



FEWEEK

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EDITION 258



A sector in unity: coverage from the Colleges Week march

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£50K TO JOIN ESFA 'TOP-QUALITY' APPRENTICESHIP REGISTER

- Broker selling access to government's provider register as 'better than waiting' for application window to open
- Providers on the register with no or little delivery accused of 'trying to cash in' with ownership change

Exclusive

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CORRECTIONS

The 'Have hopes for the new national colleges been derailed?' article in edition 257 of *FE Week* erroneously stated that the National College for Digital Skills, known as Ada, is projected to have an 'inadequate' financial health rating in 2018/19. A spokesperson for the colleges has clarified that this was a projection from July that has since been revised upwards, and it is expected to break even for the year.

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Jeremy Corbyn joins colleges in mass demo over funding

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Thousands of learners, staff and leaders marched on parliament on Wednesday in “the most amazing show by colleges ever” to demand fairer funding, as the centrepiece of Colleges Week.

The march for FE, organised by the University and College Union in partnership with the Association of Colleges, was followed by a packed rally in Parliament Square during which Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn declared his support for colleges and their “pathway to liberation”.

“It’s the most amazing show by colleges ever,” said David Hughes, the AoC’s chief executive, as he addressed the crowd.

“We’re here to really shout out about how proud we are about what colleges can achieve, and we are making a noise in parliament; we are sending a message to government,” he said.

“We’re not after handouts. We’re after investment.”

“I support this demonstration because college education is very, very important,” Mr Corbyn said.

“It’s the pathway to liberation for many of our young people. It’s the pathway for older people to discover

new things about themselves, new subjects, new opportunities and indeed a career change if that’s what they want.”

Earlier, shadow education secretary Angela Rayner said she was “so sorry that this current government doesn’t value the work that you do”.

Representatives from at least 30 colleges across the country were understood to have taken part in Wednesday’s march in the heart of the capital.

Numbering in their thousands, the protestors headed through Trafalgar Square and down Whitehall, cheering, chanting and bearing placards demanding more funding for colleges.

There were large contingents from Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College and New City College, both of which closed their campuses to allow staff and students to take part.

Gerry McDonald, group principal of New City College, told FE Week its four campuses in Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Redbridge and Epping Forest were closed “to get as many people as possible, to really get the message across that FE has got to have its funding sorted out for the long-term future of the country”.

Karen Redhead, principal of EHWLC, said her leadership team had “taken the decision to close so that students and staff can take part in this very positive



lobby that celebrates everything that IS fantastic about FE colleges”.

A group from Leeds City College had spent six hours on a coach to be at Wednesday’s march.

Among them was Ivola Dombay, a GCSE English teacher at the college, who said she was motivated by funding cuts that meant she was teaching overcrowded classes.

Throughout the week, colleges across the country have put on their own events, “inviting the local community to celebrate the impact that colleges have”, an AoC spokesperson said.

FE Week has produced a special supplement to celebrate Colleges Week, which has been published alongside this week’s edition.

DfE launches digital skills consultation

The Department for Education has launched a consultation on the new national standards for digital skills, including plans for new qualifications at two levels.

It sets out the government’s plans to overhaul the current national standards, which set out core digital skills, as well as improving basic digital skills with qualifications at

‘beginner’ and ‘essential’ levels.

All adults without basic digital skills will be able to enrol on the new qualifications free of charge from 2020.

Funding for the courses will come from the existing £1.5 billion annual adult education budget.

The consultation will run until January 10, 2019.

Milton finally meets IfA apprentice panel

The skills minister met with the Institute for Apprenticeships’ panel of apprentices for the first time this week, a year and a half after it was established.

Anne Milton met 13 members of the 21-strong panel during a special meeting at the Houses of Parliament where she consulted them on the “challenges” they have

experienced with their training programmes.

She asked them to feed back regularly on their experiences with employers and training providers, and wider issues with reforms.

“Their input into how we run the apprenticeship programme is invaluable,” Ms Milton said after meeting the panel.

T-level 2020 training provider changes

Three schools will no longer deliver the first wave of T-levels after one received a low grade from Ofsted and two others “decided not to” take part.

But Suffolk New College has been added to the list of those delivering the technical qualifications from 2020, after the government went back out to find providers when

the construction pathway changed from “building” to “design”.

The three schools are the Archbishop Holgate’s School in York, the George Abbot School in Surrey and Bordesley Green Girls’ School in Birmingham.

Ofsted rated Bordesley Green grade three in July. T-level providers need to be at least grade two.

ESFA to pay 3aaa staff to help with apprentice transfer

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Exclusive

The government has agreed to pay the wages of around 40 staff from Aspire Achieve Advance until the end of the month, even though the company ceased trading last week.

Nearly 500 people lost their jobs on October 11 as the provider, better known as 3aaa, had its funding withdrawn by the Education and Skills Funding Agency following a second investigation, the findings of which have now been passed on to the police.

The company’s website says it has now “ceased trading”, but questions have been raised over whether or not the provider has actually gone into administration. FE Week has so far been unable to confirm if any administrators have, in fact, been called in.

Regardless of 3aaa’s status, the ESFA is now tasked with finding new training

providers for around 4,500 affected apprentices – but it has drafted in some unexpected help for the mammoth task.

Special treatment is being offered to around 40 members of 3aaa’s staff who have been asked to stay on, with salaries paid for by the ESFA until the end of October to move the learners on.

A spokesperson for the agency confirmed this and said the decision was made to ensure the apprentices are transferred to the right providers with a smooth transition.

FE Week understands this is the first time the ESFA has made such an arrangement – to keep paying the now-out-of-work staff after withdrawing their provider’s skills contracts.

It is retaining at least one staff member in each of 3aaa’s “academies” spread across the country.

In addition, it is understood that one of 3aaa’s top senior leaders, Anthony Bromirski, the company’s director of operations since 2013, is also being paid until the end of October.

FE Week approached him for

comment but he did not respond.

The decision to keep on 3aaa staff to help with the transfer of apprentices may well have been affected by the ESFA’s past experience of carrying out such a strenuous task.

Another of the largest apprenticeship providers in England, First4Skills, called in the administrators after the agency terminated its contract in March 2017.

The provider, which held an annual £15 million apprenticeship allocation, had around 6,500 apprentices, all of whom needed to be found new training companies.

When asked by FE Week if the ESFA was keeping on the 3aaa staff because it doesn’t have enough resources, a spokesperson denied this was the case.

3aaa received over £31 million in government funding last year and had the largest allocation for non-levy apprenticeships – at nearly £22 million.

The government launched a second investigation into the company earlier this year following claims by a whistle-blower that prompted Ofsted



to declare its inspection of the formerly “outstanding” 3aaa in June “incomplete”.

The first ESFA investigation, carried out by KPMG in 2016, found dozens of success rate “overclaims”.

Following a meeting with the ESFA on October 10 this month, the agency decided not to provide any more public money to the company and withdrew its contracts.

The findings of the new investigation, which have so far not been shared, have been passed on to the police through Action Fraud.

In an email to customers last week,

3aaa managing director Richard Irons said any “historic data issues or previous investigations into the business” are “categorically not part of our current dialogue with the ESFA and precede new management”.

3aaa’s co-founders, Peter Marples and Di McEvoy-Robinson, resigned last month and have been uncontactable ever since, despite this newspaper’s numerous attempts to elicit comment.

Mr Marples took down his LinkedIn and Facebook pages last week. He then resigned from his position as chair of the Spencer Academies Trust.

DfE figures shoot down claims of ‘incredible’ destinations for UTC pupils

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New government data has undermined boasts about university technical colleges’ “excellent destinations”, and shows the level of NEET leavers to be eight times higher than is claimed.

The Baker Dearing Educational Trust, which backs UTCs, has repeatedly claimed that just one per cent of 18-year-olds leaving the 14 to 19 technical institutions were not in employment, education or training (NEET).

However, according to the latest destinations data published by the Department for Education this week, that figure is actually eight per cent.

Despite this difference, a spokesperson for the trust insisted that its claims were “absolutely not” misleading.

“We calculate the data differently, and we’ve always been very open about this,” he said.

The trust’s data is based on information from each UTC about their students’ immediate destinations after finishing their studies, whereas

the DfE’s data looks at sustained destinations, he said.

“The only time that we can capture this data is when the students are leaving. What we can’t do is follow those students over the next six months and see where they go, and whether they sustain that destination,” the spokesperson explained.

“We are looking to change that we want to become more consistent with the current approach adopted by the DfE.”

Nonetheless, he said the trust’s data was “about as accurate as it can be, at the time of publishing it”.

Speaking to *FE Week* in May, Lord Baker described UTCs’ destination data as “incredible”.

“Last year we had 2,000 leavers and only 23 NEETs. That is an unemployment rate of one per cent whereas nationally it is 12.2 per cent,” he said.

And Charles Parker, the chief executive of Baker Dearing, said in July that the 14 to 19 technical institutions’ destinations were “the best of all schools in the country”.

The claims are featured on a flyer published on the Baker Dearing Trust’s

website, which boasted that 97 per cent of UTC leavers at the age of 18 either continued in education or started an apprenticeship or job.

However, these are the Baker Dearing Trust’s own figures, not government data.

A footnote on the flyer said that the information was based on “data collected in September and October 2017 from year 13 students who left 33 UTCs in July 2017. 14 students were uncontactable and are not included in the breakdown of destinations”.

In contrast, the DfE’s figures are based on learners who completed sixth form in 2015/16, and measure destinations in 2016/17.

A total of 1,315 learners across 28 UTCs were included in the data, of whom 88 per cent had a sustained education or employment destination and eight per cent didn’t.

“Sustained” is defined as in education or training, including apprenticeships, for the six-month period from October 2016 to March 2017, or in employment for at least five of those six months.

“Destination not sustained” includes learners who participated in



Lord Baker

some form of education, training or employment over the year but not for long enough to count as sustained, and those recorded as NEET or claiming out-of-work benefits.

A further four per cent of leavers were recorded as “data not captured”. This included learners with a national insurance number but no recorded education, employment or training participation, or any record of any benefit claims, as well as learners

without a NI number.

The average for positive sustained destinations across all state-funded schools and colleges for the year was 89 per cent, while for “destination not sustained” the average was eight per cent.

For FE colleges the figures were 86 per cent positive, and 10 per cent not sustained, while sixth-form colleges had 90 per cent positive and seven per cent not sustained.

£50K to join ESFA apprenticeship register

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From front Exclusive

Concerns have been raised about a loophole in the government’s apprenticeships register after a broker advertised how companies can buy their way on to it.

FE Week discovered the apparent short cut on Wednesday when Yorkshire-based Education & Skills Consultancy put out an advert to sell a provider for between £50,000 and £60,000.

Its heading reads: “Great chance to purchase a provider on the RoATP & RoTO. Better than waiting for the window to open!”

The purchase is likely to be the same as buying an off-the-shelf company with no staff or assets, and its value would simply have been derived from successfully applying to the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers.

Mark Dawe, the boss of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, is troubled by the loophole but blamed the Education and Skills Funding Agency for its delay in

reopening the register for creating this buying and selling market.

“In its zeal to open up the apprenticeship market, the government played far too loose with the requirements to get on to the register, to the extent that over 700 providers on it aren’t delivering and we’re seeing opportunistic examples like this of trying to cash in,” he said.

“The forthcoming register refresh should close the loopholes and in the meantime ESFA has to maximise the use of its existing powers to terminate agreements where abuses are taking place.”

The Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers has been closed ever since the government shut it for review in October 2017, even though it was originally meant to open every quarter.

The government states that organisations listed on the register have been through an application process that “considers due diligence, capability, quality and financial health to assess their capability to deliver high-quality apprenticeship training”.

FE Week has however reported extensively on the problems with the application process, and discovered, for example, one-man bands with no

delivery experience being given access to millions of pounds of apprenticeships funding.

The register was meant to finally reopen last month with a more robust application process but there is still no sign of it. The ESFA remained tight-lipped when *FE Week* asked for an update this week.

It is this delay in reopening the register that has “created this sort of market where smaller providers who aren’t doing much delivery can be sold off”, according to James Hart, the managing director of Education & Skills Consultancy.

“I would much prefer an open and transparent system where it is more regular for providers to get on there,” he told *FE Week*.

Mr Hart said selling providers on the register to companies that are not does not break any ESFA rules.

He added that providers must notify the ESFA when there is a change in ownership, at which point it is up to the agency to carry out due diligence on the people taking it over.

The Education and Skills Consultancy advert states: “A great and simple opportunity to purchase a training provider listed as a main provider on

the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers and on the Register of Training Organisations.

“Awarding bodies already in place.

“Offers in the region of £50,000 to £60,000.”

The value of this provider is bound to only go up the longer RoATP stays shut.

Mr Hart claimed to have received over 30 enquiries just 24 hours after putting the advert out.

FE Week asked how much the cut would be that his firm would take for handling such a deal, but he refused to say.

He did however describe their role as “very much like an estate agent”.

A Department for Education spokesperson said: “The ESFA hold an apprenticeship agreement with training providers. In the agreement it is clear

that they have a requirement to notify the ESFA if there is a change of provider.

“If providers do not do this then the ESFA may terminate an agreement.”

When the register was first launched the DfE described those listed as “top-quality” and the then skills minister, Robert Halfon, said: “We are giving employers the confidence to do business with high-quality training providers.”

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News

Six struggling college leaders quit with immediate effect in just three weeks

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The bosses of six of the country's largest colleges have all stepped down with immediate effect in the last three weeks following a mix of financial and quality warnings.

Terry Jones became the latest to resign on Thursday when he agreed with the Peterborough Regional College board that a "different skill set is now required".

His decision was made a year after the college was hit with a 'requires improvement' verdict from Ofsted, which heavily criticised leaders for allowing achievement rates to fall.

On Monday, the RNN Group's chief executive John Connolly left after a year in which the group planned for a loss of over £1 million.

And Maria Thompson stepped down

from Havering College at the end of September, four months after the college was hit with a financial notice to improve.

They all followed three other principals out the door, starting with Andrew Cleaves on September 25.

The leader of Birmingham Metropolitan College, who earned a massive £266,000 in 2016/17, making him one of the highest paid principals in the country, stepped down after the college was rated 'requires improvement' for the second time in a row by Ofsted last year.

He was followed by Dame Asha Khemka, another highly paid principal, who resigned from West Notts at the beginning of October when the ESFA hit her college with a financial notice to improve after it requested a £2.1 million government loan.

FE Week subsequently revealed that the exceptional financial support was asked for just 48 hours before it was due to run out of cash.

And last week, Joe Docherty quit as chief executive of the NCG group.

His decision followed a turbulent year for the country's largest college group, which was been rated 'requires improvement' by Ofsted, seen its achievement rates fall, made mass redundancies, and suffered with staff strikes.

Colleges with financial warnings and 'requires improvement' ratings from Ofsted are in scope for FE Commissioner intervention.

Julian Gravatt, deputy chief executive of the Association of Colleges, offered to shed some light on what could have caused the sudden flurry of high-profile resignations.

"Colleges are held to high standards while lacking the funding they need to meet student demand," he told FE Week.

"A college leader can make a real difference to success. It's often a shame when a leader resigns but what really matters is that colleges – and everyone who works in them – have the tools to do the job they need to do for their students and communities."

Mr Jones had been in charge of Peterborough Regional College since

July 2015 and although he resigned as its principal, he will stay on as the college's chief executive until the end of the year.

In Ofsted's grade three report for the college, published in July 2017, inspectors said governors have been "slow to challenge leaders to reverse the sharp decline in achievement for learners and apprentices".

Its apprenticeship achievement rates sat at 68.6 per cent in 2014/15 but fell to 59.8 per cent a year later, and fell again to 59.2 per cent in 2016/17.

Mr Connolly left the RNN Group as it was expecting to face a loss of £1.3 million.

Board minutes from March 2018 state: "An initial draft budget was presented, indicating a loss of £1.3million for 2018-19, before any measures to offset income reduction.

"Income had declined by £281,000 compared to the original budget, mainly due to a reduction in 16-18 numbers, a shortfall in apprenticeships, and lower than expected HE enrolments."

Although the RNN Group has been rated 'good' by Ofsted since an

inspection in 2013, an early monitoring visit carried out in February warned it was making 'insufficient progress' in managing subcontracted provision effectively.

Ms Thompson stepped down from the troubled Havering College at the end of September, four months after the college was hit with a financial notice to improve and at the same time as a federation agreement ahead of a planned merger took effect.

A spokesperson claimed Ms Thompson had "made the decision to retire" after 17 years at the college, six of which were as principal.

But she denied that it was connected to the college's financial troubles.

The college's financial health was rated "inadequate" by the ESFA in May. Its published accounts for 2016/17 revealed it to have had a £3 million operating deficit for the year.

Havering College is set to merge with New City College and Havering Sixth Form College from April next year, and a federation agreement ahead of the merger took effect from October 1.



John Connolly



Maria Thompson



Terry Jones



Andrew Cleaves



Dame Asha Khemka



Joe Docherty

Milton builds FAB bridges towards T-level reforms

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The skills minister declared herself to be “pleased and excited” to be at the Federation of Awarding Bodies annual conference, as she made good on the government’s promise to reset its relationship with the federation following its aborted legal challenge this summer.

Speaking on the first day of the event, held in Leicester on October 18 and 19, Anne Milton made clear that she planned to work together with awarding organisations to implement the government’s reforms.

“For T-levels to be a success we need to get to a whole new level of teamwork. We need partnership across the entire system,” she said.

Partnership, Ms Milton explained, meant “you being with us every step of the way”.

“It means that we want to listen and learn from you. It means that we

want to draw on the huge amount of experience that you have behind you.”

The skills minister also referred to the controversial tender process for the qualifications, that will see just one awarding body selected to deliver each one.

In July this year FAB threatened legal action against the government’s proposals for the new qualifications, on the grounds that the timescales were irrational, there was a lack of proper engagement on the single-provider model and they would have a disproportionate effect on the sector.

However, these plans were dropped in early August after the Department for Education watered down a number of its plans and offered to reset its relationship with awarding bodies.

The closing date for bids in the tender is October 26, and Ms Milton said she had “no doubt we’ll get some really strong bids because this is a chance to be at the forefront of some really groundbreaking and lasting changes”.



With 22 T-levels yet to launch, she said it “would be really great to see bids from all parts of the sector, including awarding bodies pooling their expertise in consortia”.

Ms Milton had opened her speech by saying she was “particularly pleased to be able to use one of the best acronyms in the business” and declared “you are fabulous”.

She closed her speech by expressing her gratitude for being invited to speak at the event.

“I look forward to continuing to work together, making sure we get all our changes right,” she said.

Ms Milton’s remarks about T-levels followed a plea from FAB chair Paul Eeles during his speech immediately before the skills minister took to the stage.

He said the federation supported the “principle of T-levels as part of a holistic approach to technical-education reform”.

But he said the organisation “would

like to see a more proactive approach to encourage consortia bids from our members so that we avoid the single point of failure problem, of awarding just a single licence per T-Level pathway”.

Mr Eeles said he believed “we can positively reset our relationship with government, despite the recent challenges”, and that he was “looking forward” to working more closely with government “to make the technical education reforms a real success”.

Campus sale near Grenfell tower ‘shameful’, says new college principal following investigation

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A college that sold its main campus to make way for housing has apologised for the “shameful behaviours of past management” following an independent review into the controversial sell-off.

The site on Wornington Road, one of Kensington and Chelsea College’s two main campuses, was sold for £25.3 million to the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea in 2016 under a lease-back deal.

The local authority then outlined proposals to demolish the building for housing, which became controversial when a fire at nearby Grenfell Tower in June last year killed at least 72 people.

The Save Wornington College campaign attracted huge support to oppose the sale, and was led by Edward Daffarn, who escaped the blaze.

Now, an independent review conducted by investigative consultancy firm Kroll has concluded



that the sale was “plainly wrong” and not in the interests of its local community.

The report catalogues the failure of management and governance in several areas, including a lack of consultation with the local community in the period before the sale, and failure to consider and evaluate alternatives to a sale to RBKC.

It also highlights shortcomings in determining the final sale price of the Wornington Road site, and the

“excluding” of college student and staff governors before the final decision to sell the college to RBKC.

Negotiations with RBKC are now underway to “determine how the Wornington Road site should serve its local community into the long term”.

Kensington and Chelsea College’s new principal, Andy Cole, took the reins in February this year from Dr Elaine McMahon, who served as the college’s interim principal when Mark Brickley – the man responsible for the

sale – resigned with immediate effect in 2016.

“The report highlights shameful behaviours of past management in excluding staff, students and the local community from its discussions and decision-making over the sale,” Mr Cole said.

“There has been a complete break with the past across the last year at executive leadership as well as board level, and we are in negotiations with RBKC to determine how the Wornington Road site will serve the needs of its communities into the long term.”

Kensington and Chelsea College’s interim chair, Ian Valvona, who replaced Mary Curnock Cook when she resigned last year, said: “The sale of the college’s Wornington Road site was plainly the wrong thing to do – even when you consider the college’s very difficult financial situation in 2016.

“Today the College apologises for that sale and I want to recognise the role of the local community and the Save Wornington College campaign for

helping to ensure that the full details of this sale finally saw the light of day.”

The sale of the Wornington site was led by Mr Brickley in the face of falling income. In 2012 the college’s income sat at £27.5 million, but it fell to just £9.25 million in 2016.

But what outraged the community was not only the sale but the way in which it was signed off.

Kroll’s report notes that on April 22, 2016, Mr Brickley “sent an email to the K&CC board of governors stating that the terms of the agreement ‘... now ensure we have the right of first refusal to any space within the future development that is provided as schedule D1 (educational or community use)’.

“The email did not state that K&CC in actuality had no control to compel RBKC to develop a D1 facility as part of a future development.

“The email was not copied to staff/student governors who had been excluded from the main board of governors’ meetings that discussed the sale of the Kensington Centre to RBKC.”

Verena Beane, a retired KCC employee and leading Save Wornington College campaigner, said the report “vindicates the Grenfell Action Group blogs and claims made by the campaign since 2016”.

The group is now working with RBKC to decide how best to use the site.

Data maps out apprenticeship outcomes – and a gender pay gap

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS
PIPPA@FEWEEK.CO.UK

New FE destinations-and-earnings data has revealed which type of apprentices are most likely to be earning the big bucks, but also shone a light on a shocking gender pay gap.

Figures released by the Department for Education on Thursday showed the outcomes of 1.1 million learners who completed an FE course between 2013-14 and 2015-16, and the earnings of those who studied between 2010-11 and 2015-16.

It found that those taking a higher apprenticeship course (level four) earned on average £17,400 one year after study, but this grew by a whopping 53 per cent to hit £26,700 five years after study.

In contrast, learners on an intermediate apprenticeship course were more likely to start off on £13,500, rising 33 per cent to £17,900 in five years.

However, there was a clear divide between the earnings of men and women. On level six skills courses, women began their careers on £23,000 while men earned a starting salary of £38,400. Five years after, this gap rises even further, with women on £24,600 and men on £42,700.

This is only the second time the DfE has published such longitudinal outcomes data, after the Small Business, Employment and Enterprise Act 2015 allowed for the sharing of data between the DfE and HMRC.

Destination data was previously only based on information from educational institutions and local authorities. However, the longitudinal outcomes data for FE also takes into account tax and benefits records, and produced much improved progress results for FE colleges.

The latest statistics, released on Thursday, also showed that most FE learners went on to sustained employment after finishing their courses.

Sustained employment, which is classed as being in paid employment or self-employment for five of the six months between October and March in the year after the course finished, was the destination for 65 per cent of learners.

College in financial trouble likely to have IoT bid dropped

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS
PIPPA@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Exclusive

A cash-strapped college's bid to open an Institute of Technology is in severe jeopardy after the ESFA assessed its finances as "inadequate"

North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College's was hit with a financial notice to improve this week.

The notice warned the college's financial situation was insufficient following a review of the financial plan it submitted to the Education and Skills Funding Agency in July.

The college has now been referred to the FE Commissioner for an independent assessment.

The ramifications of "inadequate" finances are likely to be severe. The college is, for instance, likely to have its bid to open an IoT dropped even though it made it to the final stage of the government's competition.

In a statement, North Warwickshire

and South Leicestershire College principal Marion Plant said the college is "committed" to the IoT bidding process, having proceeded to the second round, and insisted that "all aspects" of the bid will be taken into account.

A spokesperson for the Department for Education said all applicants seeking to secure IoT status "will be judged on a number of criteria".

However, he added: "One of the criteria they will be judged on is their financial health and credibility."

Ms Plant said the college was "operating in a challenging financial climate exacerbated by a decline in funding over successive



Marion Plant OBE

years.

"It is inevitable that a sector that has suffered a 30 per cent decline in funding over the last decade will be tested at times, but we are confident that we are in a strong position to meet our objectives and financial obligations."

She added that the college's financial position was being "robustly managed" and the college had seen "very strong recruitment" of 16-19 learners this year, after a fall in apprenticeship numbers and delivering £1 million of unfunded teaching last year.

The college was created out of a merger between North Warwickshire and Hinckley College and South Leicestershire College in August 2016. Before they merged, the former FE commissioner, Sir David Collins, urged the two colleges to fix their recurring deficits.

But according to the ESFA's college accounts, the merged college owed £2.5 million in exceptional financial

support in 2016-17. The college's own accounts for 2016-17 show outstanding loans totalling £14.2 million: three with Lloyds Bank, two with the Royal Bank of Scotland and another with the DfE.

Board minutes from July 2018 warned that "the cash position which had previously been stated as £3 million was now £1 million due to the need to absorb the drop in income", and said the college's financial health grade for 2018-19 would be "inadequate", moving to "satisfactory" in 2019-20 and "good" in 2020-21.

The college is hoping to bring in some income from the sale of the former premises of the Midland Studio College in Hinckley, which closed in 2016, but the sale has not yet been concluded. It would not comment on how much this sale would make.

NWSL's minutes from July also state that the college's financial position does not "currently support a whole college pay award".

When asked if a pay award was actually given this year, the college declined to comment.

CITB fixes 'reverse subcontracting' deal with colleges

BILLY CAMDEN
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Exclusive

The Construction Industry Training Board has struck a new deal to work with colleges after concerns were raised that its "reverse subcontracting" proposal would have broken funding rules.

The updated contract for non-levy apprenticeships could still see colleges paying the CITB around £1,600 per learner – but this is about half of what was originally proposed.

In August the construction board tried to get colleges to enter "reverse subcontracting" arrangements where it would charge top-slices of at least 28 per cent, even though it would be the college that was the prime.

This came after the CITB failed to win a non-levy apprenticeships contract and was scratching around for ways to continue making money through the programmes.

But the Association of Colleges stepped in and said the deal would actually break government rules because the "services" being offered, such as recruitment and functional skills

checks on maths and English, "weren't eligible for funding".

The new deal is now compliant with the rules and "certainly is not a reverse subcontract", according to Teresa Frith, senior skills policy manager at the AoC.

"Rather than doing the service on a percentage of a contract, they are going to identify what they feel that service will cost to deliver and suggest that as a basis," she told FE Week.

On offer is a "split process". Part one is a fee for sign-up services, where the CITB will source the college an "oven-ready learner and employer", with paperwork filled out to the point where the college can take control.

FE Week understands the cost of this will be £700.

The second service on offer is a fee for site visits.

"This is where they [CITB] undertakes the liaison with the employer and follows the apprentice around from site to site, then feeds back to the college to let them know how the on-the-job training is matching the 20 per cent off the job, and so on," Ms Frith said.

FE Week has been informed that for a two-year apprenticeship programme the CITB is stating a minimum of six visits – four site and two college – should



be carried out at £150 each.

Over the two years, if six site visits are carried out the college would pay £900.

It is, however, down to each different college to negotiate how many site visits a learner will have during their programme.

Colleges that opt to use both services can expect to pay around £1,600 per learner.

"The AoC and CITB have been working together on arrangements for non-apprenticeship levy-paying employers," said Gillian Cain, head of apprenticeships at CITB.

"We are pleased that we have now reached a positive agreement, which we believe represents good value for all parties and complies with funding rules.

"CITB will support colleges to ensure that learners can achieve their skills objectives during their apprenticeship programme. Colleges can choose to receive this support from CITB and

would pay a fee for these services, but are under no obligation to do so."

Before the levy, the CITB would use its apprenticeships contract as a prime and subcontract the training out to colleges. Following its failure in the government's non-levy procurement, the CITB wanted colleges to agree to a "reversal of our contracts".

In this scheme, colleges would have been the prime but would have paid a huge management fee, believed to range from 28 to 36 per cent, like a subcontractor, for which the CITB would have given access to construction employers and provided other services such as inductions and health and safety training.

It would have meant that for apprentices on the carpentry and joinery level-two standard, for example, the training provider would receive £12,000 government funding but have to give £3,360 or more of it to the CITB.

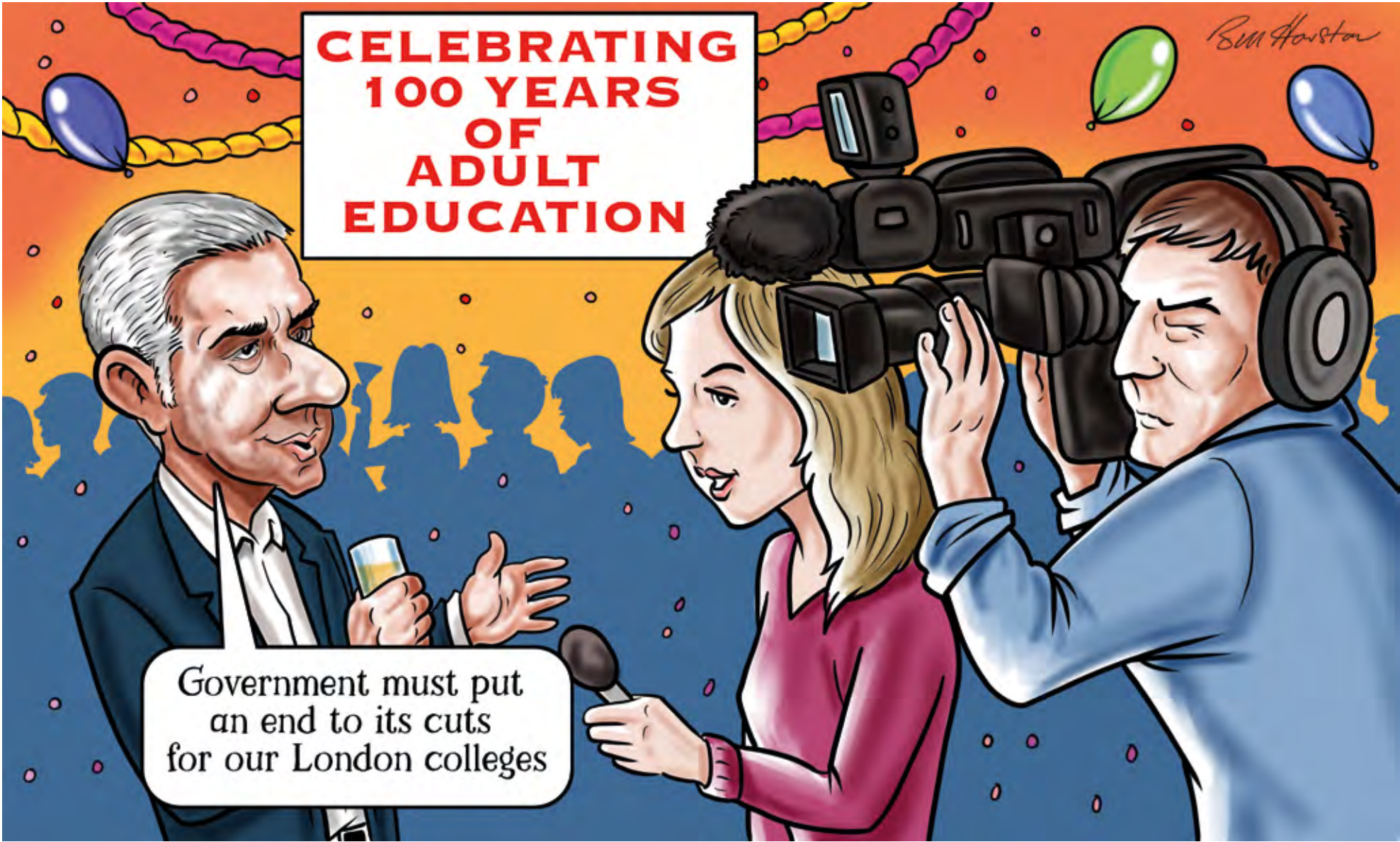
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Danny Metters,
Assistant Principal –
Bishop Burton College





Mayor of London plans party to celebrate AEB devolution

BILLY CAMDEN
BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Exclusive

London's mayor will host a party to celebrate taking control of the capital's adult education budget next year – where he'll lay out ambitions for making his skills system the "envy of the world".

From September 2019, the Greater London Authority will have its annual £311 million AEB devolved.

Mayor Sadiq Khan has big plans for how to control the fund, including shifting its payment model away from funding qualifications towards wider outcomes such as progression into work.

He's also hoping the government will later devolve further skills funding into his hands, including apprenticeships.

To kick devolution off Mr Khan

wants to hold a launch event to "set out London's vision for future skills".

The party will coincide with the centenary of adult education at the City Literary Institute in autumn 2019, according to minutes from the latest Skills for Londoners Board meeting, held on September 21.

"The event would celebrate the wider history of adult education in London and provide an opportunity for the board to set its vision for the future," the minutes state.

"It would also be used to mark the launch of the commencement of the AEB in London."

The event "presents a great opportunity to support and convene collaboration within the sector and support the mayor's priority for creating a more strategic city-wide approach to skills" and his "ambition for making London's skills system the envy of the world".

There are, however, questions over

whether the funding for the party will come from the capital's AEB revenue budget, which would take more money away from frontline learning.

"The project budget required to support delivery of this proposal is yet to be fully scoped out," the minutes state.

"It should be noted that while there is no specific budget provision for this initiative within the GLA budget, it is expected that officers will seek to contain any associated project costs within the existing revenue budgets available to the Development, Enterprise and Environment Directorate."

If this is not possible, a "growth bid will have to be submitted for consideration as part of the 2019-20 budget process currently underway".

FE Week asked the GLA if it was planning to use a chunk of the AEB to pay for the event, but the authority stayed tight-lipped other than to say:

"No funds [are] committed to this event, which is being organised by City Lit."

City Lit said it has asked Mr Khan to take part in its centenary celebrations, but is still waiting for his response. It would not comment on how the event would be paid for.

Mr Khan came under fire earlier this year when FE Week revealed his plan to top-slice over £3 million of the annual AEB to pay for an army of nearly 100 new bureaucrats to manage the fund.

It did however emerge last month that the idea of top-slicing from the budget was a recommendation from the Department for Education, after the GLA complained it needed extra cash to cover operational costs.

The SFL minutes also reveal that the GLA is proposing to follow the celebration event with an annual "skills summit", which would "provide an ongoing opportunity to share best practice and to promote collaboration

amongst networks".

"While members commented that these networks already existed on a more localised level, this could provide an opportunity to bring together representatives from across the sector each year to discuss the opportunities and challenges they face," the minutes said.

"While the proposals were welcomed, it was suggested that the skills summit be supplemented with smaller local events, in order to reach out to as much of the adult learning community as possible."

The GLA will be launching its tendering process to award £130 million of London's devolved AEB to independent training providers the week beginning October 22, 2018.

The remainder of the budget will be awarded in the form of grants to colleges and other institutions that currently receive AEB via a grant from the government.

Principal

Salary up to £120,000 plus benefits



Barnet and Southgate College is seeking to appoint a Principal, reporting to the newly appointed CEO and responsible for all elements of curriculum and quality, ultimately ensuring student satisfaction and success.

This is a new senior post and enables the post holder to have a clear focus and provide strategic leadership on all educational aspects of the College, ensuring delivery of our ambitious curriculum strategy. Working closely with the CEO to develop and grow the curriculum in line with the College's mission, vision and values, community needs, educational priorities and policy whilst embedding and further improving strong quality of provision.

The College has circa 14,000 students across further and higher education, strong partnership provision for aspects of adult learning and apprenticeship delivery, a turnover of £40M, strong financial health, and is graded "Good" by Ofsted providing the successful candidate with a strong base to work from. The College operates across five sites within Enfield and Barnet with good transport links, attracting learners from across London.

The successful candidate will be visionary, motivated and focussed with a demonstrable track record of successful leadership. They must be a strong advocate of education and skills with a commitment to ensuring the delivery of outstanding teaching and learning.

This is an exciting time for the College and provides an ideal opportunity for an experienced Principal or a strong deputy looking for their next career step. If you want to be part of leading the next part of our journey, we look forward to hearing from you.

Further information about the role and the College is available at www.barnetsouthgate.ac.uk/principal-vacancy-2018

If you would like an informal discussion about the role, please contact Diane Sage, PA to Principal and Chief Executive at diane.sage@barnetsouthgate.ac.uk

Closing date: 12 noon, 9th November 2018



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Closing date: 4 November 2018 (midnight)
Interview date: 14 November 2018

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Deputy Principal

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North West

SK College Group is a leading provider of education and training to over 12,000 students across the communities of Knowsley and St Helens and the wider Liverpool City Region. With an ambitious programme of development and world-class leading infrastructure, the Group is well placed to capitalise on today's changing educational landscape and are seeking a Deputy Principal to help lead this agenda.

Reporting to, and working collaboratively with, the Principal/Chief Executive, the Deputy Principal will focus on shaping the Group's curriculum and quality agendas in line with strategic objectives, whilst promoting innovative teaching and learning and class leading student support. You will take accountability for organisation-wide strategic initiatives and will thrive in a role where you can genuinely

influence and develop a culture of excellence.

The role requires an outstanding and innovative educational leader to support the Group's ambitions, demonstrating a total focus on performance, standards and student outcomes, whilst challenging existing practices and implementing new initiatives. Your collaborative leadership style will empower and inspire, as will your passion for positive change, to enable the college group to achieve outstanding status. Already a successful member of SLT, you will bring an impressive track record of success, gained within a leading FE institution with the ambition and drive required to enable the Group to move to the next level.

For more information regarding this role, and details of how to apply, please visit www.doddpartners.com/vacancies ref 2985. Should you wish to have a confidential discussion about the role, please call John Dodd on **0151 342 5244** or **07545 431 848**.
The closing date for applications is 9am 29th October 2018.



Tyro Training, Adult Learning, Projects and Subcontracting at Craven College

New job opportunities have arisen as a result of Craven College's ongoing investment in business and community development. Successful candidates will work with an energetic and innovative team to optimise delivery, prepare for new opportunities and ensure excellent service is delivered to all customers.

Business Development and Training Manager

To strategically lead and manage Tyro Training to include the development of strong links with employers and stakeholders and manage the delivery of appropriate training programmes.

Salary: £36,073pa plus £2,750 PRP, 37hrs per week

Subcontracting Manager

To strategically manage the College's Subcontracting of funded provision. Responsibility for supply chain management, monitoring progress and leading on quality assurance and risk assessment.

Salary: £14,861pa, 18.5hrs per week

Sales Team Leader

To co-ordinate the Sales Team at Tyro Skipton. You will lead on promotion of Tyro products and services, developing links with employers and identifying training needs.

Salary: £24,050 pa plus £1,500 PRP, 37hrs per week

Sales and Training Adviser

To open up and develop new sales opportunities and promote Tyro Training, turning leads into long-lasting business relationships with employers.

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Big Lottery Project Manager

To manage the ESF and Big Lottery Building Better Opportunities Projects: Action Towards Inclusion and Positive Progressions.

Salary: £25,021 - £26,678 pa, 37hrs per week



Temporary subject to funding until 30/09/19.

Adult Learning Co-ordinator

To manage the Adult Learning provision through the Adult Education Budget, Advanced Learning Loans (Education and Skills agency) and through commercial fees to ensure income and expenditure targets are met.

Salary: £25,021 - £26,678 pa, 37hrs per week

Community Outreach Worker

To co-ordinate community delivery and project activity, working with partners to achieve enrolment targets and incomes and developing funded and commercial activity.

Salary: £9,928 - £10,903 pa, 18.5hrs per week

Apprentice Business Administrative Assistant

To support Tyro in administration, supporting audit compliance, processing information, data and records and dealing with customers.

Salary: National Apprenticeship Rates

Closing date: Midday 24/10/18 Interviews w/c 29/10/18

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Deputy Principal, Curriculum and Quality Vice Principal, Finance and Resources

Attractive remuneration package
Swindon

New College Swindon is a highly successful College based in the heart of Swindon, one of the fastest growing towns in the UK. With over 10,000 learners, a 'Good' Ofsted outcome and strong finances, we are well placed to develop our offer beyond our highly successful 16-18 year-old A-level and vocational market and grow our provision to the communities of Swindon and beyond. With a new Principal and newly formed executive leadership team, this is an ideal opportunity to join the College and help us accelerate our journey to excellence.

New College is now seeking to appoint a Deputy Principal who will be responsible for a full review of our curriculum to meet the needs of a broader range of learners, partners and stakeholders. An experienced senior leader, you'll bring a sophisticated understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing Further Education colleges. You should have a proven track record as a strategic leader who can execute high quality curriculum innovation and delivery across the college.

The College is also looking to appoint a Vice Principal who will be responsible for leading corporate services as well as having responsibility for the finances of the College. An experienced senior leader, you will have a proven track record in financial strategy and leading teams through periods of development and

change. You do not have to have a background in further education but will need highly developed communication skills, an understanding of complex funding structures, a commercial outlook and be committed to the values of the College.

Both positions are part of the Executive Leadership team, and will play a crucial role in formulating the strategic direction of the College.

To find out more, please visit www.newcollegeswindonappointments.com
For an informal and confidential discussion, please contact our advising consultants at GatenbySanderson: Paul Aristides on 020 7426 3987 or Victoria Wakerley on 020 7426 3977.

Closing date is Monday 5 November 2018.



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illustration by Lucy Vigrass



Careers Event – Teaching Opportunities

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Reference: SEP20186543

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You will have a background in Care Professions such as; Care, Nursing, Health, Childcare. Digital Technologies such as; Computer Science, Cloud Computing, Cyber Security and Internet of Things (IoT) Digital & Technology. Business such as; Retail & Logistics, AAT, Customer service and Business Administration. We also welcome candidates with degrees in Higher Education across all subject areas to support within our Access to Higher Education courses.

We are holding an open event to give you the chance to learn more about working for Milton Keynes College and how you can be a part of the students learning experience. This will be a 2 hour event where you will hear more about each curriculum area, have the opportunity to have a tour around the campus and spend time networking with other attendees and staff from the college.

Event details: Friday 16th November 2018 to be held at our Chaffron Way Campus

For more information, please visit
<https://www.mkcollege.ac.uk/jobs/our-vacancies>

Closing date: Friday 2nd November 2018

Should this event be suitable for you we will go on to send further information nearer the date.



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EDITORIAL



ESFA overhaul of their register of apprenticeship training providers is more urgent than ever

It all seemed so sensible when the ESFA first announced at the FE Week Annual Apprenticeship Conference in March 2016 that they would be launching a Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers (RoATP).

Employers would be able to choose from a list of “high-quality” providers and everyone would have confidence that the annual £2bn of public money would be well spent in England.

Following an application process, the sector was left in shock in March 2017 to

discover the ESFA's claim of “top-quality” included the inclusion on RoATP of many newly incorporated companies with no trading history.

These companies on RoATP, many still with no apprenticeship delivery, can then be bought for around £50,000 as a way to gain access to public funding.

But, the problem is not so much with the ability to buy and sell companies on a government register.

The problem was created when the ESFA let companies onto the

register with no trading history and no filed accounts.

It was particularly easy to get on without a trading history because the ESFA was having to judge plans instead of track record, when it came to capacity, quality and finances.

In fact, perverse as it may sound, it would have been easier for the owners of an established provider with poor quality or financial issues to incorporate a new company and apply based on a fictional plan.

The ESFA has belatedly realised their RoATP

application process was deeply flawed, and the register has been closed to new applicants for a full year now.

But, as we expose this week, the longer it is closed the more value those on it may be able to extract in a sale.

So the ESFA must prioritise a complete overhaul of the register, urgently, starting with a reapplication process for everyone that has not had a satisfactory visit from Ofsted in the last five years - which will include those that have not started any

apprentices since May 2017.

Then the new application process needs to set the capacity, quality and finances bar far higher, with a process of due diligence commensurate with the ‘top quality’ claims.

This would put an end to the madness of someone simply setting up a company in name alone, so as to sell access to a government approved register.

Nick Linford, Editor
news@feweek.co.uk

Readers' reply



Ministers lobby for change in UTC admission age

Interesting in the context of our @EduPolicyInst research last week. We recommended moving to 16, partly on the basis of poor KS4 progress. Also, admission at age 11 would mean children are put on a particular pathway while they are still very young.

@DavidRObinsOn

Clearly none of the great and the good recall the old saying: “when you’re in a hole, stop digging”. UTCs have been a costly flop and they have no chance of success as 16-18 providers: the finances simply won’t work. Close them and give the assets to local FE providers to do something useful with.

Ironpyrite

Another boss of huge college group in financial trouble resigns with immediate effect

This further news regarding senior college leaders going, mainly due to financial issues,

demonstrates one of two things. Either there really is a major funding crisis in FE, or there is a serious financial leadership issue.

@tonyaas1

More Tory policy impact. Yes governance is an issue in all four but cuts are behind this pattern. They do pay them too much, mind, but that is another day's argument.

@properjob57

Revealed: How 3aaa spent £1.6m on sponsorship at sports clubs

A general review of marketing and sales spend across the sector is probably due - to set acceptable levels of spending on this activity. In an open market there needs to be some level of transparency and comparison across providers.

@GeekTalent

Absolutely appalled by this misdirection of public funds. £1.6 million could have

supported many of the smaller providers who fell short of the procurement (another absolute joke) when the government put minimum contract levels into force.

Obviously no lessons were learned from the LearnDirect fiasco. How are these places even deemed to have the financial health required to obtain contracts in the first place?

The words “one rule for one, one rule for the others” springs to mind.

Gaynor

3aaa co-founder embroiled in police probe resigns as chair of academy trust

I was an apprentice with 3aaa. I saw my assessor 3 days before the whole company was shut down and everyone lost their jobs. 3aaa haven't done anything to help so far except say “all the best”

Lauren North

REPLY OF THE WEEK

Ministers lobby for change in UTC admission age

We need to understand what the criteria are for Lord Baker to make his claim that UTCs are “some of the most successful schools in the country”.

The whole concept of a University Technical College that is in fact a school, is unsatisfactory, and many people I speak with just don’t understand the idea at all. Lord Baker has referred to needing a separate Ofsted type of inspection based on different criteria, including I believe a measure of “destinations”.

The “smoke and mirrors” continues and the latest news re the closure of UTC@harbourside in Newhaven needs clarification as to what went wrong and for some accountability at a high level.

Gerry

Experts

PROFESSOR
EWART KEEP

Director of SKOPE,
Oxford University



Opportunity knocks for providers
of non-university education

With the DfE taking a renewed interest in intermediate-level provision, FE needs to seize the moment, says Professor Ewart Keep

We are currently experiencing a surge of policy interest in the strange “missing middle gap” that exists in provision between level 3 and level 6 (university degrees) – witness the Department for Education’s level 4 and 5 review, and also some of the questions being posed by the government’s post-18 funding review. In the vast majority of OECD countries, this gap does not exist and sub-degree provision is extensive. Even in our close neighbour Scotland, sub-degree courses have remained a much larger component of post-compulsory activity than here; and policy has established a clear demarcation of roles, which leaves colleges dealing with sub-degree work and universities dealing with degrees and above.

Behind England’s renewed policy interest in this gap lies a sneaking

suspicion that we have put too many eggs in the full-time, three-year, full-honours university-degree basket, and ignored more cost-effective and appropriate alternatives. The current pause for reflection could provide an opportunity for English FE to develop new high-quality vocational progression pathways.

An important starting point is that until the recession of the early 1980s, we used to have a lot of this kind of provision – overseen by employers and aimed at their technician workforce. Alongside apprenticeships, large employers such as the BBC, the National Coal Board, British Steel, BP, ICI, PO telecoms, British Rail and the electricity boards all offered HND/HNC technician training via day or block release or night school.

Besides the more conventional full-time model of sub-degree courses, it is this part-time, employment-based model that we urgently need to think about reviving. This will require qualifications and course design/

curricula that meet genuine employer need for technicians and associate professional occupations, across a range of sectors, and which can deliver packages of learning that not only equip individuals for entry into an immediate job-role, but also act as the foundational platform for subsequent reskilling and upskilling. The on- and

group training associations), Catapult innovation centres, institutes of technology and awarding bodies.

This would not be an easy task, but there are three reasons why it would be worth the effort. First, such a development would complement T-levels, and provide a logical progression route for many students.

ageing technician workforce in some sectors, and the impact of technological change meaning that more and more adults will need to retrain and upskill, new learning opportunities to address these needs will be required. Current wisdom probably favours degrees, but the length and cost of such courses militates against their utility in this role. We need shorter, snappier, employment-oriented courses of the type found elsewhere across the developed world.

Finally, alongside T-levels, enlarging this area of provision would help boost the vocational nature and status of English FE. At present, the bulk of FE students are pursuing level 2 and below courses, and considerable amounts of provision are “second chance” in nature, often remediating the failures of secondary schooling. The lesson from abroad is clear: for FE to be seen as higher status, it needs to also include a strong and highly visible component of intermediate and technician-level provision.

“We need shorter, snappier,
employment-oriented courses”

off-the-job elements will need to be integrated into coherent packages of learning, with close cooperation between college and employer, along the lines promoted by the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning report. For provision to be effective, it should be based around a co-production model, not a provider/customer relationship, which means FE working in partnership with individual firms and employer groups (such as

When T-levels were first mooted, the talk was that they would be designed to lead to entry into work rather than subsequent study, but since then policy has been furiously back-peddalling because without the draw of a subsequent learning progression pathway, it has been realised that T-levels will not be sufficiently attractive to high-calibre students.

Second, given the labour-market impacts of Brexit, problems with an

SIMON
MARTIN

Executive consultant, Academy
Transformation Trust Further Education



Where on earth will all the
T-level teachers come from?

The ambitious plans for T-levels will surely fail unless more well-qualified staff can be attracted to the sector, warns Simon Martin

In September we saw FE representatives from across the sector almost unanimously voting that the timetable for T-level implementation was “reckless”, at the parliamentary debate staged by FE Week and Pearson. But even if the sector manages to pull off industry placements and the rushed tendering process, one problem will still seriously threaten T-level delivery – namely, the availability of sufficient numbers of well-qualified, experienced staff.

Department for Education papers and ministerial pronouncements have repeatedly described T-levels as “a skills revolution”, and most recently the education secretary Damian Hinds has extolled them as the “once-in-a-lifetime opportunity” to ensure the UK economy has the skilled workers it needs to compete globally.

Part of the wiring for this is the beefed up 900 hours per annum (1,800 over two years). Allowing for a top-end 60-day industry placement, that leaves 1,500 “classroom” hours, 25 per cent more than a 16-19 study programme top-funded at band 5 (around 1,200 hours over two years). Even with increased qualification funding to match, that higher level of contact time will place a strain on the teaching establishments of institutions both large and small, which are already struggling with recruitment alongside funding and finances, as recent headlines testify.

The DfE reported in February that the FE sector has a 20,000-teacher shortfall, which is most severe in priority subjects. The two most recent FE workforce data collections (the “staff individualised record data insights” produced by the Education and Training Foundation) chart a 3 per cent trend of annual workforce decline over several years, a shrinkage that is doubled among FE teachers. The

Teaching, leadership and governance in further education research report published earlier this year concluded, unsurprisingly, that FE teacher supply is a big problem, with growing fears for recruitment because reforms are “reshaping the skills that are required”, particularly in STEM subjects.

Skills and industry currency are also a problem. The latest FE workforce survey has identified that

the same way as schoolteachers, the recruitment landscape looks problematic.

The initial T-level pathways include childcare and education, digital and construction. Worryingly, the economic sectors with the greatest projected employee shortfalls by 2050 are: No. 1 – teachers (128,000); No. 2 – construction (66,800); No. 4 – engineers (36,800); and No. 5 – IT

development; for the construction route this rises to 60, with a further 30-plus in development. These supply-and-demand pressures will exacerbate the T-level teacher problem.

The ETF is pursuing a number of worthy initiatives through the workforce development strategy for technical education. These include Taking Teaching Further, Teach Too, SET for Teaching Success and Further Forces, among others. However, the central question of how to persuade highly skilled industry practitioners into FE teaching, with the disparity in potential and actual earnings between the sectors and pay constraints in FE, is yet to be addressed by the government. Mr Hinds has just announced a £38 million capital boost for schools and colleges in the first wave of T-levels, for “cutting-edge equipment and facilities”. This is all well and good, but unless some similar investment is made in the human estate for technical education, those state-of-the-art facilities and equipment may well be standing idle.

“T-level providers will compete
against industry for staff”

across the board “learner-facing technical staff” have increased by just 1 per cent. That will hardly supply the human resources required for a “skills revolution”. Moreover, the providers who offer T-levels will be competing against industry for the same highly skilled staff. Against a well-documented backdrop of low pay for FE teachers and the government’s refusal to fund pay increases in

(33,300).

Labour supply problems already exist at this “high end” of the sector. Recruitment and retention problems for end-point assessors for apprenticeship standards have been widely aired in the past few months, with some day-rate fees reputedly approaching £1,000. In the digital route there are already 15 standards available, with another half dozen in

CLAIR MOWBRAY

Chief executive, National College for High Speed Rail



Keeping the National College for High Speed Rail on track

Clair Mowbray explains how the first incorporated college to open in 30 years is responding to its funding and recruitment challenges

In last week's edition of FE Week, national colleges were placed under the spotlight with regard to the challenges they have faced recently around their funding and learner recruitment.

It has been just over one year since we launched our two state-of-the-art new training facilities in Birmingham and Doncaster. The very idea of our college hadn't existed, in the public realm at least, until September 2014, when the government announced the concept for the very first time. We've come a long way since then, but we recognise that we still have our challenges, which we will never shy away from.

Now, as the first incorporated college to open in 30 years, we are challenged by a system that needs to adjust to enable us to achieve the

vision set out by the government for our college. As a brand-new institution with no source of revenue funding to cover our start-up costs, and the need to establish our business against a backdrop of significant reforms in funding and apprenticeships, the challenges are felt deeply.

Since the apprenticeship levy was introduced in May last year, the number of apprenticeship starts across all industries has fallen by almost 39 per cent. We are a post-18 provider with around 80 per cent of our offer in level 4 and level 5 apprenticeship delivery.

This issue is also compounded by our flagship apprenticeship in high-speed rail being placed in the £21,000 funding band. We had reasonably understood this would be in the maximum funding band. We have strong support from DfE on these issues and we are currently in discussion about the best ways to move forward.

Aside from these challenges, we

always expected that it would take time to grow the college's student numbers. High-speed rail is in its infancy in the UK, and naturally it takes time for the prospect of something new to enter the minds of parents, teachers and learners. Our

“We always expected that it would take time to grow the college's numbers”

level 4 pathways in high-speed rail and infrastructure are trailblazers for the industry and they are gradually being accompanied by a widening choice of niche courses across our curriculum.

I am also encouraged that we have

already had over 1,000 applications to study at the college. And we are on track to reach our target of 400 new starts in this academic year, with 1,000 new starts by 2021, in line with our current business plan. But our learner numbers are not just about getting interest from young people. Our college was built to help businesses, and we need more employers to commit to apprenticeship vacancies and take full advantage of the levy.

The future of the National College for High Speed Rail is a bright one. We are perfectly positioned to train the future workforce needed for HS2 and its related infrastructure projects. Yet without wishing to understate its utmost importance, our ambition for the college goes much further than the HS2 talent pipeline.

Over the summer, we became the collaborative partner of the Alstom Academy for Rail, based in Widnes – the largest rail modernisation facility in the UK. This will help to expand our offer even further across the north,

and the British rail and engineering sector as a whole. We intend to continue developing such a network of partnerships throughout the UK, on a hub-and-spoke basis.

We have our own industry advisory panel, which brings together senior figures in the rail and infrastructure sector to advise and shape our offer to ensure it is truly industry-responsive. We are heartened by the partnerships we have formed with other FE colleges – genuine collaboration rather than veiled collaboration. And apprentices who have studied with us are now doing brilliant work with rail engineering companies around the UK.

The National College for High Speed Rail will thrive and we have a real chance to make a difference in engineering across the UK and the world. But on apprenticeships, funding challenges and in raising the profile of engineering, we need to work together in order to seize every opportunity to make this work properly.

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There is still time to book for the packed AELP Autumn Conference 2018, sponsored by City & Guilds.

The Commons education committee has just published a critical report on the apprenticeship levy reforms and its recommendations chime with much that AELP has been saying throughout the year. We will be hearing from the BBC and an NHS Trust what employers think about the reforms and then a major session will be given over to Keith Smith, ESFA's Director of Apprenticeships on the government's response to the falling apprenticeship numbers and how non-levy paying employers can be brought on to the apprenticeship service. Delegates will have plenty of time to ask questions on how the new system will work. City and Guilds will offer its blueprint on an EPA and EQA system can respond efficiently to the demands placed on it.

The review panel of the **Post 18 Review of Education and Funding** will soon be reaching conclusions for its interim report and its chair, **Philip Augar**, will be updating the conference on current thinking. The government has already budgeted £100m for its promised National Retraining Scheme for adult workers and the DfE will inform providers how plans for the Scheme are progressing. The Department for International Trade and Open University will address the conference on taking advantage of international opportunities for vocational learning. England now has 7 metro mayors pushing hard for more devolution of employment and skills programmes and delegates will hear from three of the Combined Authorities on both their aspirations and their procurement of the adult education budget.

Time has been set aside for the provider voice to be heard too and **AELP CEO and conference chair Mark Dawe** will facilitate a debate on AELP's policy priorities and members will have a chance to vote to make an interesting end to the day. So do join us in Manchester on Tuesday, 30 October!

News



Lesley Graham

Campus principal, Stockton Riverside College

Start date October 2018

Previous job
Pro-vice chancellor, curriculum and quality, Writtle University College

Interesting fact
Lesley has climbed to the top of the Sydney Harbour Bridge



Paul Britton

Principal, Wyke Sixth Form College

Start date August 20 2018

Previous job
Vice principal, Nelson and Colne College

Interesting fact
Sachin Tendulkar, Indian great batsman and first overseas player for Yorkshire Cricket club, once stood on Paul's foot in Scarborough

Movers & Shakers

...

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



Sian Thomas

Head of international, NCFE

Start date September 5 2018

Previous job
Head of academic partnerships, ABE Qualifications

Interesting fact
Sian grew up in Wales in the village with the longest name in the UK, Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwylllantysiliogogoch



David Gallagher

Managing director, NCFE apprenticeship services

Start date September 3 2018

Previous job
Commercial director, Babington

Interesting fact
By the age of 16, David learned to cook every dish from an Italian restaurant's menu and has continued his love of food and cooking ever since

If you want to let us know of any new faces at the top of your college, training provider or awarding organisation please let us know by emailing news@feweek.co.uk



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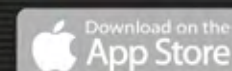
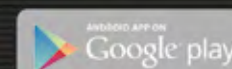
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FE Week Sudoku challenge

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

Difficulty: Easy

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

Difficulty: Medium

Solutions: See right

Spot the difference To WIN an FE Week mug



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: Mo Dixon

Solutions

Turn the paper around to check if your answers match - but no cheating!

Difficulty: Easy

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

Difficulty: Medium

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