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# FEWEEK

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FRIDAY, APRIL 26, 2019  
EDITION 278

## DFE TO REVIEW INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY 'COLD SPOTS'

Government considers competition for more IoTs after we highlight none planned for the north west or east of England



Exclusive

BILLY CAMDEN [BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK](mailto:BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK)

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## PHD APPRENTICESHIPS IN DOUBT

- › Decision deferred on first PhD level as IfA questions if in 'spirit' of programme
- › Board seeks 'urgent policy work' and 'clarification' from DfE on level 8s
- › No policy despite employers developing standard expecting starts this year
- › IfA committee concerned degrees 'cross-subsidising HE from appren budget'

Exclusive

NICK LINFORD BILLY CAMDEN [NEWS@FEWEEK.CO.UK](mailto:NEWS@FEWEEK.CO.UK)

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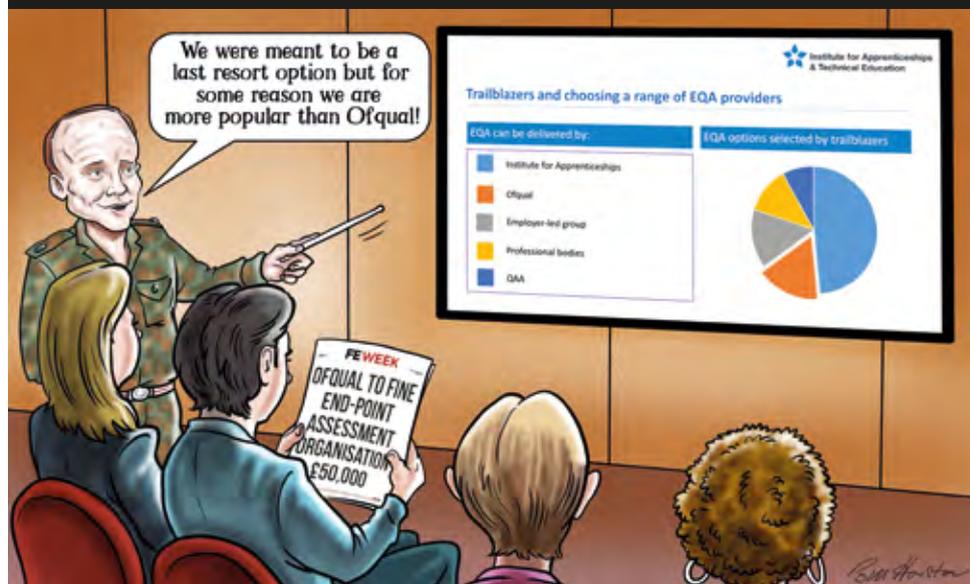
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# UCU calls on FE Commissioner to consider de-merging London colleges from NCG

BILLY CAMDEN

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Exclusive

Union officials at two London colleges have written to the FE Commissioner requesting that he urgently investigates whether they should de-merge from the country's largest college group.

Members of the University and College Union at Lewisham and Southwark colleges have been contesting their pay and conditions for years but claim matters have deteriorated even further since their controversial merger with NCG in August 2017. NCG's headquarters are 300 miles away in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

After allegedly failing to reach amicable solutions with their paymasters in the north, staff in London are now seeking investigations by the government.

In a letter to FE Commissioner Richard Atkins expressing their "grave concern", seen by *FE Week*, the local UCU branch at Lewisham and Southwark colleges said NCG's

management has had a "deleterious effect on the colleges' provision and thus on students, staff and the wider communities that they serve".

The letter explains that staff at Lewisham and Southwark colleges have "had to endure years of constant change, restructure, reapplying for their jobs, merger and de-merger, whilst watching a procession of very well-paid principals and senior managers come and go".

It adds: "It is our fear that NCG's managerial and financial problems will result in the two colleges being left devastated and unable to serve the communities of Southwark and Lewisham boroughs.

"We are, therefore, formally requesting that the FE Commissioner urgently investigates NCG's management of Southwark College and Lewisham College to determine its fitness to operate the two institutions and whether their future could lie elsewhere."

It comes at a troublesome time for NCG, which is expecting a diagnostic visit from Atkins' team next week following its grade three Ofsted rating last year.

The college group announced plans

last month to slash up to 300 jobs across its two training providers – Intraining and Rathbone Training – which came off the back of a damning Ofsted inspection as well as an Education and Skills Funding Agency mystery audit that found major data manipulation, as revealed by *FE Week*.

The group ran itself into financial trouble in 2017/18, generating a deficit of £7 million, according to its latest accounts.

A spokesperson for NCG said it was "disappointed to see this letter from the local branch of UCU", particularly as NCG has been "working collaboratively with them for more than 18 months to develop a positive working partnership and successfully resolve some long-term issues".

Lewisham and Southwark colleges were one entity when they joined NCG.

NCG announced the college was to become two separate colleges within the group in September 2018.

The letter from the local UCU branch at Lewisham and Southwark colleges told the FE Commissioner this move had been announced "with a complete lack of transparency and



without consultation with staff".

"As part of this separation of the two Colleges, NCG has put forward a new management structure that makes little sense when contrasted against the reality of the two colleges," the letter claimed, adding that current managers "who have run the different departments very successfully for many years now find their jobs are at risk".

The spokesperson for NCG said the claims are "wholly inaccurate and we have responded to these previously

in full".

Asfa Sohail, the new principal of Lewisham College, said: "I'm surprised to see the comments from UCU, particularly as we have been in positive talks regarding the management structure moving forward – the most recent of these being only last Tuesday.

The letter suggests that this management structure has been imposed on the colleges by NCG, however I would like to confirm that this is not the case."

# ESFA takes control of investigation into Hadlow's former deputy principal

FRASER WHIELDON

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Exclusive

An investigation initiated by the Hadlow Group's board into their former deputy principal has been taken over by the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

A spokesperson for the embattled group said the board is "co-operating with the ESFA" and "working closely with the agency to ensure the outcome is fair, proportionate and holds individuals to account".

Amid a separate investigation by the FE Commissioner into financial irregularities at the group's colleges – Hadlow College and West Kent & Ashford College – the principal of both, Paul Hannan, Hadlow's deputy principal

Mark Lumsdon-Taylor, two board chairs and several governors left their roles earlier this year.

It has been alleged Lumsdon-Taylor doctored emails from the ESFA to prove to the agency that he was entitled to claim extra funding, which he said had been agreed when Hadlow College adopted West Kent & Ashford colleges from K College.

The ESFA queried the claims following an audit of West Kent & Ashford College last year, and when it found it had not sent the emails Lumsdon-Taylor had presented them with, the agency demanded a significant sum of funding be returned.

Lumsdon-Taylor left his role on March 1 and received "no financial enhancement to his salary or payment after this date", according to the group.

He has scheduled a press conference

for June, entitled "MARK LUMSDON-TAYLOR talks about then... now... and the future", where it is understood he will respond to the FE Commissioner's report, which is due to be published next month.

In the meantime, the college is evicting him from a flat he has on campus, with a spokesperson saying the college has served

notice "regarding the inaction of his tenancy".

It is understood that Lumsdon-Taylor is currently completing a Master of Science degree in

Finance and Accounting at Manchester Metropolitan University, which the college agreed in 2018 to pay for.

The college would not give more exact details on when paying for the course was agreed and whether the decision was made by one of its committees. A spokesperson said the college "does not expect to be paying any fees for any future years".

A spokesperson for Mark Lumsdon-Taylor said he could not be reached for comment.

He became one of the leading figures at Hadlow College after starting work there in 2002, overseeing the creation of the Hadlow Group in 2014.

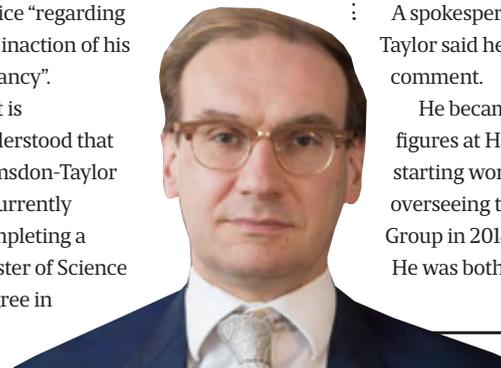
He was both a finalist in the 2018

Institute of Directors director of the year awards, and the winner of the UK financial director of the year (public sector and voluntary) award at the Business Finance Awards in 2014.

The regeneration of Betteshanger Colliery, which Hadlow College acquired in 2013, into Betteshanger Sustainable Parks was described as a "personal" project of his.

However, the college had to spend £1.2 million changing plans for the foundations of a park visitor centre and it lost out on £4 million when the sale of a business park at Betteshanger fell through.

This, combined with a failed application for £20 million from the ESFA transactions unit and the ESFA's demands for funding to be returned, has left the colleges reliant on government bailouts for survival.



Mark Lumsdon-Taylor

## News

# Apprenticeship levy usage rockets from 5% to 22% in its second year

**BILLY CAMDEN**  
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Exclusive

Employers used 22 per cent of their apprenticeship levy funds in the 12 months to the end of January 2019 – a fourfold increase from the 5 per cent drawn down in the first nine months of the policy.

Skills minister Anne Milton revealed in a parliamentary answer on Tuesday that between May 2017 and the end of January 2019 levy-paying employers “utilised £601 million of the funds available to them to pay for apprenticeship training in England”.

This amounts to 15 per cent of the £3.9 billion total funds entering employers’ accounts in the same period.

In a separate parliamentary answer from last week, Milton revealed that in the 12 months from February 2018 to January 2019, £523 million, or 22 per cent, of the £2.36 billion received into employers’ apprenticeship service accounts had been drawn down.

FE Week analysis of the figures used by the minister shows that in the first nine months of the levy, from May 2017

to January 2018, £78 million of the £1.54 billion (5 per cent) paid into employers’ accounts was used to cover training costs.

Levy funds usage has therefore increased fourfold, but apprenticeship starts have only increased by just over one-fifth (21 per cent).

Funding is automatically drawn down every month for the duration of the apprenticeship, so as new starts are taken on the monthly usage, the percentage rises much faster than the starts because it includes some of the cost of the starts in previous months.

This monthly funding and the fact that, on average, apprenticeships are now costing more than double the forecast, goes some way to explain why the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education and the National Audit Office have warned of a budget overspend in the future.

Milton explained in the parliamentary answers that the figures do not include other costs that the levy pays for, such as funding apprenticeships for small, non-levy-paying employers, for English and maths qualifications and for extra support for apprentices who are care leavers or who have special needs.

Large employers have been made to

pay the apprenticeship levy since it was launched in April 2017. After a deduction for non-English employees and a 10 per cent top-up, the monthly levy value appears in the employer apprenticeship system account, which they have two years to use.

In March, Keith Smith, the Education and Skills Funding Agency’s director of apprenticeships, told the Public Accounts Committee that employers are expected to lose around £12 million in May, or 9 per cent of what they paid in April 2017, when the first “sunset period” arrives.

And in a webinar with FE Week during the Easter break, the government admitted for the first time that the vast majority of the £400 million underspend from the Department for Education’s apprenticeship budget was taken back by the Treasury.

Asked how much cash the Treasury clawed back in the financial year to April 2018, Milton replied that she “can’t give exact figures”, and referred the question to Smith, who said it was “just over £300 million”.

Concerns have been raised that employers are not spending their funds quickly enough. The NHS, for example, told FE Week in March that it



expects to lose a fortune when unspent apprenticeship levy funds begin to expire from May.

Recent policy changes have aimed to increase levy spending. From this month, levy-paying employers will be able to share more of their annual funds with smaller organisations, when the levy transfer facility rises from 10 to 25 per cent.

The 10 per cent fee that small businesses have to pay when they take on apprentices has also been halved this month.

The government had hoped the apprenticeship levy would encourage

more employers to invest in training and help it to hit its manifesto target of three million apprenticeship starts by 2020. However, starts have fallen dramatically since its launch.

The latest figures, released on March 28, reveal that apprenticeship starts for January were down 21 per cent on the same month in 2017 before the levy was introduced.

FE Week analysis shows that an average of 85,246 starts are needed every month over the next 15 months to reach the three million starts target. Since May 2015, the average has been 38,251.

## West Notts to lose 55 more jobs in further bid to save cash

**BILLY CAMDEN**  
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A college in financial crisis has announced plans to shed another 55 jobs in a move that is expected to save it £2.2 million annually.

West Nottinghamshire College has undergone a major restructure over recent years to try to find savings, with its staffing numbers falling from a high of 967 in 2013 to 598 last month – a 38 per cent drop.

At the end of February the college axed a further 75 jobs and told staff this week of a new consultation to make a further 55 redundant.

“Unfortunately, 72 colleagues have been placed at risk of redundancy as part of proposals to lose 55 staff,” a spokesperson said.

“These are mainly in management and support roles, with very few direct teaching posts affected.

“This final phase has been informed by the curriculum-planning process for the 2019-20 academic year and will see the current breadth of provision

retained at our campuses in Mansfield and Ashfield.”

However, the spokesperson added that the plans include the closure of the West Nottinghamshire College’s construction and employability training centre in Sheffield, which is “under-utilised and no longer viable”.

The college is in dire financial straits. As FE Week revealed in March, its government bailouts rocketed to more than £10 million in just six months.

Its main monetary issue was related to subcontracting rule changes that meant it had to drastically scale back on this provision and lose out on millions in management fees.

The financial strain surfaced in July 2018 when the college received an initial £2.1 million in exceptional financial support from the Education and Skills Funding Agency following the failed sale of its eLearning business bksb, which FE Week later revealed was requested just 48 hours before it was due to run out of cash.

West Notts’ 2017-18 accounts show that the college generated a £9.54 million deficit before gains and losses,

West Notts College FTE staff	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Teaching staff	194	292	322	332	362	424	437
Non-teaching staff	404	452	448	467	480	537	530
<b>Total staff</b>	<b>598</b>	<b>744</b>	<b>770</b>	<b>799</b>	<b>842</b>	<b>961</b>	<b>967</b>

West Notts College FTE staff	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Teaching staff %	32%	39%	42%	42%	43%	44%	45%
Non-teaching staff %	68%	61%	58%	58%	57%	56%	55%

up from £2.57 million the year before.

The turbulent year at West Notts has led to major leadership and governor changes. This included 14 new appointments to its board, including a new chair and a new interim principal after its former high-profile leader, Dame Asha Khemka, resigned in October.

The college ended the use of corporate credit cards for senior staff earlier this year, after FE Week revealed Asha had claimed more than £40,000 in

expenses over five years.

The West Notts spokesperson said the proposed job losses are designed to bring “financial stability and ensure we are the right size to serve our communities”.

“In developing these proposals we have worked hard to minimise the impact on students, in particular on their teaching and learning, although some non-essential student-facing services will be delivered slightly differently,” he added.

“These changes are no reflection on our hard-working and dedicated staff, who have remained extremely professional during this difficult time. We are committed to supporting all those affected and will seek to place people into other roles wherever possible, or help them find employment elsewhere.

“Although highly regrettable, the measures are expected to save £2.2 million on our annual pay-bill and are another crucial step towards our financial recovery.”

# IfA questions whether PhD apprenticeships are in the 'spirit' of the reform programme

NICK LINFORD  
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From front

Exclusive

Plans for PhD-level apprenticeships have been thrown into doubt after the Institute for Apprenticeships raised concerns they were not in the "spirit" of the programme.

In December the IfA's approval funding committee had deferred approving the first PhD-level apprenticeship "in order to seek further guidance from the board and the Department for Education on whether level 8 apprenticeships were compatible with the aims of the apprenticeship reform programme".

The committee was concerned "whether it [the level 8 clinical academic professional standard] could be approved under current rules and whether it was in the spirit of apprenticeship policy".

Minutes from the IfA board meeting

in January, published this week, reveal a discussion concluding with an action for "the DfE to explore the concept of level 8 apprenticeships further and agree a policy position".

FE Week asked the department this week if they had now agreed a way forward, to which a spokesperson said: "We are continuing to keep the programme under review and discussions are ongoing regarding these new proposals.

"We are looking carefully at what the priorities of the programme should be from 2020 onwards."

The chair of the trailblazer group for the clinical academic professional standard in the health and care sector was unavailable for comment.

However, the employers behind the development of the "technical specialist in nuclear engineering, science or technology" apprenticeship were expecting a speedy resolution.

The Nuclear Skills Strategy Group oversees apprenticeship developments in the nuclear sector and has been developing the level 8 standard since

the middle of last year.

A spokesperson told FE Week the plans for the PhD-level standard were "included in our Nuclear Sector Deal, agreed with industry and government last June, so we are already in close contact with government about the policy issues, and we look forward to their being resolved so that we can complete this development and have the standard ready for use this year".

In the context of introducing the first level 8 apprenticeships, the IfA committee members "also noted concerns that the increasing number of degree apprenticeships, particularly at level 7, may put pressure on funding for delivery of apprenticeships at the lower levels, while cross-subsidising higher education from the apprenticeship budget".

Despite the minutes listing an "action" to "prepare a paper for the board setting out the issues/concerns" an IfA spokesperson said the board did not discuss it the following month but it would be considered, looking ahead.

The IfA approvals committee includes

four of the ten board members.

When asked if the board shared the committee's concerns, a spokesperson said: "The board has not formed a view as the issue was not discussed at the meeting."

In December, the IfA estimated that the apprenticeships budget for England could be overspent by £0.5 billion this year, rising to £1.5 billion during 2021-22.

Subsequently, a report by the National Audit Office, published in March, warned there is "clear risk" that the apprenticeship programme is not financially sustainable after the average cost of training an apprentice hit £9,000 – double what the government had predicted.

The NAO suggested the government should think about reducing the level of public funding for certain types of apprenticeships after finding levy-payers are "developing and choosing more expensive standards at higher levels than was expected".

Following this, the Association



of Employment and Learning Providers called for all level 6 and 7 apprenticeships, including those with integrated degrees, to be removed from the scope of levy funding in order to relieve mounting pressure on the budget.

A week later the DfE's permanent secretary Jonathan Slater admitted during a Public Accounts Committee hearing that "hard choices" would need to be made if the treasury cannot find extra funding for the programme in the upcoming spending review.

"It will be self-evident to the committee that if the amount of money were to be constrained at its current level, that would require choices to be made between level 2 and level 6, the balance between one sector and another," he said.

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- ▶ Keith Smith, ESFA
- ▶ Mark Compton, Access to Music
- ▶ Phil Beach, Ofqual
- ▶ Anthony Impey MBE, FSB
- ▶ Marie-Claire O'Brien, New Leaf Initiative
- ▶ Mark Pike, Develop
- ▶ Robert Nitsch, The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education



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## News

# DfE to review Institute of Technology 'cold spots'

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**BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK**

From front

Exclusive

The government has said it may tender for more Institutes of Technology after *FE Week* shared concerns that there were none planned in the north west and the east of England.

Just two of the 12 flagship institutes being taken forward after a two-stage tender process are in the north, with the north west being completely shunned.

"So much for the Northern Powerhouse!" was how one MP reacted after seeing *FE Week* analysis showing residents of major cities such as Liverpool and Blackpool would have to travel over 100 miles to attend their nearest IoT.

The east of England, in addition, doesn't have a single IoT opening in the region, following the rejection of one college's bid. There has been no explanation forthcoming for this.

## "So much for the Northern Powerhouse!"

The IoTs, which will be established via a share of £170 million in capital funding, will specialise in delivering higher level technical training at level 4 and 5 in STEM subjects, including digital, advanced manufacturing and engineering.

In the education secretary Damian Hinds' words, they will be the "pinnacle of technical training – new collaborations between universities, colleges and business to make sure young people have the skills they need to build a well-paid rewarding, career, while the economy gains the skilled workers it needs to be more productive".

But when *FE Week* shared serious concerns over a lack of broad geographical coverage, the DfE quickly realised there was a problem.

"We have always acknowledged that there might be some parts of

the country where there were no proposals that met our high quality threshold," a spokesperson for the department said.

"We will, however, review the extent of geographical 'cold spots' to determine whether a future competition should be considered."

According to the DfE, all institutes must hold an Ofsted 'good' or 'outstanding' rating at the time the licence and capital funding agreements are signed.

The department said it did receive other applications from providers based in the north at stage one of the competition, but these did not meet the threshold required to progress to stage two.

Henri Murison, the director of the Northern Powerhouse Partnership, was not impressed with the outcome: "By only choosing two locations in the north out of a possible 12, and the north west missing out entirely, the government is failing to address the scale of the skills challenge facing the north.

"The skills gap between the north and south is one of the biggest challenges facing us now and for future generations. We need to see better representation across the whole of the north if the government is serious about rebalancing the economy and making the Northern Powerhouse a reality."

## "Government is failing to address the scale of the skills challenge facing the north"

He told *FE Week* that with all the Northern Metro Mayors missing out, "any future decisions about how and where next should be made by devolving the decisions and funding to those who understand our interconnected city regions,

- A - New College, Durham
- B - York College
- C - University of Lincoln
- D - Dudley College of Technology
- E - Solihull College
- F - Milton Keynes College
- G - University of Exeter
- H - Weston College of Further and Higher Education
- I - Swindon College
- J - Harrow & Uxbridge Colleges
- K - Queen Mary University London
- L - Barking & Dagenham College

not another Whitehall-led bidding process".

Angela Rayner, shadow education secretary and MP for Ashton-under-Lyne, was furious at the government for "neglecting" the north. "With not a single university or college in the whole of the north west involved, one of my constituents would need to travel nearly two hours on public transport to the nearest provider on the government's list, while

Liverpool is over 100 miles away," she told *FE Week*.

"All of our communities need investment and have great potential if we support our young people and equip them with the skills they need."

Gordon Marsden, shadow skills minister and MP for Blackpool South, was equally unimpressed: "The failure to give a leg-up to learners and providers in the north west – and the need to support all our colleges, who have had the Cinderella treatment from government on funding, supporting staff and still

no decent response to the Love Our Colleges campaign – has now been compounded by the minister's inexplicable decision to leave us off the map for the new Institutes of Technology programme."

Stephanie Peacock, Labour MP for Barnsley East, added: "The education secretary said the Institutes of Technology would be the pinnacle of technical training but that pinnacle will be left out of sight for far too many. Barnsley is a near 50-mile drive or a two-hour train ride to York College, the only such institute in the whole of Yorkshire, Humberside and the north east combined.

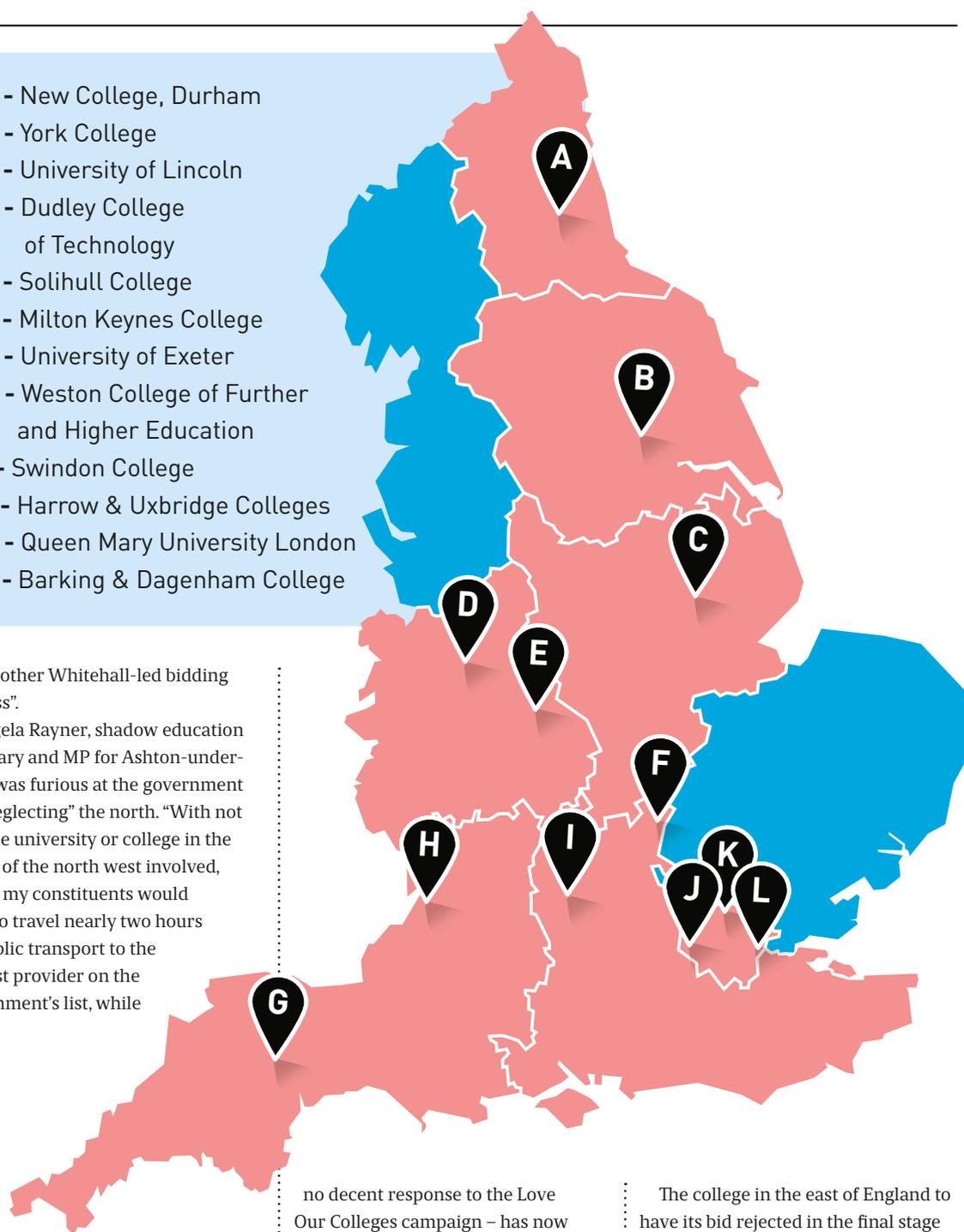
"So much for the Northern Powerhouse."

The college in the east of England to have its bid rejected in the final stage of the IoT tender was West Suffolk College, which has been rated 'good' by Ofsted since 2010.

The college has not yet received detailed feedback of why it was declined, and principal Dr Nikos Savvas said: "We were very surprised and disappointed to learn that we didn't make it through to the second stage of the IoT as we believed we had submitted a very strong bid."

He added that the college is opening a "campus for STEM innovation for the eastern region in September 2019", which will help fill the gap of an IoT.

The first IoTs are expected to open from September this year.



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## News

# DfE slammed for refusal to investigate defunct Manchester UTC as paperwork fails to materialise

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Exclusive

Auditors were unable to properly scrutinise the finances of a failed University Technical College because important data was missing, but the government chose not to investigate this issue.

Accounts for the Greater Manchester UTC for 2016-17, finally published last month and over a year late, reveal that auditors gave a rare “disclaimer of opinion” on the state of the UTC’s finances.

This was because auditors couldn’t get their hands on data on income and expenditure, the school’s balance sheet or a statement of cashflow.

The UTC, set up by venture capitalist and Bright Tribe founder Michael Dwan, closed in September 2017, just three years after it opened. It had failed to attract enough pupils to be financially sustainable.

In the accounts, the auditors say they were “unable to obtain all of

the information and explanations requested” following the departure of trustees and leaders during the 2016-17 year.

The documents also show the UTC closed with a £526,000 deficit, which had to be paid off by the government.

A “disclaimer of opinion” is one of four types of report issued by external auditors when looking at company accounts. It means a firm’s financial status cannot be determined. Such reports are rare in the academies sector; just three were issued in 2015-16 and 2016-17.

However, despite the rarity of such an audit outcome, and despite the fact the ESFA has previously investigated academy trusts and schools on the basis of internal financial information or concerns about potential financial irregularities, the DfE told *FE Week* no investigation was carried out in this case.

Lucy Powell, MP for Greater Manchester and a member of the parliamentary education committee, told *FE Week*: “The failure to supply adequate accounting information to the auditors is really concerning and is a

further indictment on the management and oversight of this school.

“It beggars belief that the DfE has failed to undertake an investigation into this situation, which yet again calls into question the oversight and accountability of all these new fledgling schools. Large sums of public money were at stake and the DfE and ESFA need much better systems to account for its expenditure.”

She added a “catalogue of errors from the DfE, the ESFA and the school leadership” had contributed to the UTC’s downfall.

*FE Week* understands the ESFA must take into account the cost of investigations into academies, and may have chosen not to do so in this case because it was already due to close.

The UTC opened in September 2014, but was already showing signs of struggling less than two years later.

A flurry of directors resigned from the UTC in 2016. Michael Dwan and his brother Andrew left in November, but North Consulting Limited, a company owned by Michael Dwan, remained as the UTC’s company secretary until January 20, 2017.



Michael Dwan also remained as a controlling member of the trust until that date, along with the Bright Tribe Trust and University of Bolton.

A spokesperson for Dwan claimed he had resigned in July 2016, but continued to offer “some support to facilitate the transition”, which was given “at the request of the Department for Education”.

“He did not at any stage have any day-to-day operational responsibilities and was never made aware of any

issues with the accounts or a lack of information. He was never approached for any documentation.”

A DfE spokesperson insisted the accounts “were signed off by the trust and the auditors”, but acknowledged the disclaimer of opinion judgment.

“New trustees were appointed in February 2017 to oversee the closure of Greater Manchester Sustainable Engineering UTC. The parent trust is still in place, pending all actions being completed.”

## Training provider rated ‘inadequate’ after six consecutive grade threes

**JESSICA FINO**  
**JESSICA.FINO@FEWEEK.CO.UK**

A private provider has been hit with the lowest possible Ofsted rating after receiving six consecutive ‘requires improvement’ ratings since opening its doors.

Nottinghamshire Training Network was rated ‘inadequate’ this week after the education watchdog found the “principles” of apprenticeship provision were not being met, such as apprentices not receiving their entitlement to “well-planned” off-the-job training.

Inspectors said the provider’s management of subcontractors, who deliver most programmes, is “weak”, and leaders and managers have “not remedied many of the areas of weakness identified at the previous inspection”.

The provider, which at the time of inspection had 352 apprentices, told *FE Week* it will now stop taking on new starts and would like to transfer its current apprentices to another provider to complete their training.

As it has been rated ‘inadequate’, NTN will be removed from the register of apprenticeship training providers

and banned from delivering its own apprenticeships, in line with ESFA rules. The ESFA is also likely to terminate all of its other skills contracts with the provider.

Syed Jafery, managing director at NTN, said the provider is awaiting guidance and formal notification from ESFA to advise on the next steps.

He added: “We are committed to assisting the ESFA in transitioning the remaining learners, to ensure no learner is displaced and let down by this inspection result.”

NTN was incorporated in 2002 and received its first Ofsted inspection in 2008, which resulted in a grade three rating of ‘requires improvement’. Since then, and prior to today’s report, the provider has had five other full inspections, all of which resulted in grade three verdicts.

Last November *FE Week* asked chief inspector Amanda Spielman how many consecutive grade three reports should lead to a provider being hit with a grade four, but she could not give an exact number.

Until recently, three grade threes in a row would automatically have qualified a provider for an ‘inadequate’ grade.

Spielman said she had changed this rule when she took over the top job at the inspectorate in January 2017 “because I thought it was flawed in conception”.

“The job of inspection is to report on what we see when we inspect,” she explained. “To artificially say that something is ‘inadequate’ and trigger all the consequences that we know go with grade four judgments, because we want to heap up pressure – I don’t think that’s the right thing for us to do.”

In 2017, Ofsted warned NTN that leaders’ and managers’ actions to improve the weaknesses identified at previous inspections were ineffective in driving improvements in the quality of training and outcomes for apprentices.

Two years later, inspectors said leaders and managers have not remedied many of the areas of concern and that apprentices continue to make “slow progress”.

Its management of subcontractors came in for the greatest criticism. “The information that subcontractors provide about the progress of learners and apprentices is unhelpful,” Ofsted explained.

“Different subcontractors provide reports that contain different



information presented in different ways. This makes it difficult for NTN managers to gain a clear picture of what is happening. Managers are unaware of the fact that many apprentices’ programmes do not meet the requirements of apprenticeship provision.”

NTN’s effectiveness of leadership and management, quality of teaching, learning and assessment, outcome for learners and apprenticeship provision were all rated ‘inadequate’, while its personal development, behaviour and welfare, as well as its traineeships “require improvement”. Its adult learning programmes were rated as ‘good’.

Jafery said he was “extremely

disappointed with the outcome” and that the overall grade “does not reflect our typical delivery and experience” but that his provider nevertheless accepted the decision.

“We are disappointed that the inspection feedback and report has relied so heavily on the judgements for apprenticeship delivery, as over the course of a year, trainees and adult learners will outweigh the number of learners on apprenticeships,” he added.

The Ofsted report did praise staff for providing “good pastoral and personal care for learners and apprentices” and that “most trainees benefit from good work placements that help them to improve their readiness for employment”.

# Apprenticeship pay and satisfaction surveys delayed and incur more costs

FRASER WHIELDON  
FRASER@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Exclusive

Two flagship apprenticeship surveys have had their publication date delayed by six months and will incur additional costs to the Department for Education.

The Apprenticeship Evaluation and Pay Surveys 2018, comprising the Apprenticeship Evaluation Survey (AEVs) and Apprenticeship Pay Survey (APS), will not be released to the public until mid-October.

This is because the supplier, IFF Research Ltd, had the deadline to finalise its research extended to July 15, 2019, despite being given an original publication date of the end of March 2019.

Government protocol mandates that once research is finalised, it has to be published within 12 weeks.

Asked if its name should be the

Apprenticeship Evaluation and Pay Surveys 2019 instead of 2018, the DfE said the titles for the surveys will be decided once the work is finalised.

IFF Research was contracted to design and question current and graduated apprentices, as well as employers, about satisfaction, motivation, benefits, retention and post-apprenticeship progression for the AEVs.

Meanwhile, the APS includes surveying current apprentices in England, Scotland and Wales about their pay, hours and training.

There were also delays to the publication of the full report on the 2016 APS, which was finalised by suppliers in January 2017, but not released until July of that year.

When it was eventually published, it revealed that nearly one-fifth of apprentices at levels 2 and 3 were illegally paid less than the minimum wage.

An FE Week report published the same week found that it was likely that



no one had been fined or prosecuted for illegally underpaying apprentices.

Following the revelations from the 2016 APS, the government's director of labour market enforcement Sir David Metcalf gave warning that government enforcement agencies and industry bodies would work to better identify employers who underpay workers and punish them with severe jail sentences.

In addition to the delays to the 2018 surveys, the DfE will also incur additional costs from the APS, on top of

the £535,535 plus VAT research costs, though the exact amount was redacted in the contract variation document.

The extra cash is needed, according to the document, because the survey interviews with 2,500 current learners were overrunning by two minutes so the DfE has agreed to pay to extend the interview length, rather than stick with the original budget by reducing the sample size by 320.

The costs will be published on Contracts Finder when the research

is complete, a DfE spokesperson said, but until then they will remain "commercially sensitive".

Delaying the publication of the APS means that its final findings will not be initially included when the Low Pay Commission (LPC) makes its recommendations on minimum wage levels (which will take effect from April 2020) as the commission will stop taking evidence in June.

The LPC says it will make a recommendation to the government on the April 2020 level of the apprentice rate of the National Minimum Wage in autumn.

"We do not expect the delay in the Apprentice Pay Survey to affect this, and we will have early access to the data ahead of publication," a spokesperson added.

The DfE said the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, which is responsible for the pay survey, has handed the vast majority of APS data from the survey to the LPC for use in its report.

10<sup>TH</sup> anniversary

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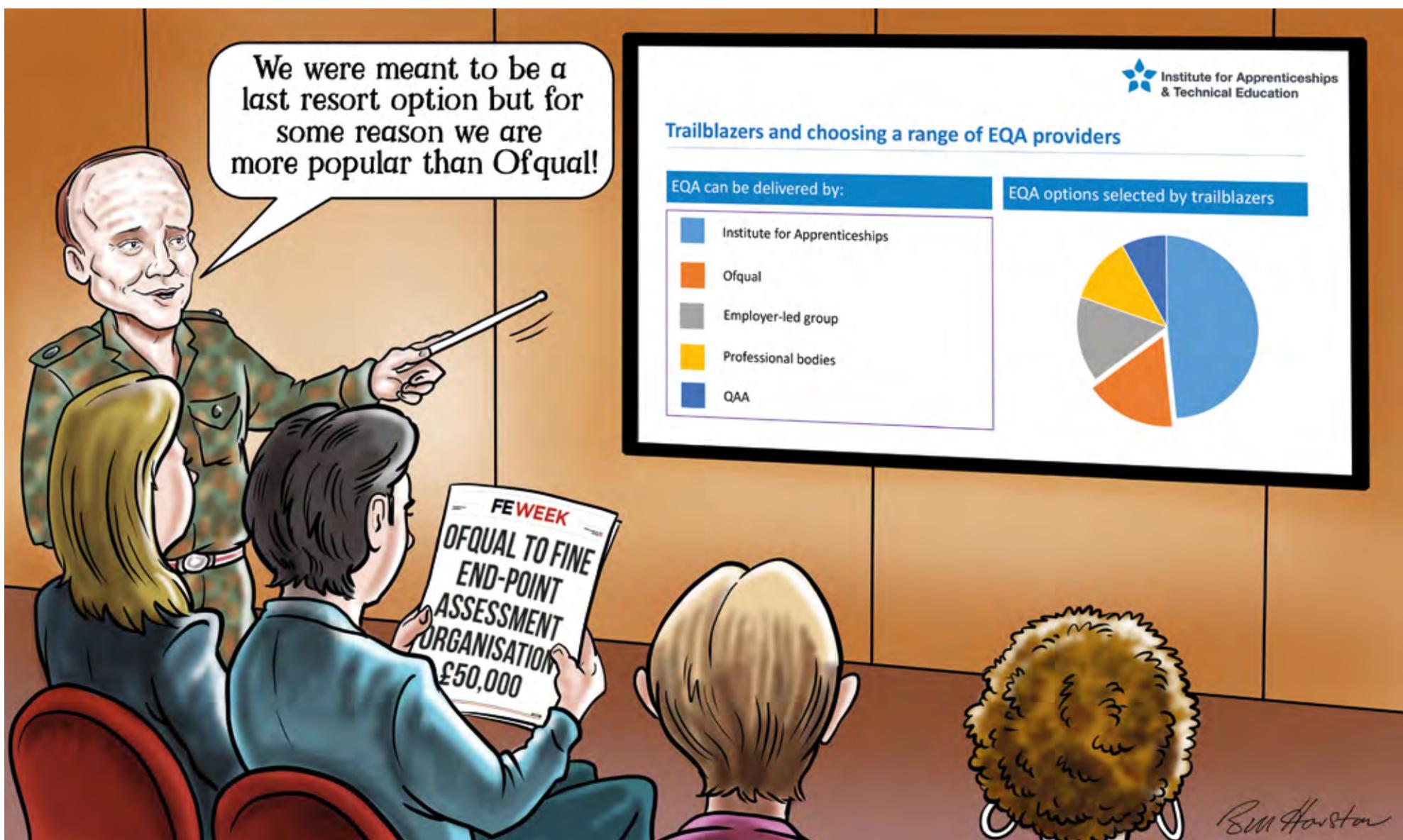
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LISTINGS CORRECT AS AT 25.04.19 - SUBJECT TO CHANGE

## News



# Ofqual issues its first intention to fine an EPAO for poor delivery

**BILLY CAMDEN**  
**BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK**

An end-point assessment organisation is facing a potential fine of £50,000 after “technical issues” affected its delivery of apprenticeship assessments.

The notice of intention to impose a monetary penalty on the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives (CILEx), published this week, is the first such fine floated by Ofqual.

CILEx, an EPAO for two apprenticeship standards, admitted in March to a series of delivery failings in the end-point assessment for the level 3 paralegal apprenticeship in June 2018.

The failings “occurred during both the timed assessment and interview components of the assessment and affected the entire cohort of 73 learners,” the notice said.

Ofqual, which is CILEx’s external quality assurer, was informed at the time that “technical issues” were to blame.

This included apprentices receiving “error messages, experiencing delays and difficulties accessing the assessment, and being unable to upload their work on to the e-platform”. Some assessments were lost “entirely”.

In July 2018, CILEx reported that “further technical difficulties” had been encountered with the Skype connections for the interview component of the EPA, including difficulties establishing a connection between the assessor and the apprentice, poor connectivity and poor sound quality.

Only four of the interviews were fully conducted by Skype video, allowing the assessors to see the apprentice for the duration of the interview, as required by CILEx’s assessment plan.

Complaints from apprentices were received “regarding the disruption and anxiety”.

All 73 affected learners were given “special consideration” by offering them a free re-sit opportunity which

would not cap the outcome at a pass.

CILEx wrote to Ofqual in January to explain that it “conducted a thorough investigation into both the technical and wider issues, submitting its findings to Ofqual voluntarily, together with an action plan”, which it has made “significant progress against”.

It said that CILEx is a “chartered body, not a commercial organisation, and as such has public interest duties, obligations and considerations as well as its responsibilities as an awarding body” while the absence of “key members of staff was a result of unprecedented and unpredictable circumstances”.

However, CILEx admitted to failing to comply with 17 conditions set by Ofqual.

The regulator formally issued the EPAO with a notice explaining its intention to fine it £50,000 on April 18, 2019.

However, the fine will be reduced to a nominal sum of £1,000 if the organisation submits a “Statement of Assurance” by September 30, 2019.

This must confirm that CILEx has “successfully implemented all of the recommendations and actions set out in its technical action plan” and “has successfully delivered the level 3 paralegal end-point assessment to the cohort of apprenticeship learners sitting the EPA in June 2019, in full compliance with the conditions”.

“Or, in the event that representations are received from interested parties or another relevant intervening factor occurs, such other amount between £1,000 and £50,000 as the Enforcement Committee considers appropriate,” the notice said.

“Ofqual has taken this approach to enforcement action in order to prioritise a focus on future improvements and to reflect the unusual circumstances of this case, including that CILEx operated the EPA at a financial loss in 2018 and expects to continue to do so for the foreseeable future.”

It added that CILEx has “agreed to pay a monetary penalty to Ofqual and

to submit a Statement of Assurance in the terms specified above”.

Linda Ford, chief executive of CILEx, said: “We have apologised for the inconvenience caused to the students last year and provided free re-sits to a small number of students where needed.

“I would like to personally reassure this year’s cohort that we are ready and fully confident in our ability to deliver the EPA successfully.”

A spokesperson added that CILEx “expects to pay the reduced fine amount of £1,000”.

Ofqual is one of 18 currently approved external quality assurance bodies that monitor end-point assessment organisations to ensure that the process is “fair, consistent and robust”. The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education is the nominated EQA provider for the greatest number of apprenticeship standards – 295 – even though the Institute is meant to be the “last resort” option.

# West London College is Hiring!

## Construction Teachers, Assessors, IQAs, Apprenticeship Skills Trainers & Master Technicians

West London College has a successful track record in Construction training and has recently been awarded the Mayor's Construction Academy West London Hub status. With 90,000 homes being built, the Heathrow expansion project, HS2 and the Old Oak Park development, there is no shortage of construction projects in West London.

To meet this demand, we need to expand our construction training workforce and are looking to hire a number of skilled and experienced Construction teachers and skills trainers to join our existing team, with full time, part time and flexible opportunities available.

Ideally candidates will have considerable industry experience and have a passion and aptitude for teaching, training or assessing. The College will be offering a generous package including a competitive salary, membership of a pension scheme, generous holiday entitlement along with salary sacrifice schemes and other industry benefits. The College will also support successful candidates to acquire a recognised teaching qualification or assessing qualification, if they do not already possess one.

We are holding an Open Recruitment Evening on **Tuesday 21st May 2019 from 4:00pm until 8:00pm** at our specialist construction Park Royal College campus, where we will showcase our range of courses and welcome industry experienced talent for a range of job opportunities.

To register your interest in attending:  
**visit [WLCRecruitmentEvening.eventbrite.co.uk](http://WLCRecruitmentEvening.eventbrite.co.uk)** and  
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You will provide leadership, direction and motivation on college wide continuous quality improvements in Teaching Learning & Assessment and the professional development of our delivery staff.

The successful candidate will have relevant experience with the ability to inspire and challenge staff creating a dynamic culture of innovation with outstanding learning, teaching and student success throughout. You will lead, with support from senior and operational leaders in raising standards through continuous quality improvements linked to coaching, mentoring and development of teaching practice.

**Closing Date: Friday 10 May 2019 (12:00 noon)**

**Interview Date: Thursday 23 May 2019**

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### WALTHAM FOREST COLLEGE

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### WALTHAM FOREST COLLEGE

**Head of MIS**

Waltham Forest College

### WALTHAM FOREST COLLEGE

**Head of Financial Reporting**

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### WALTHAM FOREST COLLEGE

**Head of Operations, Business Development**

Waltham Forest College



**Southend** adult  
community college

# PRINCIPAL

**Salary Range:** Southend Spine Points 58 – 61, currently £70,748 - £77,302

This is an opportunity for an outstanding individual with vision and inspirational leadership qualities to manage Southend Adult Community College (SACC) and additionally give strategic leadership to the adult and community learning strategy for Southend.

SACC was established in 1993. It has a small full-time team and over 200 part-time and voluntary members of staff. They provide award winning education, training and skills to over 6,500 customers and a large number of local businesses each year who participate in a wide variety of programmes, many of which lead to qualifications.

The College employer responsive provision was the first to be judged Outstanding by OFSTED (in 2009) serving over 130 local employers each year. In 2009 SACC became the first Local Authority run Adult College in the country to be awarded LSIS Beacon Status. In November 2017, OFSTED again judged the College Good.

SACC has three sites including a specialist centre for young adults

with severe, profound and complex learning difficulties. Classes also take place at a wide variety of schools, community venues and organisations in and around Southend.

Over the past few years the College has effectively managed funding changes and has been successful in its approaches to sustainability.

Applications are invited from suitably experienced and qualified practitioners who have the vision and energy to lead the College through its next phase of development. If you would like to arrange a visit to the College on 29th or 30th April or 1st May 2019 please contact Sarah Threadgold: [sarahthreadgold@southend-adult.ac.uk](mailto:sarahthreadgold@southend-adult.ac.uk) or on 01702 445700, to make arrangements.

For an application pack please contact email Jane Elson: [leadershiprecruitment@southend.gov.uk](mailto:leadershiprecruitment@southend.gov.uk)

Completed applications should be sent to Jane to arrive by **9am on Tuesday 7th May 2019**. Interview and assessment days will

take place on **Thursday 23rd May and Friday 24th May 2019**.

This post is subject to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check (including update service).

Southend Adult Community college welcomes applications regardless of gender, disability, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation or faith.

The college is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment and that students and staff can study and work in an environment free from harassment and bullying.

Southend Adult Community College aims to achieve curriculum excellence by promoting consistently high standards of teaching, learning and assessment across all provision. We expect all staff to take Personal Responsibility In Delivering Excellence (PRIDE).



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Coleg Gwent is one of the largest colleges in the UK, with five major campuses located throughout South East Wales. Within easy access of the M4 corridor and surrounding rural areas, the City of Newport Campus serves a large and diverse range of learners, usually recruiting in excess of 4500 students per year; of which 1900 are full-time. The campus is within easy reach of some of the most beautiful countryside in South Wales and the area offers many attractions for those seeking to relocate.

The School for Engineering has within it over 30 staff and oversees a wide range of curriculum that includes CAD, Mechanical & Electrical Engineering, Motor Vehicle, Vehicle Body Repair and Fabrication & Welding provision. This spans across courses for school-link, WBL & HE learners and significant part-time commercial activity.

We wish to recruit someone who can continue to develop an already successful School, particularly focussing on outcomes on FT and WBL programmes and further increasing non-core income activity. You will need to be innovative, creative, thorough and determined. You will also need to demonstrate that you are an enthusiastic manager with a record of success in improving performance and leading teams. A background in "Engineering" or a related STEM subject area is desirable.

As one of our key managers, you will provide leadership to staff and direct, develop and manage the delivery of excellent teaching and learning. You will also possess the skills to enhance and develop the existing curriculum. A fully qualified teacher with significant experience in post-16 education, we will need you to quickly establish yourself within the leadership and management team on the City of Newport Campus working with other Heads of School, both at the Campus and cross-College.

The College offers many good employment benefits including generous holiday entitlement, pension scheme and many on-site benefits and facilities. You will join a college that is ambitious, purposeful, committed and supportive. If you want to make a difference, this is the place to do it. For our part, we'll make sure that you are given a warm welcome, plenty of encouragement and a good deal of job satisfaction.

Applications may be submitted in Welsh and will not be treated less favourably than applications submitted in English. The ability to use the Welsh language at basic level (or willingness to undertake training) is desirable.

The College is committed to safeguarding, ensuring the safety and welfare of children and young people. Employment is subject to a satisfactory Enhanced

Disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service and registration with the Education Workforce Council.

Please note that successful candidates will be expected to pay for the Enhanced Disclosure and registration with the Education Workforce Council (EWC).

We particularly welcome applications from candidates who speak languages other than English and also from under-represented groups including ethnicity, gender, transgender, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion, in line with our Equality Opportunities policy. All campuses are accessible and facilities such as prayer rooms are available.

We are committed to the recruitment and retention of disabled people, and are a Disability Confident Employer.

To apply, please visit [https://www.colegwent.ac.uk/thecollege/jobs\\_and\\_careers\\_\(323\)](https://www.colegwent.ac.uk/thecollege/jobs_and_careers_(323))

**Closing Date: 12:00 noon Thursday 16 May 2019**

**Interview Date: Friday 24 May 2019**

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## EDITORIAL



## As the wheels fall off plans for the first PhD level apprenticeship, have employers been ejected from the driving seat?

This week we reveal that an Institute for Apprenticeships sub-committee (that includes four board members) refused to approve the first PhD level 8 apprenticeship.

Instead, they asked the full board to rule whether a PhD level is even “in the spirit of apprenticeship policy”.

Four months on and the board is still in discussions with the DfE about an agreed level 8 policy, despite employers working on plans for a year, and the DfE is “looking carefully at what the priorities of

the programme should be from 2020 onwards”.

The IfA hasn't always given employers what they want, often quoting rules originating from the DfE when rejecting demands.

But there does appear to be far more concern over value or money and a weakening of the employer-ownership mantra, given it was only last May that their chief executive, Sir Gerry Berragan, told the education select committee: “The institute is completely agnostic about the level of apprenticeships” and

“from my perspective, this is an employer-led process, and that is who we reflect.”

And at the same sub-committee meeting in December the IfA called for their board to consider if the “increasing number of degree apprenticeships, particularly at level 7, may put pressure on funding for delivery of apprenticeships at the lower levels, while cross-subsiding higher education from the apprenticeship budget”.

Despite this the IfA told *FE Week* this was not discussed at

the following board meeting, so it remains unclear what the board think.

And as for the IfA chief executive, it seems if he does have a view he is not keen to share it, given ahead of our last interview it was a “condition that he wouldn't answer questions relating to the levy and apprenticeships budget because that's DfE responsibility”.

The truth is, as eloquently articulated by the DfE permanent secretary, the apprenticeship budget is on track to be overspent

and hard choices will need to be made.

Now more than ever before we can be honest and say the employer-ownership experiment has proved unaffordable.

The young people that would benefit most from the public funding should be in the driving seat, and the IfA could have an important role in helping define the priorities to make that happen.

**Nick Linford, Editor**  
news@feweek.co.uk

## Readers' reply



EMAIL



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WEBSITE

### Tenth UTC closure announced

What a farce, how can UTC do this to the pupils! Especially as the exams are ongoing. They should have known this was going to happen from the off. I'm so upset for the teachers, but most of all the children, as they are our future teachers, nurses etc!

Nicholette Whittle

### Creeping complexity has reached critical levels in FE

Love the phrase “creeping complexity”, so accurate, an absolute minefield at the moment.

Ben Hansford

### Huge employer provider to downsize and scrap all level 2 apprenticeships

What a shame, but underlines the significant impact of the reforms,

government changes, funding-band reductions and additional and unwanted bureaucracy that is making more employers think twice about how best to develop their workforce.

@djhoughton

Halfords will not be alone. Whilst some will see the part reason of the £5k to £4k cut as just an excuse, it is affecting other large retailers too. An unintended consequence of the IFATE's obtuse funding tactics will see others following this lead.

Tony Allen

### Treasury took back over £300m despite small employers being turned away

Absolutely agree, this is unacceptable. Levy money should be spent on skills/ apprenticeships, not

snatched by treasury for erroneous uses.

Bryony Kingsland

This is highly unusual for me, but I actually feel sorry for Keith Smith here. It's not his fault treasury “took the money back” – that's how it works for any government spending department.

Steve Hewitt

It's not as if this wasn't pointed out when the policy was rolled out, but the scale is shocking.

Ally Braithwaite

Poor contract management by EFSA. Maybe they should put their staff on management apprenticeships to ensure these mistakes don't happen again.

Tim Buchanan

## REPLY OF THE WEEK

### Plans revealed for Londoners to receive free ESOL courses up to entry level 3 from next year



All learners, regardless of age, should have an absolute entitlement to a fully-funded first Level 3 qualification. That policy alone would do more for productivity and social mobility than any other.

Tom Bewick

## Experts

PROFESSOR  
EWART KEEP

Director, The Centre on Skills, Knowledge and Organisational Performance (SKOPE)



## Is there any more centralised skills system in the developed world?

**Policy-making conducted in a bunker is a poor way to do business, says Ewart Keep. Instead it should be shared to include all stakeholders**

As the pages of *FE Week* repeatedly demonstrate, policy finds itself in a bit of a mess. Why did we get to this point? There are a host of reasons, but this column will focus on some glaring deficiencies in national policy machinery.

Most developed countries support employers to engage with skills issues collectively at national, local and sectoral levels. We, on the whole, no longer bother. The sector skill councils were deemed imperfect, but rather than try to improve them, the government opted for the perfection of a vacuum and stopped funding and encouraging collective capacity.

Having tired of formalised sectoral bodies, it replaced them with a patchwork quilt of one-off clubs (eg, trailblazer groups) and with

attempts to deal with employers on an individual basis. This means that we now lack a coherent, authoritative employer voice, and are further away than ever from encouraging and enabling firms to act as partners and co-producers rather than a set of fragmented, semi-detached and grumpy customers of the skills system.

Most countries' skills delivery systems are far more devolved than ours. The power of central government to act unilaterally is circumscribed by the need to secure the support of regional and local administrations (who deliver much of the skills activity), and that of the social partners – employers and trade unions.

Policy-making is shared across levels and with a range of partners, not least learning providers of various sorts, rather than being massively centralised as in England. Abroad, consensus rather than random ministerial fiat tends to be the dominant *modus operandi*. Here,

with almost every education and training reform over the past 35 years the secretary of state has acquired new powers. It is now an open question whether there is any more centralised skills system in the developed world.

English centralisation, particularly

**“Policy is made in ignorance of how it is likely to play out”**

in the context of what is a relatively large (in population and economic activity terms) country, brings with it major problems of communication and trust. For instance, most nations build in, not least through the institutional arrangements described above, mechanisms that

allow bottom-up feedback from frontline staff back to policy-makers so that both parties can arrive at a shared understanding of how policies and programmes will play out in the real world.

We tend to avoid doing this at all cost. Ministers and senior officials often have a very limited comprehension of how the education and training system actually works – although they do know how they think it should operate according to their plans – and, as a result, there is often a fatal distance between intention and reality, design and implementation. Policy is effectively being made in ignorance of how it is likely to play out when actually delivered – see apprenticeships as a prime example.

Unless and until we start to learn to devolve and share power and responsibility, for both delivery and policy formation; unless we learn to find ways to work with employers

and other stakeholders in a more structured and concerted fashion; and unless we learn to trust the voice of the practitioner and of those who have to actually make policy work, lasting progress will elude us. The key point is that this is not a call for policy-makers to embrace warm fuzzy feelings about other stakeholders. It is a call for institutional change and for a new architecture of relationships and representation within skills policy formation and delivery.

The current model is a mess and is delivering highly sub-optimal outcomes. It is also creating tensions and conflicts of interest that will be hard to resolve – for example, between level 2 and 3 apprenticeships for young people, and level 6 and 7 “apprenticeships” for adult (and usually experienced) managers. Policy-making conducted in a bunker is a very, very poor way to try to do business.

JAKE  
TWEEN

Head of apprenticeships, DSW



## How to make sure apprentices finish before the Gateway closes

**Many apprentices are missing their end-point assessments because they have not done their 20 per cent off-the-job training. The solution is to spend time at the planning stage, says Jake Tween**

We are reaching a pivotal moment with the new standards. The first large cohorts of apprentices are coming to the end of their programmes and approaching Gateway, a critical milestone in their journey. This is the point at which the employer, training provider and apprentice all agree that the on-programme requirements have been met and the apprentice is ready to undertake their end-point assessment.

What many of us are finding, however, is that many are not reaching Gateway on the anticipated dates. Typically, they are completing three to four months later than planned – and in some cases they appear to be stuck and not progressing at all.

Such slippages are not necessarily a cause for concern; indeed, they are a sign that policy is working as intended. One of the key criticisms of apprenticeship frameworks was that successful apprentices were lacking the ability to effectively apply their skills and knowledge in the workplace. It stands to reason that a rigorous, independent end-point assessment (EPA) should require a longer period of training, preparation and mastery. However, communication with EPA assessors is essential to avoid bottlenecks and conflicting priorities further down the line.

So, what is causing this issue of “Gateway slippage”? I have spoken to a number of clients and the truth is there are a multitude of factors at play. But there is one common factor: 20 per cent off-the-job (OTJ) training.

### The 20 per cent conundrum...

Many providers are finding that apprentices who reach Gateway have not yet been able to meet the 20 per

cent OTJ training requirement. This may be caused by sickness, etc, but is more commonly due to employers not releasing the apprentice for the agreed amount of time.

This is not intended to denigrate employers but is merely acknowledging the reality of running

**“Consider front-loading, Then the OTJ training is already in the bag”**

a business: priorities shift, staff call in sick and, ultimately, business always comes first. The problem is compounded once the planned Gateway date has been missed. For every day that passes without training, the apprentice moves further away

from his or her 20 per cent target. It becomes increasingly difficult for the employer to justify releasing the apprentice, and the apprentice becomes disengaged with the whole process.

Training providers cannot then claim their completion payment – and EPA organisations don't get paid at all.

### Solutions?

The planning stage is critical. Training providers and employers need to be open, honest and realistic about when the apprentice is available for training. It is an absolute given that things will change, but this can be managed and mitigated through regular reviews and revisions to the schedule.

Many employers still mistakenly equate 20 per cent OTJ training as a day a week out of the office. Most of us know by now that there are plenty of naturally-occurring activities that take place in the workplace. It's

important that we give employers and apprentices the tools to understand and record this.

There are other things to consider, such as planning OTJ training around quieter periods. For example, avoid scheduling in classroom-based training for a retailer during Christmas, or for an airline during the summer holidays. Make use of online and distance learning to create a blended approach towards training delivery. Encourage apprentices to play a part and to log activities that they think may contribute.

Last, consider front-loading OTJ training. There is a school of thought that considers this good practice – deliver the bulk of the knowledge up front and allow apprentices time to apply it in the workplace, practising and refining their skills as they go. It also means that if business needs do take over later down the line, then the OTJ training is already in the bag.

The key message? Plan for the worst, but strive for the best!

# SUE PITTOCK

CEO, Remit Training



## Does government really care about level 2 and 3 apprenticeships?

**Lower-value programmes, which support the youngest and often most vulnerable apprentices, are at risk of becoming unattractive to deliver, says Sue Pittock**

After Halfords' announcement that it plans to scrap its level 2 provision because of a desire "to continue delivering highest quality training", it didn't take long for a staff email to reach FE Week revealing that the 20 per cent funding cut was a key reason for stopping the programme.

Rated 'good' by Ofsted in March, Halfords knows what makes a great programme, and what it costs to deliver quality teaching and learning. Its description of the challenge it faces is very clear. Delivering quality programmes is not possible without the right funding.

The decline of level 2 apprenticeship starts since the introduction of the levy in May 2017 has been widely reported. Compare the first six months of 2016-17

with the first six months of 2018-19 and the change is significant: starts at level 2 are down by more than 42 per cent (which equates to 63,000).

At the same time higher apprenticeship starts have more than doubled, from 18,000 to 43,000, an increase of 138 per cent.

With the increase in starts at higher levels, and the associated high funding bands, you would expect these standards to be under early review. However, to date, of the 61 reviews that have taken place or are underway, only seven are at level 5 or above, with 44 at levels 2 and 3.

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) describes its process of reviewing funding bands as "open, consistent and collaborative", considering evidence from employers, training providers, end-point assessment (EPA) bodies and trailblazer groups.

Working across a wide range of sectors, including automotive, IT, management, hospitality, food

manufacturing and craft, Remit has been engaged with many trailblazer groups and funding band reviews.

The experiences of trailblazer chairs are very different. New funding bands are proposed with little explanation or justification by the IfATE, with employers unclear about how the

**"Starts at level 2 are down by more than 42 per cent"**

decision was reached, and why the new band selected. These experiences seem contrary to the openness, consistency and collaboration the IfATE describes.

Funding band reviews present a real risk to ensuring there are providers in the marketplace who can support employers to deliver the standards

they need. Where funding is reduced to the point that quality is compromised, providers of all types will have to consider whether a standard remains viable to deliver.

If this were to happen, the lower-value programmes at levels 2 and 3, supporting the youngest and often most vulnerable apprentices, are at risk of becoming unattractive to deliver.

The health and social care market is an example of reduced employer appetite for level 2 and 3 programmes and demonstrates the impact of low funding bands. There has been a decline from 90,290 starts in 2016-17, to 44,380 in 2017-18, and just 15,440 starts during the first half of 2018-19. If this continues the market will have shrunk by two thirds in the past two years against a backdrop of increasing demand for health and social care workers.

If government is concerned about affordability, it needs to think about what it wants to fund. Is a reduction in funding for high-volume level 2 and

3 programmes required to fund the unexpected uptake at higher levels? And if so, is that right? Or should government consider regulating who can undertake a funded apprenticeship, and what they can study?

Trailblazer chairs are industry professionals, not experts in apprenticeship policy and funding. They need clear templates and guidance from the IfATE on how to lead the gathering of evidence submissions from their chosen providers and EPA bodies, and how to review these for completeness and accuracy before submission. This will prevent variations in how evidence is displayed, what is included and how this is calculated.

At a time of uncertainty, employers need to be confident the skills system supports them to build the workforce they need to be successful. Apprenticeships could and should be an essential part of this approach, providing the system is funded appropriately.

NOT TO BE MISSED

## UPCOMING EVENTS

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# Bulletin



**Andrew Kaye**

**Principal and chief executive,  
Fareham College**

**Start date** April 2019

**Previous job**

Deputy principal, Fareham College

**Interesting fact**

He gets up at 5am every morning to swim



**Darrell DeSouza**

**Group principal and chief  
executive, Harrow College  
Uxbridge College**

**Start date** August 2019

**Previous job**

Vice principal, Harrow College Uxbridge College

**Interesting fact**

He enjoys sports, photography and music



**Martin McGuire**

**Director for Scotland,  
WorldSkills UK**

**Start date** September 2019

**Previous job**

Principal, New College Lanarkshire

**Interesting fact**

As a penniless student in Glasgow in the 80s, he busked outside the famous Rogano restaurant



**Yiannis Koursis**

**Principal and chief executive,  
Barnsley College**

**Start date** April 2019

**Previous job**

Interim principal, Barnsley College

**Interesting fact**

He was a yachtmaster at the age of 17

# Movers & Shakers

...

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

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](mailto:news@feweek.co.uk)

# FEWEEK

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or call 020 81234 778

**ncfe.**

# the future of english and maths conference.

## Creating a level playing field for English and maths

Join NCFE for a one-day conference looking at the future of English and maths. Hear from policy and subject experts as we dissect current standings and discuss how and why a level playing field should exist for these vital subjects.

We'll explore alternatives to the mainstream GCSEs and how the Functional Skills reform will help to enable equality in the reputation of GCSE alternatives.

As well as hearing from key speakers in the sector, we'll also host some useful workshops looking at topics such as the Functional Skills reform and how to successfully implement these subjects and qualifications within your organisation.

You'll also get the opportunity to network and share best practice with peers from organisations based around the country.

## We'll be joined by a fantastic panel of speakers

**Mark Dawe - CEO - AELP**

English and maths in the skills system

**Catherine Sezen - Senior Policy Manager, FE - AoC**

Resits, reformed Functional Skills, transition and T Levels - the future of post 16 English and maths in a changing landscape

**John Dixon - CEO - YourCode Group**

How alternative qualifications help me succeed

**Stephen Evans - CEO - Learning and Work Institute**

New ways to engage people and deliver learning

**Limited places available, visit [ncfe.org.uk/conference](https://ncfe.org.uk/conference) to book your tickets now!**

### Event details

**Date:** Wednesday 22 May

**Time:** 09.30 – 16.30

**Venue:** Holiday Inn London Bloomsbury

**Price:** £59

**visit** [ncfe.org.uk/conference](https://ncfe.org.uk/conference)

**email** [events@ncfe.org.uk](mailto:events@ncfe.org.uk)

Wednesday 22 May  
London

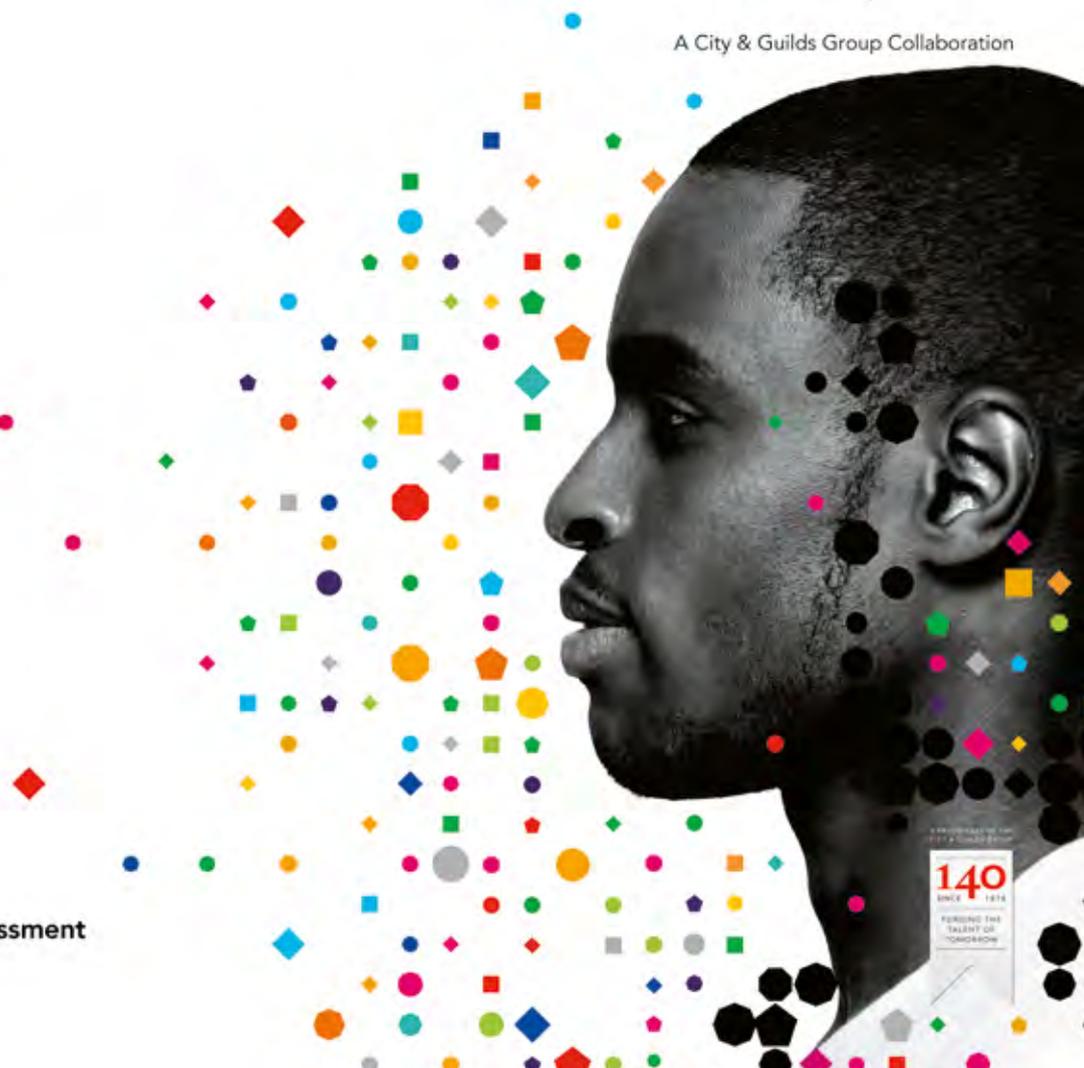
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## FE Week Sudoku challenge

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

Difficulty: Easy

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

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](mailto:news@feweek.co.uk).



Last Edition's winner: Sion Farrell

## Solutions

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

Difficulty: Easy

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

Difficulty: Medium

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