t have a view of how many,” he told FE Week. “Why would we have a view about a desired number?”



Peter Lauener

ANNUAL APPRENTICESHIP CONFERENCE

Marsden calls for five policy objectives

TOM MENDELSON
@TOM_MENDELSON

Labour would establish an official pre-apprenticeship programme, and support apprenticeships for care leavers, veterans and people with disabilities, according to the shadow skills minister Gordon Marsden.

During his speech at the Annual Apprenticeships Conference, Mr Marsden made clear his support for technical education, and hit out at “the lack of adequate resources” the government is putting into the new Institute for Apprenticeships.

In all, he made new five policy objectives from the state, committing his party to

1. Targets to increase apprenticeships for people with disabilities, care leavers and for veterans.
2. A system of traineeships to work as “an official pre-apprenticeship programme”.
3. “Specific support” to cover apprentices’ travel costs, which he said currently run to an average of £24 a week – a quarter of their earnings if they’re on the minimum wage.
4. Devolving apprenticeship funding to local



Gordon Marsden

combined authorities or metro mayor regions provided they have a strategy to achieve it

5. Incentives for large employers to “overtrain apprentices to fill skills gaps in the supply chain and the wider sector”, perhaps including subsidising the administrative

costs of that training.

He said that the Local Government Authority is afraid the levy would cost them up to £207 million every year, and wants the money it will raise to pool it locally so councils can “create apprenticeships to fill

local skills gaps and meet local employers’ needed”.

Mr Marsden also talked about the impending threat posed by Brexit to technical workers, pointing to a skills shortage in the construction industry, which he says is at risk of losing 200,000 jobs.

“We need not only to scale up areas of traditional apprenticeships in manufacturing and industry, but also grasp the potential for great expansion, including for high-quality apprenticeships in the service sector,” he said.

“There are growing demands in social care, leisure, and visitor services, as well as digital and creative industries, and we must do everything we can to meet these. Increased automation is changing the world of work and jobs. That is why the service sector will be so crucial.”

He also took a moment to pay tribute from the stage to the victims of the attack in London on Wednesday in which four people died. He only made the decision to travel to Birmingham at the last minute, and extended apologies from his ministerial counterpart Robert Halfon, whom he said had been disappointed not to come.

Panel debate dominated by end-point assessment and the register

GEMMA GATHERCOLE
@G_GATHERCOLE

Concerns about quality and the impact of reforms on social mobility dominated the panel debate of FE and skills sector leaders at the Annual Apprenticeship Conference.

Dame Asha Khemka DBE, principal of West Nottinghamshire College and a member of the board of the Institute for Apprenticeship, called for the sector to “work together to find solutions”, admitting that “we all know implementation is going to be rocky”.

However, she said the fact that so many standards’ end-point assessments were not yet in place was “not acceptable”.

Her fellow panel member Dr Sue Pember, the director of policy at HOLEX, described the lack of EPAs for approved standards as “diabolical”. “In my mind”, she said, “you shouldn’t put a standard on the books unless it’s got an EPA”, a position that was met with warm applause from delegates.

Replying to a question about whether the levy would lead to an increase in deadweight provision, which would use levy funds to pay for training that would already have taken place, Dr Pember said “deadweight is a word I don’t like to hear very often; it reminds me

of Train to Gain”.

John Hyde, the executive chairman of HIT Training, warned that an increase in the use of levy funds to pay for “existing management training and degree sandwich courses may skew it too far”.

He insisted that entry-level apprenticeships and those for 16- to 18-year-olds “are still needed” and urged the government to “keep a close eye on it”.

There were stark warnings from the chief executives of both the Association of Colleges and the Association of Employment and Learning Providers. David Hughes, the chief executive of AoC, said “we should go into this open-eyed; sometimes there will

be scams and scandals”, but was careful to insist this wouldn’t apply to the majority. He also warned that the levy might “amplify” the behaviour of “unscrupulous” employers, noting that “the labour market is just grossly unfair and unjust, and the levy won’t solve that”.

Mark Dawe, the boss of AELP, asked whether the system could truly be considered employer-led when employers weren’t free to select the provider that they wanted to work with, as not all providers were on the register of apprenticeship training providers.

“Don’t distort the market through a procurement process that doesn’t recognise quality,” he insisted.



(L-R) David Hughes, Mark Dawe, Sue Pember, John Hyde, Dame Asha Khemka, Kirsty Wark

EDITORIAL

Broker fees are back again



The government needs to look carefully at the NHS' plans to hit providers with brokerage fees.

No-one is suggesting the health service is breaking the Skills Funding Agency's rules, but we must prevent money meant for frontline training from going astray. The issue of brokerage is one that I've followed closely since my investigation a year ago exposed brokers were charging up to five per cent of every deal they made to match subcontractors with primes.

The SFA deserved full credit for announcing in February that public funds would not be used to pay such fees through its final apprenticeship funding rules.

But it's alarming to discover that the nation's largest and most treasured public body is indulging in another form of brokerage to recoup the cost of seeking providers.

It also seems that the decision by these NHS bodies to create their own "frameworks", which will effectively limit access for contracts to providers they deem fit for purpose, casts further doubt on the robustness of the government's own new register of apprenticeship training providers.

Paul Offord, Deputy editor
news@feweek.co.uk

#FEWEEKAAC17 TWEETS:

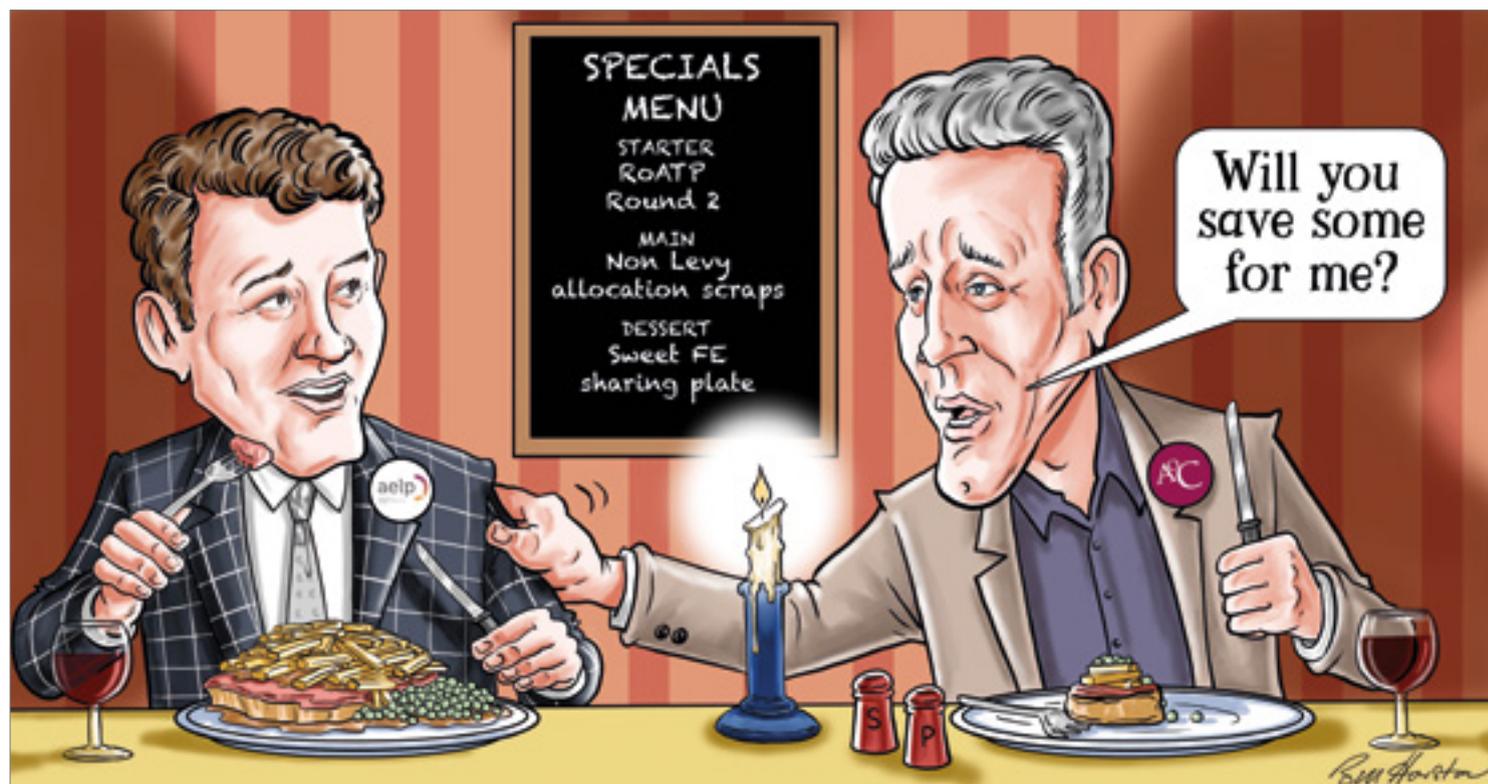
Graham Howe @GrahamDavidHowe
Apprenticeship Provision might be hard to find #feweekaac17

Karen Bailey @ktebailey
OFSTED need sector specialists. What with training providers & EPA looking 4 people 2 - who will be left to do the actual job? #FEWEEKAAC17

Paul Saunders @Gateway_Paul
We will inspect the management of your contracts with subcontractors said Ofsted. Isn't that SFA role? #feweekaac17

Paul Turner @EduTurn
@GordonMarsden It's a scandal the current hamster wheel that is the English & Maths GCSE regime. Losing excellent apprentices #FEWEEKAAC17

Arit Eminue AritEminue
Lots of talk on lack of BAME #apprentices at #feweekaac17 only BAME represented on stage so far is @ShakiraSweet1 #startsattop



SFA softens its stance on non-levy allocations

PAUL OFFORD
@PAULOFFORD

Non-levy allocations will no longer be ruled out for the dozens of colleges that weren't listed on the new register of apprenticeship training providers at the first attempt following political pressure, FE Week has learned.

However, there should be no behind-closed-doors special treatment offered to colleges that would work against the private sector, the AELP boss Mark Dawe has warned.

The apprenticeships minister Robert Halfon revealed this week that providers which did not make it onto the RoATP would be able to reapply from March 21 – with applications to be in by April 7.

Now, the DfE appears to have softened its position on whether colleges and training providers had missed their chance to get an SFA allocation for non-levied employers, with a spokesperson saying that the department "will decide on [this] once the new system becomes established".

Up to £440 million of non-levy allocations – funding for apprentices with employers who do not pay the levy – for those that are on the RoATP, is still delayed, however. The results of the tendering process should have been published on March 14, according to the Skills Funding Agency's own timetable.

The Association of Colleges is understood to have lobbied the SFA to find additional non-

levy allocation funding – which would come on top of that £440 million – for those colleges that will get onto the RoATP at the second time of trying.

Otherwise, the AoC said it wants some of that money held back for providers successful in the second round as "a contingency".

"Ideally the SFA would have had time to get the register right and then to confirm tender decisions for small company training," David Hughes, AoC's chief executive, told FE Week.

"However, they had to run the two processes at the same time, so AoC has suggested that they process the latest register applications quickly, while making sure there is funding available for the high-quality training that the excluded colleges offer."

His counterpart at AELP, Mr Dawe, insisted that it would be wrong if any special dispensation were given to colleges that missed out on RoATP first time round.

He said: "If there is a private deal done with the colleges that didn't get on the register first time that is unacceptable. Every provider type needs to be treated fairly. The same approach should be applied to everyone."

The delay to non-levy allocations was confirmed on the government's Bravo e-tendering portal, but the Department for Education refused to comment publicly at the time.

The DfE's director of apprenticeships David Hill tried to reassure delegates at FE Week's Annual Apprenticeships Conference in Birmingham, that the delayed results were

"imminent" but not "civil-service imminent".

A spokesperson for the Department had previously admitted that he had been unable to establish a precise date from which providers would be able to start apprenticeships, should they be successful in the RoATP reapplication process, but did reveal that "those who are successful can start in May".

The DfE's changes of heart reflect anxiety in the sector, with Chris Hayden, an employer engagement manager for apprenticeship and workforce development in life sciences with South and City College, tweeting: "Great to see applications available again, but, will we have decision before May?"

"Our clients want to know!!"

The April 7 deadline for the new round of RoATP applications gives providers less than three weeks to apply, a shorter window than during the first round of applications, which opened on October 24 and closed on November 25.

Just hours before that deadline slammed shut in November, the SFA warned that some providers were failing to follow instructions, and were applying via more than one route.

The Agency eventually published the RoATP on March 13, with many providers surprised to find themselves left off.

As only those on the list will be able to deliver apprenticeships from May, the absence of a number of major providers, including at least 21 colleges with a combined current allocation of £44 million, caused shock and disbelief across the sector.

COMMENTS

Exclusive: England alone with end-point assessment-only apprenticeships

It was very clear we had been duped when the Richards report was published with a 5 year old sketch of a spanner on the front. Enough said.

Alan Jones

Exclusive: Non-levy allocations no longer ruled out for unsuccessful colleges

Surely the question is – how is it possible that the 21 colleges, with their huge resources and experience, managed to fail what was a simple process. All they had to do was answer 4 questions with 2000 character answers and tick a few boxes. I think we should question their capability more than anything. After all 73% did get on the register and many of those did not have the huge resources of an FE college to draw upon.

John Filly

Unsuccessful applicants can reapply for apprenticeships register... but deadline is tight

Not all of these colleges do subcontract. You can find this information on their websites which is published according to SFA regulations.

HappyDays

Minister wrongly claims there are no grade four providers on new apprenticeships register

Quite clearly this was a procurement exercise. Track record is great, but no guarantee of future performance. If providers can't fill out a fairly simple tender they don't deserve access to public funds #harshbutfair

Mr bvious



Be a catalyst for change



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College
A real education

Principal and Chief Executive
Competitive Salary

Stoke-on-Trent College is embarking on a process of repositioning and transformation. As part of the next phase of our development we are seeking our next Principal and Chief Executive to lead us into a new future. Our new leader will be quality focused and commercially astute; someone who is highly visible and accessible and full of energy and enthusiasm for the challenges ahead. This role will present a strong and inspirational leader with a wealth of opportunities to impact on students, communities and the economy of our city.

We have retained FE Associates to secure the best possible candidate to lead us into the future. For an initial discussion contact Samantha Bunn on **01454 617 707**.

More information and details on how to apply can be found on our microsite: <http://stokecollege.fea.co.uk>

Key Dates:

Closing date for applications:
Monday 10th April 2017 at noon

Interviews:
26th/27th April 2017



East Durham College

'Where Careers Grow'



East Durham College is one of the leading Further Education colleges in the North East England. The College continues to go from strength to strength. The College has three unique campuses. The Peterlee Campus is a stunning £36m build that opened in January 2009. The Houghall Campus, on the outskirts of the City of Durham, is the leading provider of land based courses in the region and includes a beautiful 500 acre estate. It has recently had a £12.75m redevelopment which has brought some market-leading specialist facilities to the Campus. The Technical Academy is a 30,000 sq. ft. purpose-built facility providing training in a range of in-demand construction trades. **East Durham College is looking to appoint to the following roles:**

Vice Principal – Curriculum & Performance

Competitive Salary

The Vice Principal will support the Principal in providing both strategic and day-to-day leadership for the College, working creatively in order to develop a high performing, supportive and challenging culture for both staff and learners, based upon the core values and College mission and vision.

The Vice Principal Curriculum & Performance will be the College lead for all aspects of curriculum management and performance and standards across the College. They will have direct line management of the Assistant Principals Curriculum Operations, Director of Student Services, Director of Marketing and Director of Teaching & Learning.

You should be educated to degree level or hold an equivalent professional qualification. While having extensive curriculum management experience at a senior level in a further education and/or land-based college, alongside this experience of implementing quality improvement and growth strategies at a Senior Level.

A good understanding of effective curriculum planning, in support of this excellent leadership and management skills would be advantageous.

Assessment and Interview days will be held on the **11th & 12th May 2017**

Assistant Principal – Curriculum Operations

Competitive Salary

Responsible for leading, creating and sustaining outstanding provision and ensuring high quality learning takes place for students through effective monitoring, evaluation and review of effective curriculum delivery models that maximise students' success as defined in strategic targets.

To contribute towards the achievement of the College's mission, vision and strategic objectives and targets, through being a member of the College Leadership Group and by ensuring that the college is represented well at key external networks.

You should be educated to degree level or equivalent, alongside this hold a recognised teaching qualification.

Experience of effective leadership and management, experience of managing within a land based and/or general further education setting, and delivering successful outcomes within set budgets are an essential criteria for this job role.

The College is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Please visit East Durham College website to complete the online application form. www.eastdurham.ac.uk

Closing date for both roles: 14th April 2017

Learning & Development Director

Starting Salary £60k plus annual performance related bonus

www.qube-learning.co.uk



Home based with travel across all of Qube's regions and frequent time spent at Qube's head office

This is a new role and department for Qube, with highly skilled individuals' in post working within the e-Products and internal development training teams. The successful candidate will be able to design the new team structure and have influence over new roles, which will include at least one SMT member. The introduction of L&D Director role is a key part of our Apprenticeship Reform strategy. Reporting directly to the CEO, the L&D Director will be part of the Executive team and sit on the Board.

Primary KPIs

- Strategic business leadership and management
- Leadership and commercial training
- Apprenticeship programme design, including our Elite Higher & Degree Level Apprenticeship programmes
- Internal training and development
- Technology based learning (including a LMS)

We are looking for a Learning and Development Professional with experience of leading and managing at senior level. The successful candidate will be outward facing, adopt a collaborative and flexible approach, be solutions driven and have a proven track record of successful project management. Equally as important is a commercial acumen that enables us to demonstrate a 'Return on Investment' (RoI) and 'Value Added' to our external and internal customers. In return we offer a generous package with a real opportunity for the right candidate to influence the business.

Please send your CV to sally.connolly@qube-learning.co.uk

Closing date for applications is 7th April 2017



FINANCE CONTROLLER

Organisation:	Private Training Provider
Contract Type:	Full Time
Subject Area:	Finance
Contract Type:	Permanent
Salary:	£40,000 - £50,000
Reports to:	Director of Finance and Corporate Services

Skills Training UK is a national skills training provider, offering an innovative and joined-up approach to business and economic development and social inclusion. We work with employers to develop skilled and productive employees whilst creating employment opportunities for people in the communities where we work.

We are currently recruiting for a Financial Controller. The ideal candidate will have experience of managing the financial accounting and reporting of the company through strong financial discipline. This is a great opportunity to join a growing business within the education and training sector.

Reporting to the Finance Director you will be responsible for providing detailed analysis and commentary on financial reports in order to add value, challenge and assist in the delivery of the company's financial performance. This is an operational role and will require a hands-on approach to supporting the development of the Finance Function.

The successful candidate will not only be an exceptional Financial Controller but will also be commercially aware, an excellent communicator and demonstrate strong leadership skills. Full-time permanent position. Based in Head office (Wembley), there may be some travel involved.

To apply for this position please send a CV and covering letter to recruitment@skillstraininguk.com Closing Date: 10th April 2017



PROCAT

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ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY



A college with a difference . . .

With its head office based in South East Essex and recently incorporated, PROCAT is a college with a difference, specialising in providing higher level skills and workforce development for the engineering, aviation, rail and construction industries. Our facilities are second-to-none providing our students with the latest industry-standard equipment and access to innovative digital learning technology.

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Circa £100k package for an exceptional candidate

We are seeking a high calibre individual to lead the finance function and bring careful & detailed financial management, budgeting, costing and planning to all aspects of the college.

As an experienced and qualified Accountant, you will be very much hands on, ensuring appropriate and strong financial guidance & governance. You'll be part of the college's senior management team, so robust leadership, corporate and commercial awareness is important, together with the ability to build strong relationships with businesses and employers.

We also work closely with our Corporation Board, comprised of high profile, influential figures from industry, community & business and together we are committed to ensuring that PROCAT continues its ambitious growth plans and maintains its financial standing.

So, if you have strong commercial acumen, are someone who thinks strategically and takes a proactive approach to finding effective solutions, then we would like to hear from you.

Join us and play a leading role in a college with momentum and ambition.

Closing date: Sunday 9th April 2017

Preliminary interviews via video conference:

To be conducted mid-April 2017

Final interview and assessment centre:

Wednesday 10th May 2017

To apply for this role or to download an application pack visit: www.protocol.co.uk/procat

Protocol Excellence in FE

For an informal and confidential discussion about the role contact Ian Sackree 07795 271559 or David Beynon 07970 042334



Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality

Salary: £75,000 - £80,000 per annum

Macclesfield College is a highly ambitious College and a leading provider in the heart of Cheshire. With over 2000 students studying further and higher education programmes and a large apprenticeship programme, specialising in STEM and more specifically aerospace, the College is strongly placed in the region to deliver the Cheshire and Warrington strategic economic plan.

We are now seeking an inspirational, dynamic and committed Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality with the drive, determination and passion to deliver exceptional educational leadership in the management and development of all curriculum and research activity, as well as quality assurance and improvement strategies.

Our ideal candidate will have an outstanding record of performance as a leader with outstanding communication and organisational skills and be strongly committed to working as a lead ambassador for the College's values and mission. They must also demonstrate a passion for education, and relentless drive to create an outstanding experience for our students.

A member of the Executive Leadership Team they will report to the Chief Executive and Principal and be involved in shaping and influencing strategic decision making to ensure that an outstanding level of innovative learning is delivered across the curriculum and an outstanding learner experience is achieved.

A college with excellence at the heart of its mission statement of **Empowerment through learning**, the ambitious team seeks to continually drive for excellence and in 2015 won the 'Best company to work for' Silver Award at the North East 2015 Cheshire Business Awards. In 2016, the College was a finalist in the Educators Investment Awards and was placed number one in Cheshire for student and

employer satisfaction.

The post-holder will be educated to degree level and will ideally possess a higher management/professional qualification and have a demonstrable record of continuous professional development. Experience as an Ofsted Inspector is desirable.

The College is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

All appointments will be subject to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check and satisfactory references.

The College is committed to equality of opportunity. We welcome applications from all sections of the community, particularly from members of ethnic minority groups

The position will close at midnight on the closing date. Interviews will be held on 15 & 16 May 2017 at the College.

To apply for this post, please download the application forms by clicking on the Application Forms link shown below. Please email the completed forms to recruitment@macclesfield.ac.uk

Closing date for applications: 1 May 2017 (midnight)

Contact Details: For further details contact Human Resources: 01625 410007

Email: recruitment@macclesfield.ac.uk

Please note that CVs cannot be received.



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Calling all ambitious and driven Science Teachers!
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- Opportunity to increase the breadth of our Science curriculum
- Leading a team of inspiring Science Lecturers
- Building links with employers
- Partnering with a brand new 6th Form to create their Science Function
- Promoting Science from Primary School age upwards
- Significant investment and support to help you achieve this
- All this while working at an Outstanding College with high ambitions!

We pride ourselves on our passion and ambition to build the leading Science provision in the area and you will be spearheading this as our Head of Science.

Don't miss out on the chance to create something fantastic with us, apply using the details below or to arrange an informal chat with our Vice Principal, contact the HR team on **01284 716296**.

Apply via: www.westsuffolkcollege.ac.uk, or to request an application pack, please email recruitment@wsc.ac.uk

Closing date: 2nd April 2017

Centre Manager



Location: Stourbridge

Full time permanent

Salary: £28,000 - £34,000

Carillion Training Services, the largest employer based provider of Construction apprenticeships in the UK, is looking to recruit a Centre Manager to join Carillion Training Services in Stourbridge. The successful candidate will be responsible for the day-to-day running and effective overall management of the Carillion Apprentice training centre including direct and franchised programme delivery.

The Centre Manager will have responsibility for:

- Effectively managing the training centre, efficiently utilising resources to achieve high quality, cost effective and compliant programmes
- Managing overall training centre budget, taking responsibility for the financial performance of the training centre
- Responsibility for compliance with IMS procedures to provide a fair, sustainable and safe place of work and safe and sustainable methods of working
- Supporting the improvement of teaching, learning and assessment to achieve and maintain an outstanding centre which fully meets the needs of our stakeholders
- Delivery of agreed objectives to support the CTS' business plan
- Ensuring effective relationships with local representatives of funding bodies, college partners and other external agencies;
- Driving and improving centre recruitment, retention, placement and achievement performance
- Line management performance of all centre staff and learners, including performance management reviews and monitoring of staff and learner attendance to improve overall attendance and
- Contributing to community and promotional activities to assist in community engagement programmes and the production of promotional and publicity and recruitment materials as required.

If you have the skills we are looking for and are ready for a fresh challenge please apply to **Paula McInally** via email Paula.McInally@carillionplc.com



Let Me Play Ltd. is currently recruiting for **18 job roles** to help fulfill several new apprenticeship levy training contracts that are now in place due to recently being accepted onto the new **Register of Apprenticeship Training Organisations**.

Let Me Play Ltd. is looking for truly excellent people to come on board as soon as possible. All job roles are full-time and are based at head office in Hammersmith unless stated otherwise. All job roles pay a competitive salary.

For more information and a job description, please email Nick Winham, Recruitment Manager - nick@letmeplay.co.uk. No agencies please.

Or visit our careers website: www.lmpcareers-site.com

Our websites:

- www.letmeplay.co.uk
- www.lmpeducation.org
- www.sportingeducation.org
- www.apprenticetrainingagency.co.uk

- 1. Senior Quality Assurance and Contracts Manager (ESF, SFA Apprenticeships, Alternative Education, CPD, EFA Study Programmes)** - management of all contracts, sub-contracting arrangements, compliance, performance and quality assurance.
- 2. MIS Manager (SFA Apprenticeships)** - will involve the implementation of new MIS software and systems.
- 3. 2 x Employer Engagement Managers** - must have an excellent track record in sales.
- 4. Apprenticeship Levy Account Manager (Quality Assurance)** - must have IQA Level 4 or above.
- 5. Quality Assurance Officer** - must have IQA Level 4 or above.
- 6. 3 x Travelling TA Assessors** - Bham/Manchester, Great Yarmouth, London/South East.
- 7. 3 x Travelling Sports Assessors** - Bham/Manchester, Great Yarmouth, London/South East.
- 8. 3 x Travelling BA Assessors** - Bham/Manchester, Great Yarmouth, London/South East.
- 9. 2 x Operations Assistant.**
- 10. Project Manager (FE Contracts)** - must have experience of ESF projects.



HOURLY PAID LECTURER – FUNCTIONAL SKILLS MATHS AND ENGLISH TO APPRENTICES

Post No: PD/03/17
£23.96 per hour (to include preparation and marking)

We require a Functional Skills maths and English teacher, experienced in delivering Functional Skills qualifications to adults from Level 1 to Level 2.

You must have a Level 3 qualification in either maths or English, and a teaching qualification, both of which are essential in order to deliver programmes to Apprentices in a timely manner to ensure high levels of student satisfaction, attendance, retention and ultimately success.

Delivery may be at employers' premises, community venues and at the main college Campuses. This is mainly a peripatetic role, which will involve regular travel to locations across the local region. Much of the teaching will be 1:1 or to small groups and include some blended/distance learning.

You will have excellent communication, IT and number skills, with a positive 'can do' attitude and have the ability to work as part of a team and independently. You will be an excellent administrator – well organised and able to meet deadlines.

To apply for this opportunity please send a completed application form with a covering letter detailing your availability at your earliest convenience.

For further information, please contact Val Heritage, Senior Community Administrator on 0121 678 7295



Bright and ambitious Maths Graduate?

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If you want to develop a worthwhile and rewarding career in teaching, then join our generous graduate trainee scheme. This will train and develop you to be a Maths Lecturer and provide a great platform from which you can start your teaching career.

New College Swindon is a successful and continually evolving FE College who are sponsoring a brand new secondary school, Great Western Academy, opening in September 2018. Our learners are at the centre of what we do - we are fully committed to supporting all students to maximise their potential.

Our graduate teaching programme offers a structured development programme which includes:

- Starting salary of £20,896 per annum
- Generous holiday allowance
- Good pension provision
- A Level 5 teaching qualification (Diploma in Education & Training), study leave and a dedicated mentor.

All of this will help you become an innovative and inspirational Maths Lecturer in FE and potentially across Great Western Academy as our expansion plans develop.

If you have (or are expecting) a minimum of a 2:1 degree in Maths (or related discipline), please apply by completing an application form and equal opportunities document. You should detail your career aspirations.

The selection process will involve a group assessment day followed by a professional discussion with staff and students.

For further information please contact a member of our staff development team.

Closing Date: 6th April 2017
Interview Date: To be confirmed

Lecturers in GCSE English



(Full time, Part time, Sessional opportunities)

Salary: £23,364 - £33,275 (Subject to experience & qualifications, pro-rated for part time)

Hours: Full time, Part time, Sessional (Hourly Paid)

Judged Good with a series of Outstanding areas by Ofsted in January 2015, we are committed to achieving excellence for all our students. Inspirational teaching and the dedication of all our staff supports the continuing growth of our student success.

These posts provide the opportunity to plan and teach engaging GCSE English classes to students from our various College vocational areas and to contribute to the department's journey to Outstanding.

Successful candidates must be motivated, possess exceptional organisational skills, work well with colleagues and have a creative and innovative approach to enthuse our students to succeed. The ideal candidate will have the ability to deliver a diverse range of English qualifications, but mainly GCSE. Ideally you will be qualified to degree level in English and will hold a full teaching qualification (or working towards this). Candidates will have an innovative approach to teaching and will ensure that lessons are designed to not only develop skills but that they connect to the industry which the students aspire to work in.

At East Surrey College we are committed to Equal Opportunities, encouraging applications from all sectors of the community to reflect our diverse student population. We are also committed to PREVENT and safeguarding the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Please note that ESC is a smoke-free zone, with no smoking permitted anywhere on campus



For full vacancy details and to apply visit our website <https://careers.esc.ac.uk> or contact the Human Resources department on 01737 772611 (option 3).

Careers



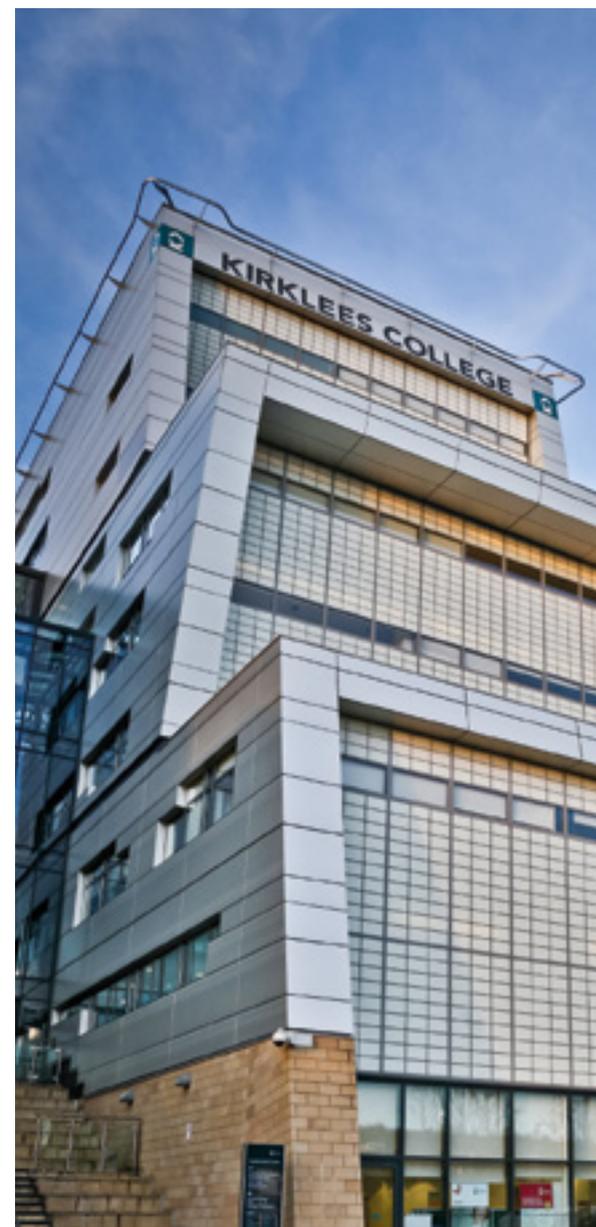
English & Maths Lecturers Required

The City of Bristol College welcome CVs from English & Maths Lecturers (GCSE/A level) who would like to be part of our 'bank staff' and will be available to cover short term.

Please send CVs to human.resources@cityofbristol.ac.uk



For further details visit <http://www.cityofbristol.ac.uk/jobs/vacancies/>



OUTSTANDING English and maths staff WANTED!



Location: Huddersfield and Dewsbury

Salary: Up to £23.89 per hour plus opportunity of scarce skills allowance (up to £30.09 per hour depending on current salary, industrial skills and specialist skills)

Hours: Variable

Do you want to begin a truly rewarding career and make a real difference by training a new generation? Then this is the career for you!

Kirklees College is one of the biggest colleges in the country and we offer a vast range of courses and study options for applicants to choose from. Based in the heart of Yorkshire we have multiple learning centres across Kirklees, serving the local population, communities and businesses.

Nationally there is a challenge to improve young people's numeracy and literacy skills. Considering recent changes to the funding methodology, this is also a challenge for the Further Education colleges. All students who have not received a grade A to C in maths and English when leaving school now have to continue to study alongside their vocational qualification.

This is an exciting opportunity for a bright, committed and innovative individual who has the ability to work with both mature and 16-19 year old learners as part of a large, dynamic and successful team within a well-established Further Education college.

The purpose of this rewarding role is to make a significant contribution to the effective delivery of the curriculum, in line with the College's Quality Improvement Strategy and to ensure a high quality and relevant learning experience for all students on the courses.

The main responsibilities of the role will be to teach English and maths related subjects at any of the College centres and to develop programmes of study to meet the particular needs of client groups served by the College. The successful candidate will also be required to assess students in accordance with the requirements of the programme and to contribute to systems of quality and advice and assist in the effective organisation of the department by the proper establishment of such syllabuses, schemes of work and records as may be necessary from time to time.

Ideally the successful candidate will already have an English or maths qualification at Level 3 or above. The candidate will also need to have a teaching qualification at Level 5 or above.

Please visit www.kirkleescollege.ac.uk/jobs and search under our latest vacancies page for more information and how to apply for this role.

If you have any queries, you can contact the HR department by telephone on 01484 437009 or by email at jobs@kirkleescollege.ac.uk.

Kirklees College is committed to Equality & Diversity and welcomes applications from all sections of the community

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ACROSS TWO DAYS**

THE EDUCATION EVENT OF 2017

The FE Week Festival of Skills is an inspiring two day CPD extravaganza for professionals working within the further education and skills sector.

Over two days the Festival of Skills brings together the best of the sector's most forward thinking advocates, practitioners of change, policy makers and educators, at one of the leading forums for thought leadership, CPD and debate in the FE and skills sector.

This year's Festival of Skills will take place alongside the prestigious Telegraph Festival of Education at Wellington College.

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EXPERTS



BOB WATMORE

Training and assessment manager,
Derwent Training Association

Ignore the anomalies – ITPs deserve your respect

The vast majority of independent training providers deliver great results for apprentices, writes Bob Watmore

The front page lead of last week's FE Week was understandably sensational about some aspects of the recent register of apprenticeship training providers announcements – namely those experienced providers which didn't make the list and the inexperienced ones that did.

While mistakes and anomalies should certainly be highlighted, focusing on these alone prevents balance. We should also be celebrating the experienced providers that have rightly achieved RoATP status and which will be critical to the three million apprenticeship starts targeted to be achieved by 2020.

There are many good providers across the country with long histories of delivering employers' needs to a high standard. This is particularly true of the engineering and manufacturing sector in which I work. Although the sector faces a significant ongoing skill shortage, exacerbated by an ageing workforce and a reliance on the skills of EU nationals that may be under threat from Brexit, it provides a myriad of modern opportunities for technical STEM-based apprenticeships at advanced, higher and degree level. It also results in well paid jobs, whose visible contribution to the UK's GDP is easily measured in manufactured and exported goods.

But according to FE Week's own statistics, the vast majority of colleges subcontract their apprenticeship delivery, often to independent training providers, and they have therefore been caught out by not taking their RoATP submissions seriously in their own right.

In the recent round of apprenticeship delivery procurement, colleges didn't have to submit a financial status as part of the invitation to tender. As ITPs with charitable status we have to provide such financial information as surety to government procurement officers. Our ability to pass this financial test should give buyers confidence in our ability to successfully deliver high apprenticeship achievement rates.

Sadly I too regularly hear complaints from employers about some colleges' poor apprenticeship delivery. Complaints include regular deference to full-time student courses, such that part-time apprentices suffer unreasonably large class sizes, doubling up on engineering equipment

during skills training, unsuitably qualified training staff working outside their own vocational areas, and implications of qualifications achieved without the barest employer engagement on rigour, depth of skill and knowledge.

Of course, I know there is some outstanding college-based apprenticeship delivery, and these often tend to be those with very close ties to original equipment manufacturers. But the three million challenge requires massive penetration into the SME and micro-business supply chain market, as most OEMs are already doing all they can.

“ **Focusing on mistakes alone prevents balance** ”

Independent training providers in the GTA England network are at the forefront of this penetration and need (and deserve) the level of recognition that will assure employers of quality provision. This is the sentiment Robert Halfon was alluding to, when he spoke of employers being able to have confidence in quality providers, on unveiling the RoATP.

My experience in the sector is broad and varied: as a senior project manager at Jaguar Land Rover for over 20 years, I had some responsibility for young engineers' development, and having worked at a large college in Leicester, and now at an ITP, I am a firm believer in the benefits of the ITP sector, especially related to achieving this growth in apprenticeships now.

Nevertheless, I concede that poor ITP provision, such as the cases FE Week has found, don't do the sector any favours and I support the important work the paper does to shine a light on these.

However, as an avid reader who regularly circulates its articles to my staff, I am keen that they – and the many other employees countrywide at successful sector skills groups, as well as employers, providers and learning institutions – should feel part of a major success story, not part of the problem.

Let's all work together to keep our eyes on the most important focus: every apprentice's journey is critical, as it will be the only one they will take.



STEPHEN EVANS

CEO, Learning and Work Institute

Registering my concerns over apprenticeship reforms

Apprenticeships might be at the heart of the Government's industrial strategy, but delays in the register of approved providers raise questions about its vision for the future, says Stephen Evans

Having worked in government, I know that the announcement of a policy can seem like the end of the process. An announcement follows a long period of analysis, getting buy-in from ministers and approval from relevant committees and others.

In practice, the announcement is only the start of the process – any policy is only as good as its implementation. That's what we're discovering with current apprenticeship reforms.

No-one doubts the government's ambition: it will be stretching to deliver three million by 2020 and the minister is clearly committed to changing the culture. Yet that ambition will founder if implementation is not well thought through or delivered.

The register of apprenticeship training providers really has become the hokey-cokey of procurement processes – delays and condensed timescales have been compounded by worries over whether new entrants can deliver quality training. Now added to that are new processes that seem designed mainly to allow those that have missed out to have another go, because of the controversy the results have stirred up.

None of this fills me with confidence that we're all systems go for what will be the biggest change to apprenticeships perhaps for a generation.

So here are four things that need to happen now to make this right.

Have a clear vision. It's difficult from the outside to discern what the government's overall vision for the provider landscape is. For example, does it think that all colleges should be apprenticeship providers? Does it want lots of new entrants, or does it think the current provider base is likely to match employer need? Does it want a smaller number of larger providers or a greater diversity of provision? This is about a shift from procurement to commissioning. And it links to other areas, like advanced learner loans, devolution in some areas, and area reviews. Too often these changes are fragmented and risk becoming less than the sum of their parts.

Set realistic timelines and stick to them. My experience is that commissioning processes always take longer than you think

they will. The process is already delayed – we now need a clear timeline of next steps. That's much easier with a clear vision of what the system should look like. We cannot get this close to reforms and still not be clear about who can deliver what – it takes time to build and maintain relationships.

Encourage new providers who can add value. It's important that new providers are able to establish themselves and start delivering apprenticeships. But on the face of it, it is difficult to see how some of the new providers on the register have got there. FE Week has highlighted a number of cases where new providers don't seem to have a website or a track record in this or any other field. This looks like a massive risk. It should be clear what new (and existing) providers are going to bring to the party.

Be clear about potential exit of providers from the market. Just because a provider has had an allocation in the past, it does not necessarily mean they should have one in the future. Providers should be approved if they can deliver the training that employers and individuals want and that meets the ambitions of the apprenticeship programmes. But the absence of a clear vision and processes risks leading to pressure to create new opportunities for these displaced providers, which is exactly what seems to have happened. There should be a level playing field for all types of providers.

“ **None of this fills me with confidence that we're all systems go** ”

The process at the moment feels simultaneously rushed, delayed and chaotic. It is not a sign of success that, immediately after some surprising results, a second bite of the cherry has been offered. And that, at this stage in the year, we are still waiting for the non-levy allocation results.

I'm still excited and optimistic about apprenticeships. I still think we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to make a real change. To grasp it, the Department for Education needs to get a grip and set out a compelling vision and a well thought through process with a clear and realistic timetable.

EXPERTS

If employers have to let apprentices out one day a week as the SFA wants, the whole system may grind to a halt, says Chris Taylor

The Skills Funding Agency has confirmed its definition of off-the-job requirements for apprenticeships. Apprentices must spend 20 per cent of their contracted work hours, the equivalent of one day per week, off the job to meet funding rules.

This has thrown apprenticeships in the UK into turmoil and raises questions about the viability of delivery and take-up by providers, colleges and employers.

“Which college or training provider can deliver training at £4 per hour per person?”

This requirement will have three unhelpful results:

- Providers and colleges will be unable to deliver apprenticeships which are now economically unviable.
- Employers won't engage in the levy due to its burden on staffing and resources, and



CHRIS TAYLOR

Director of UK Levy Limited

The SFA's funding rule will be disastrous for the whole sector

will pay it as a tax.

- The government will not reach its three million apprenticeship target.

Apprenticeship funding simply does not pay enough to train apprentices one day per week for at least a year, excluding maths and English. Perhaps the SFA should have applied functional skills in maths before it took this decision: customer service level two at £1,500, minus 20 per cent for end assessment, equals £1,300. Divide this by 46 weeks, and then again by five to represent one day in five means £28 per day. Divide this by seven hours comes out at £4 per hour. Which college or training provider can deliver training at £4 per hour per person?

This excludes observations and everything else required to deliver an apprenticeship

which funding must provide for – and forget about quality delivery.

This decision will have a real impact on employers and will reduce productivity and operations. There will be additional costs for travel and substance, and not many employers can lose employees for one fifth of their contracted hours for a year or more plus holidays.

Using the apprenticeship levy to upskill existing employees is not now an option for most employers and providers across the UK. The programme will now only suit traditional technical and trade apprenticeships, and employers in those sectors which use day/block release.

Many providers and colleges which did not make it onto the register of accredited

training providers may now be glad they were unsuccessful, while employers may want to terminate programmes with providers. Self-delivery employers will now walk away and just pay the levy as an additional tax, a simpler option that'll prove less costly to employers than training and employing apprentices.

“
In the worst case, some employers may withdraw from apprenticeships altogether

In the worst case, some employers and providers may withdraw from apprenticeships altogether, seeing them as simply too unworkable and risky.

This requirement needs to be redefined as soon as possible by the SFA to avoid disaster. It needs to ensure apprenticeships are delivered using methods and funding rules which employers want in a technological, post-Brexit economy, especially as many will be directly paying for their apprenticeships sooner rather than later.

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CAMPUS ROUND-UP *with Samantha King*

Lancashire's youngest English teachers



Community service: Proud volunteers

Eighteen college students have become the first teens in Lancashire to qualify as volunteer ESOL teachers as part of a nationwide language initiative.

The Nelson and Colne College students, all aged between 16 and 19, will teach conversational English to Muslim women in Pendle, Burnley and Accrington as part of the national Talk English project.

The scheme, which is funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government, helps improve community integration by helping those with poor English improve their language skills.

The newly qualified volunteers took a five-week course, and will now teach classes of up

to 20 in size, joining around 30 others who are also currently teaching English in the region.

"It will be great experience," said A-level student Morgan Hughes. "It's nice to be able to teach something as simple as English and I think it will be incredibly humbling to watch people grow."

Amanda Melton, the principal of NCC, added: "This is a fantastic opportunity for our students to go out into the real world, support people and help improve their English skills."

"Our students will become a lot more confident through this brilliant first chance to teach and it will be a really empowering experience for them."



Brenda McLeish Learning Curve CEO celebrates IIP Gold award with employees

Officially ahead of the curve

The Learning Curve Group has joined the 13 per cent of organisations in the UK to be awarded the Investors in People gold standard award.

The accreditation recognises organisations with good people management and provides resources for businesses to innovate, improve and expand, with a focus on their staff.

As part of the award application process, LCG employees met with assessors to discuss their job satisfaction, and the company had to demonstrate opportunities for staff progression.

One key area that helped LCG achieve the accolade was a manager's scheme for employees, where employees identified as having potential receive extra training

for managerial and directorial positions, regardless of their current level.

Founded in 2004, county Durham-based LCG is a provider of training and work-based learning, with a portfolio including apprenticeships, distance learning qualifications, vocational training and recruitment.

Working directly with over 50,000 learners and 4,000 businesses per year, LCG have now grown to over 270 employees and 400 associates across their nine centres.

Gail Crossman, director of performance and development at the company said: "People were cheering when we received the award. Staff really wanted to show the assessors that Learning Curve was a great place to work."



Peter Tatchell, left, with Lenka Kaur and Roy Ward

LGBT campaigner comes to Bradford

Human rights campaigner Peter Tatchell paid a visit to Bradford College last week to talk to students about the 50 years he has spent campaigning for LGBT rights.

The 65-year-old recounted tales of his activism over the last half century, including being the 300 violent assaults he has sustained from anti-gay and far-right extremists.

Tatchell maintained that "queer freedom is an unstoppable global force" despite citing figures which show that "73 out of 193 countries still criminalise same-sex relations" during his talk.

He appeared as part of Human Rights Day, and this was actually the second time he has paid a visit to the west Yorkshire college.

Speaking of the event, Tatchell – who runs a human rights organisation called the Peter Tatchell Foundation, said: "There were lots of great questions. We have made great progress in Britain on LGBT human rights, but there's still more work to be done to tackle bullying and hate crime."

"Bradford is a great multicultural city but there are still communities where LGBT people are not understood and accepted."

Lenka Kaur, the inclusion and diversity coordinator at the college, added: "Peter is one of the key human rights activists in the world so it was a great pleasure to have him come to address our students on the subject of LGBT rights and the battle for equality."

It's a clean sweep for this popular biohazard lecturer

Abiohazard cleaning lecturer has been awarded a medal for excellence from the qualification board City and Guilds.

Stuart Wilson, a tutor at Accrington and Rossendale College, received the award for his innovative teaching methods, which include creating realistic crime scenes using Nutella, tomato sauce and even tinned vegetable soup.

He was recommended for the award following positive feedback left by former students, many of whom have gone on to work for private specialised cleaning companies or set up their own businesses.

Stuart has been teaching at the college for 18 years, running courses on biohazards, crime scene and trauma cleaning, having previously worked for local authorities and the police service in north-west England.

The award is only given to outstanding trainers and tutors, and Mr Wilson said: "It's an honour to be recognised in this way for something I do every day as my job."

"I really enjoy making my lessons as interactive and engaging as possible and the fact that this important career path is being highlighted can only be a good thing. It's a dirty job, but somebody's got to do it."



Spick and span: Stuart Wilson in his lab

CAMPUS ROUND-UP *with Samantha King***First ever all-wheelchair production of Chicago is a new spin**FEATURED
CAMPUS
ROUND-UP

A college's musical theatre department will put on a unique version of Chicago in order to raise awareness of disability in the arts. Samantha King reports.

Inspired by Kieron Hoult, a 17-year-old musical theatre student and wheelchair user, staff and students at Stratford-upon-Avon College wanted to give the classic musical a twist by putting the whole cast in wheelchairs.

Dubbed Chaircago, the department hopes the performance will show youngsters with mobility issues that they can still pursue a career in musical theatre.

Kieron is the first ever wheelchair user to enrol on the college's musical theatre course – after being turned away by a number of other institutions – and this is the first time wheelchairs have been incorporated into one of its productions.

Alex Dengate, a lecturer in musical theatre, said: "Kieron originally auditioned at other colleges in the area and was simply turned away. He's got a great singing voice and he can act; his only restriction is his mobility. We thought we had to give him a crack at this."



Kieron has also taken on the job of movement director during rehearsals, teaching fellow performers how to turn, stop quickly and perform tricks like wheelies.

"A few years ago, I was told that I was unable to study GCSE drama when I was at school, so it's really important to me to prove

that this can be done and show that there is a key role for people with disabilities in the arts," he said.

"The rehearsal period has been challenging and we've had a few on-stage collisions, as the other performers are still getting used to moving in wheelchairs."

The production has received sponsorship from the Red Cross, which is lending the college 22 wheelchairs for performers to use,

and representatives from the charity were in attendance at the show's opening night.

Nadia Jambawai, mobility aid coordinator at the charity, said: "Until people experience an injury that affects their mobility, they just don't realise how challenging it can be. The students should be applauded for their wish to raise awareness in such a positive way."

Mr Dengate is keen that other people with mobility issues are not deterred from studying musical theatre at the college in the future.

"I hope other wheelchair users in our catchment and community area see this and think we can do this, other than thinking their options are restricted," he said.

"It was really heartwarming to see Kieron engage. Normally he's used to being the only guy in the room in a wheelchair, but now when he comes to college you don't even spot him, because everyone's

in a wheelchair."

The show ran for two days, on March 22 and 23.

Do you want to be in Campus Round-up?

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& MOVERS SHAKERS

Your weekly guide to who's new and who's leaving

Malcolm Goodwin has been appointed the new principal of Capel Manor College in Enfield, London.

Mr Goodwin has worked at the college since 2013, first joining as an assistant principal before becoming vice-principal and deputy over the course of four years.

He will succeed current principal Dr Stephen Dowbiggin – who has worked at the college for 35 years – after his retirement in July this year.

Mr Goodwin says he is most looking forward to "supporting London's need for land based skills" in his new role at the college, which specialises in land-based courses such as countryside, garden design, leatherwork and floristry.

Speaking of his appointment, he said "Capel Manor is a unique and special college that provides opportunities for the young and not-so young alike to get into the land-based industries. The college plays a vital role in the green agenda for London.

"The college is in a very good position with an excellent staff team and strong

support from the land-based sector. It's a very exciting time to be taking the helm."

Jackie Grubb has been appointed principal of the new National College for High

Speed Rail, which will open in September.

The college, which is spread across two campuses in Birmingham and Doncaster, will train learners in everything from rolling stock and track systems to civil engineering and communications, in preparation for the country's future in high-speed rail.

In her role as principal, Ms Grubb – who has more than 30 years of experience working in further education – will oversee the around 1,300 learners annually.

She takes up the principalship from her position as deputy principal at Basingstoke college of technology, and before she this

held a variety of senior roles, including being director of Swindon College.

She said she was most "looking forward to building a new, diverse workforce for the rail sector", and hopes to continue to grow the network of employers working with the college in order to "produce the talented young people they need".

She continued: "With the college gearing up to launch this September and produce a new generation of skilled professionals who will lead Britain's rail industry, this is a great time to join the team".

Di Gowland has announced she will be retiring from her role as principal and chief executive officer of the Newham College Group.

She first joined the college in July 2014, and has since lead it through a successful Ofsted inspection, as well as improving the organisation's financial situation.

She says it was a difficult decision to "retire from such a brilliant college", and thanked staff for their help and support in contributing the success of the Newham college group throughout her tenure.

She will be replaced by Paul Stephen, who for the past six years has been responsible for dealing with the estate and finances of both City and Islington College and Westminster Kingsway College, alongside supporting curriculum expansion.

He will take over the role when Ms Gowland steps down at the end of the academic year.



MALCOLM GOODWIN



JACKIE GRUBB



DI GOWLAND

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FE Week Sudoku challenge

How to play: Fill in all blank squares making sure that each row, column and 3 by 3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9

	8	9	1		2	4		6
		6	9					2
					5	7		9
	2							
		1	8		9	2		
							4	
6		7	2					
2					1	5		
8		5	3		4	9	2	

Difficulty:
EASY

7				3		2		
	8	9						1
2			5	7				4
9		8			5			
			2		3			
			7			1		3
8	4			6	2			9
1						6	3	
	9			5				2

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Solutions:
Next edition

Last Week's solutions

8	4	7	6	5	9	2	1	3
9	3	1	2	7	4	6	8	5
2	5	6	1	3	8	4	7	9
6	2	8	4	9	7	3	5	1
4	7	9	5	1	3	8	6	2
5	1	3	8	2	6	9	4	7
7	8	2	3	6	5	1	9	4
1	9	4	7	8	2	5	3	6
3	6	5	9	4	1	7	2	8

Difficulty:
EASY

2	3	8	7	5	6	4	1	9
6	7	9	4	1	2	8	5	3
1	5	4	8	3	9	7	6	2
7	9	6	2	8	5	3	4	1
3	4	5	9	7	1	2	8	6
8	2	1	3	6	4	9	7	5
9	6	2	1	4	7	5	3	8
4	1	3	5	2	8	6	9	7
5	8	7	6	9	3	1	2	4

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

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Spot five differences. **First correct entry wins an FE Week mug.**
Email your name and picture of your completed spot the difference to: news@feweek.co.uk.
Last Edition's winner: Karl Bentley, RSM