



FEWEEK

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EDITION 282

ESFA FAILED TO CHECK HADLOW ACCOUNTS

Earlier intervention could have saved the college from insolvency

See news on page 8 & editorial on page 15

HADLOW COLLEGE LEADERSHIP HID THE TRUTH UNTIL CASH RAN OUT



Image credit: Manu Palomeque

L-R: Mark Lumsdon-Taylor, deputy group principal, with Paul Hannan, group principal, in a photoshoot for *Kent Life* last year

- Damning FE Commissioner report exposes 'corporate failure of leadership'
- Senior college staff describe being cut out and 'isolated' from key decision-making
- 'Systematic failure of governance' after board unaware of 'complete crisis'
- College now in administration, and skills minister warns of the 'perilous position'

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See pages 8 & 9

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CORRECTIONS

In edition 281 of FE Week, a story headlined 'Grenfell community meets the PM about 'threat' to local college', Mary Curnock Cook was mistakenly named as the chair of Kensington and Chelsea College at the time of the sale of its Wornington Road campus in 2016. The chair at the time of the sale was actually Naraindra Maharaj. Curnock Cook did not joined the KCC board until May 2017. We apologise for this error.

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Creditors set to lose out as eResponse liquidators settle for just £200,000

BILLY CAMDEN
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Exclusive

The directors of a provider that had its government funding contracts terminated following an *FE Week* exposé only have to pay back £200,000 following its liquidation, despite owing nearly £3 million to creditors.

Furthermore, the amount, which is likely to go straight into the pockets of the insolvency practitioners to cover their fees, has been arrived at even though the directors' new business is producing millions in profit.

In 2016, Paul and Joe Alekna switched the ownership of a successful provider they ran from one parent company – eResponse – to another, before transferring out £6 million, liquidating it and leaving learners and creditors on the hook for millions of pounds.

Meanwhile, the brothers continued to run another provider called Options 2 Workplace. But when *FE Week* exposed the situation, the Education

and Skills Funding Agency cancelled its contract and eResponse – which changed its name to ER Training & Development Limited after the revelation – went insolvent in August that year.

A liquidator's statement published in October 2018 shows the company owes £2,783,953 to creditors. The HMRC alone is owed £614,861.

FE Week has now learnt that a "settlement agreement" has been reached, which will see the directors pay £200,000 to the liquidation.

In January 2017 it was agreed that the liquidators would be paid a "set fee" of £125,743 for their work, according to the statement published in October.

It goes on to state that these fees have now been "exceeded", and that the liquidator will "review the position as regards fees when the prospects of realising the remaining assets becomes clearer".

The total fees being claimed by the insolvency practitioners are not known, but they are likely to be close to the £200,000 settlement – meaning there won't be much left for

creditors.

The insolvency practitioners and the directors were approached for comment but none provided a response at the time of going to press.

Since the insolvency of eResponse, the Aleknas have launched a recruitment firm called Workforce Solutions Group Ltd.

Its latest accounts show its turnover grew from £9.5 million in the five months from April 2016 to September 2016, to £26.75 million in the 2016-17 financial year.

The company made a gross profit that was just shy of £5 million in that year.

Workforce Solutions Group Ltd hasn't gone without controversy since opening. In November *FE Week* revealed its links with a mysterious training provider called SCL Security Ltd, which has taken £16.5 million from Brooklands College over the past three years to deliver hundreds of level 3 IT apprenticeships, for mostly 16-to-18-year-olds, despite having fewer than 10 staff.

SCL Security, which has since been suspended from recruiting



apprentices following the launch of an ESFA investigation into its operations, claims on the government's Find Apprenticeship Training website to "operate training centres nationwide", but its own website makes no reference to any training venues – the only address is for a head office in Kent.

However, a Google Maps search locates one of their training sites as "9 Church Road, Redditch" – the same building that Workforce Solutions Group operates out of.

Paul Alekna previously told *FE*

Week that Workforce "specialises in temporary and permanent staffing, focusing in the manufacturing, logistics and transport, food manufacturing and office appointments sectors", and insisted "that's all we do".

But he refused to deny that Workforce and SCL Security have a working relationship.

The investigation into SCL Security is ongoing. The principal and chief executive of Brooklands College, Gail Walker, has since resigned.

Ofsted finds learners unaware they are on an apprenticeship programme

JESSICA FINO
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An experienced commercial training provider has been heavily criticised by Ofsted after the regulator found a "high proportion" of learners not knowing that they were on an apprenticeship programme.

Manatec Limited, which had 550 apprentices at the time of inspection and is based in Grimsby, received two "insufficient" ratings in its first monitoring visit since it started receiving public funding to train apprentices in May 2017.

Inspectors found that leaders had "not ensured that the apprenticeships they offer meet the requirements of apprentices or of their employers".

Ofsted's report details how the majority of Manatec apprentices "have a poor learning experience, do not gain new knowledge, skills or behaviours" or are, most worryingly, "unaware that they are completing an

apprenticeship programme".

Moreover, leaders and employers do not ensure that all apprentices are suitable for an apprenticeship, Ofsted said, and some individuals are simply existing members of staff.

Manatec has been delivering commercial training for over 30 years, and became a subcontractor to deliver apprenticeships in 2011.

It currently trains 670 apprentices across a range of standards, including care workers, customer service practitioners and team leader/supervisors, all of whom are trained in care-home settings.

Roger Dixon, managing director of the provider, told *FE Week* that despite the "disappointment expressed by our staff at the review findings", Manatec will not challenge the report.

"Instead, Manatec sees it as a development opportunity and is determined to respond positively to the review findings to ensure a true reflection is gained on the next Ofsted Inspection," he said.



Under Education and Skills Funding Agency rules, any provider with an "insufficient" rating in an early monitoring visit Ofsted report will be banned from taking on any new apprentices until the grade improves.

Dixon said Manatec will "continue to support the learning of our apprentices" and "look forward to the impending ESFA hold on starts being lifted".

The provider was found not to be giving learners their entitlement to off-the-job training, meaning that, for "too many of them", the provider does not meet the principles of an apprenticeship.

In fact, most apprentices are unaware of how they will be assessed at the end of their programmes and are unaware of this entitlement, and they end up

completing their training in their own time due to "high workloads".

While leaders and managers have determined a number of strengths and weaknesses as part of their evaluation and self-assessment, they were found to "underestimate the severity of many of the weaknesses".

As a result, they have been "too slow" to ensure that employers and apprentices have high-quality information about the programmes and the quality of the training that apprentices receive.

Moreover, leaders do not have a strong enough relationship with employers, and most employers and their staff do not participate in the planning of apprentices' programmes or in reviewing the progress that apprentices make.

However, Ofsted said learning consultants are "well qualified for, and experienced in, the care sector", and that leaders and managers have ensured that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place.

News

Apprenticeships programme 'out of kilter' with DfE's own objectives, PAC warns

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The way the apprenticeships programme is evolving is "out of kilter" with the government's own objectives, while "poor execution" has created "serious longer-term problems", the Public Accounts Committee has warned.

The damning conclusion was made in the influential committee of MPs' new apprenticeships progress report, which said the reforms made in spring 2017 are failing to deliver.

It hits out at the DfE's "focus" on higher-level apprenticeships and levy-paying employers which "increases the risk that minority groups, disadvantaged areas and smaller employers miss out on the benefits that apprenticeships can bring".

The PAC reiterated what many other sector leaders have warned: that some employers are using apprenticeship funds to pay for professional training or management courses that they would otherwise have paid for themselves.

Speaking to *FE Week*, PAC chair Meg Hillier said the Department for Education has "given away the power to

control" this unintended consequence, and it has lost sight of the original goals of the apprenticeship reforms.

"Obviously some companies were already funding people through MBAs and so on, and I'm absolutely fine with people having continuing professional development at every level, but that's not really what we all thought was going to happen with apprenticeships," she said.

"If levy funding goes on these expensive standards, there will be less for lower-level apprenticeships where the investment in somebody makes a huge difference to their lives, the productivity of the UK and the sector they are going into. A few people doing an MBA I'm sure is helpful to them and the company they are working for, but that's not what ministers intended when coming up with the reforms."

The PAC report said employers' "preference" for higher-cost apprenticeships means the programme is expected to come under growing financial pressure in the coming years.

In December, the Institute for Apprenticeships estimated that the apprenticeships budget for England could be overspent by £0.5 billion this year, rising to £1.5 billion during



Meg Hillier

2021-22.

The National Audit Office then warned in March there was a "clear risk" the apprenticeship programme is not financially sustainable after the average cost of training an apprentice hit double what the government predicted – rising from around £4,500 to £9,000.

It said that employers are developing and choosing more expensive apprenticeship standards at higher levels than was expected, which is "absorbing" the public funding.

Following this, the Association of Employment and Learning

Providers called for all level 6 and 7 apprenticeships to be removed from the scope of levy funding in order to relieve mounting pressure on the budget.

Jonathan Slater, the DfE's permanent secretary, then admitted to a PAC hearing that "hard choices" will need to be made in the face of an imminent apprenticeship budget overspend – which could include prioritising some apprenticeships over others.

Hillier told *FE Week* that it will be a challenge for the government to now tell employers what they can and

cannot spend their apprenticeship levy funds on after giving them free rein to do so.

"There is a big issue there," she said. "The DfE needs to say they didn't expect these consequences and what they're going to do about it."

She added that the DfE is "in danger of moving the goalposts" if they say they are happy with the current set-up and the "hard choices could be saying to some companies 'you may think you can do what you want with the apprenticeship levy but we're going to push for a focus at the lower end'"

The PAC made a series of recommendations to the DfE in its report.

Apprenticeships and skills minister, Anne Milton defended the government's reforms.

"We are making apprenticeships better," she said. "They are now longer, higher quality and have more off-the-job training."

"Our reforms have also seen more employer buy-in, giving employers greater control so they can invest in the people and skills they need."

She added there is "still work to be done, but we won't sacrifice quality for quantity".

Revealed: the quarter-of-a-million pound brand to boost T-levels' visibility

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Exclusive

The government has unveiled its new branding for T-levels, in what has been described as the "first step" toward raising awareness ahead of their rollout in September 2020.

The 'NexT Level' brand logo, designed by marketing firm Havas Worldwide London Ltd, to the tune of £250,000, has been shared exclusively with *FE Week* as a sneak peek to a full branding toolkit, which will include leaflets and "social assets" and be released in "due course".

An extra £3 million will now be handed to Havas for the implementation of a campaign in 2019/20 to help recruit the first wave

of students for the new technical qualifications.

Raising awareness of T-levels among parents and employers is proving to be a huge challenge for the Department for Education. In September, a survey of over 1,000 parents of children aged 11 to 18 commissioned by the Chartered Management Institute found that two-thirds had never heard of the qualifications.

The department is also struggling to convince enough employers to offer the lengthy industry placement component of T-levels, which must last a minimum of 315 hours. Up to 100,000 industry placements will be taken each year when the full rollout commences.

"T-levels will be the biggest change to technical education in a generation," said skills minister Anne Milton. "Right from the start we have worked with employers, young people, their parents

and education providers. I want more and more people to understand that T-levels are a high-quality, advanced and desirable qualification, with employers at the heart of their design.

"I can't wait for more people to learn about what T-levels have to offer and how they can open up a world of exciting options."

The DfE said the branding has been designed in consultation with employer panel members, FE providers, young people and parents.

A procurement for a firm to lead on the work was put out by the department earlier this year and won by Havas in February. The contract is expected to run for 26 months.

Tender documents show that for the development of a "T-level brand and campaign strategy development and some initial implementation" the successful bidder would receive

£250,000.

There has been a slight delay to the launch, as the documents also state that the DfE would "like the T-level brand to be ready in regional marketing activity by March-April".

The budget for 2019-20, for T-level brand and campaign implementation, is "anticipated to be up to £3 million, subject to DfE financial approval and Cabinet Office professional assurance", the tender documents added.

"The budget for 2020-21 is subject to allocation of resources at the next

comprehensive spending review."

The first three T-levels – in digital, construction, and education and childcare – will be taught from September 2020.

Qualifications in health, healthcare science, science, onsite construction, building services engineering, digital support and services, and digital business services will then be taught from 2021.

By 2022, the government will introduce the final wave of T-levels – 15 in total.

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News

Provider to stop delivering care apprentice standards after DfE rejects funding rate plea

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Exclusive

A significant apprenticeship provider plans to stop recruiting in the care sector after the government rejected calls to increase funding rates.

The “devastating” decision is being taken by Surrey-based Professional Training Solutions (PTS) Limited, which offers hundreds of apprenticeships every year, mostly in health and social care.

It was desperate for the Department for Education to double the funding bands for the level 2 adult care-worker and level 3 lead adult care-worker standards, which have recently been reviewed by the Institute for Apprenticeships, to £6,000.

The provider’s managing director Jackie Denyer told *FE Week* she is working at a 9 per cent loss upon achievement, and a 30 per cent loss if an apprentice doesn’t achieve, at the current band of £3,000.

But despite a robust plea from the trailblazer group which developed the standards, the government decided to keep the rates as they are.

Officials have now been accused of undervaluing the care sector, with one other provider branding the decision a “disgrace”.

“As a business I cannot sustain these poorly funded standards,” Denyer said.

“I’m devastated because it is something I feel really passionate about. The care sector is low paid and made up predominantly of women, and I’m devastated that the government undervalues the people who underpin the whole economy.”

It comes at an awkward time for the IfA, which announced last week it will soon start evaluating the impact of its controversial funding band reviews, and promised to “take action” where reductions have made delivering apprentice training non-viable.

In recent months, major retailer Halfords has scrapped all of its level 2 provision and blamed the move on the IfA’s decision to cut the funding for the standards it delivered. Meanwhile, Scania, a leading manufacturer of heavy trucks and buses, has warned that its industry’s long-term skills strategy is threatened by the proposal to slash funding for the apprenticeships it delivers.

Jill Whittaker, the managing director of HIT Training, offers around 1,500



apprenticeships every year on the care standards that didn’t see their rate increased.

She told *FE Week* her provider will continue to deliver them despite also working at a loss as “we believe strongly in the value of the care sector to our society”. However, they will need to “reduce the amount of face to face time that our staff spend with apprentices to minimise losses on these programmes”.

“It says something shocking about the society we live in that its government places little value on the skills of people who care for our most vulnerable citizens,” Whittaker said.

“Only this week Matthew Hancock, now health minister but previously

minister for skills, was talking about investing in skills in the care sector to ensure carers and healthcare staff are properly trained.

“If this investment is skimmed on as part of the IfA’s driving down of costs then we will have apprenticeships based on the lowest common denominator, driven by price not quality. It’s a disgrace.”

Home Counties Carers is one employer that currently works with PTS to offer care apprenticeships. Its head of care, Ingrid Clift, said the company will “really struggle to provide these” following the decision of the provider to stop delivering the training.

“We are working in a sector where

there is never enough staff due to an ageing UK, low wages, bad working conditions, long hours and more,” she said.

“Yet the expectation is that good-quality, caring, effective, responsive, safe and well-led care is provided 24/7.

“Our dear loved ones need care and support but are denied decent funding for the sector that trains and develops the staff needed to care for these precious people.”

A spokesperson for the IfA insisted the government is “fully committed to supporting apprenticeships at all levels and across all industry routes”.

“The aim with all standards that go through the funding review process is to ensure the funding band we recommend provides for quality apprenticeship training and assessment,” he added.

“Each standard is considered on its own merits following the same rigorous processes. This was the case with the care standards.”

PTS will continue to deliver some apprenticeships in health and social care, including the early-years educator and the nursery assistant standards, as well as in other sectors, such as business administration, customer service and leadership and management.

DfE's double standards over level 2 business admin apprenticeship

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Exclusive

The Department for Education has been accused of double standards after it launched a recruitment drive for level 2 business administration apprentices on frameworks while refusing to approve an equivalent standard.

Old-style apprenticeship frameworks will be fully switched off next year and replaced with standards, which the government constantly lauds as being of “higher quality”.

But in an unusual move, the DfE recently posted an advert seeking 11 people to take on a level 2 business administration apprenticeship framework across its Coventry, London and Sheffield offices.

While saying it was “absolutely fantastic” that the DfE was offering this apprenticeship, and that “at this rate we could start to call the department a true champion of social mobility”, the Association of Employment and Learning Providers said: “How strange, then, that one of its own agencies appears to be defying the sponsoring department for apprenticeships by resisting a much-needed replacement standard that major employers in the public and private sectors want.”

East Sussex County Council, supported by SkillsFirst and employers including the NHS, have been campaigning for a business administration apprenticeship standard at level 2. However, the Institute for Apprenticeships has repeatedly refused the proposals because of its concerns about overlap with the same standard that is approved at level 3.

Skills minister Anne Milton is understood to be sympathetic to the campaign, but she previously told *FE Week* that she and the institute are concerned about whether there would be enough 20 per cent off-the-job training available for the standard at level 2.

The IfA told *FE Week* it is currently consulting on approving a level 2 business support assistant standard instead, with the target date for approval being December 20, 2019, but that this will be different to what is being campaigned for.

The IfA’s proposal explains that this differs from the level 3 business administration standard as the latter “focuses on the decision-making responsibilities of the role”, whereas

the level 2 business support role “emphasises the supporting nature of the role, and the need to act under supervision”.

Last year, the AELP threw its weight behind calls for a business administration level 2 standard after “disbelief” that the trailblazer group’s proposals were rejected.

“The IfA have got a robust set of proposals in front of them to sign off and they should get on with it, so that the DfE and others can carry on recruiting,” Mark Dawe, chief executive of the association, said this week.

Lucy Hunte, national programme manager at Health Education England, previously said she was concerned “if

the framework is turned off with no replacement standard then we will be removing this route into the NHS for any candidate who does not have the literacy and numeracy levels required for the level 3 standard and therefore severely limiting our future workforce supply”.

And Caroline Bragg, employability and skills strategy manager at East Sussex County Council, warned: “By not allowing a level 2 standard, the IfA is seeking to cut off a key entry route into the workplace, therefore stifling the social mobility of young people into employment. Furthermore, it is not listening to business in what is meant to be an ‘employer-led’ system.”

The DfE did not respond to requests for comment about why it is recruiting apprentices on old-style frameworks.

The consultation for the level 2 business support assistant standard is open until May 26.



Mark Dawe

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ANNE MILTON
Apprenticeships
and skills minister

AELP is delighted to announce that for the third successive year, apprenticeships and skills minister Anne Milton will be speaking on day 1 at the AELP Annual Conference, sponsored by NCFE. Off the back of another critical report from a committee of MPs, the minister is expected to offer her usual honest appraisal of where we are at with the apprenticeship reforms before setting out the next steps of the transition that should lead to all employers being on the apprenticeship service.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

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aelpannualconference.org.uk

News

Former college leadership and ES

FE Commissioner verdict: a 'corporate failure of leadership' led to administration

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From front

A damning FE Commissioner report has revealed how Hadlow Group's leaders concealed the truth of its financial position until the college needed bailing out, in a "corporate failure of leadership".

Richard Atkins' reports on Hadlow and West Kent and Ashford College were published on Thursday, the day after the High Court put Hadlow into education administration – the first time that has ever happened to a college.

The report reveals how a clique of leaders and governors ran the college on their own, having cut out executive team members and left board members and the government completely unaware of the "extremely

serious financial situation" at the college.

Deputy principal Mark Lumsdon-Taylor declined to comment after the commissioner report said he and principal Paul Hannan made decisions themselves and reacted "strongly" when challenged by others.

Entwined government arrangements, where the college shared an audit, finance and governance committee, led to a few individuals having "significant sway" over all the organisations in the group, the report said.

In his report, the commissioner argues the board failed in its fiduciary duty and put the sustainability of the two colleges and its learners "at risk".

"Loans" were the key evidence behind the commissioner's team's claim that there were "significant and long-standing" concerns about the reliability of data at the college.

This extended to the college's grade

one Ofsted rating from 2010, as the emerging issues with leadership, governance and management brings into question the board's self-assessed grade of "outstanding" for the past three years.

Achievements in its 16-19 study programmes fell by 2.7 per cent between 2015-16 and 2017-18, from 86.1 per cent to 83.4 per cent.

An Ofsted spokesperson said the regulator was "aware" of the achievement rates for 16-19 provision at Hadlow College and would continue to keep the situation under review.

A spokesperson said Hadlow College and WKAC have already begun implementing the FE Commissioner's recommendations, including those to recruit an interim chief financial officer and increase the financial expertise on the board, and the college is working on addressing its clerking, governance and auditing.



The two colleges have also separated their boards, each of which has a new chair, and a buyer for its £40 million subsidiary Betteshanger Park site is being sought, with the intention of finding one by July 31.

This is after the commissioner challenged the college to justify the

educational rationale for the college's involvement in the business.

The commissioner did take the opportunity to refer to the dedication and commitment of the college's staff, in what the spokesperson said "continues to be a challenging time for them".

ESFA failed to check accounts

The Hadlow Group's financial crisis could have been caught sooner, had the ESFA checked the college's self-assessed financial health score of "good" against its accounts and realised that the college had not included borrowings, such as a £3 million loan.

Every year, colleges have to send the ESFA financial data to calculate a financial health score.

The college sent ESFA data in which they claimed to have a "borrowing as a percentage of income" of 24.41 per cent.

This would have been given an automatic financial health score of 80 out of 100 by the ESFA, according to the college financial planning

handbook.

But analysis by FE Week of the Hadlow College accounts found the borrowing percentage was in fact 45.35 per cent.

This would have scored 40 out of 100 and would explain a shift in the score from "good" to "inadequate".

The commissioner's report found "material differences", particularly in relation to loans, between Hadlow's annual accounts and its self-generated score of "good" in 2016-17.

The 2016-17 Hadlow College accounts show that, for example, in addition to long-term college bank loans, one of their subsidiary businesses, Grove Farm Park Limited, took out a substantial £3.3 million

eight-year loan in 2015.

FE Week spoke to a financial adviser who works with many FE colleges, and who criticised the ESFA's assurance role on this occasion.

"Accountants don't audit the financial record. There is an expectation the ESFA will check the financial record they receive from the college against the statutory accounts.

"Clearly with Hadlow College, this did not happen, which brings into question what, if anything, the ESFA does to check the reliability of the data they receive."

Skills minister Anne Milton has promised an independent review into processes for monitoring college finances, saying: "The DfE will be

undertaking an independent review to check whether there is anything more we should do to make sure we know if things like this are going on at a

WHO RUNS HADLOW COLLEGE NOW?

A High Court judge has approved the appointment of three administrators – all of whom are from the same firm, BDO – to take over the running of Hadlow College.

The administrators' objectives are to protect provision for existing learners, then seek the best outcome for creditors.

Education administrators do not have to have direct experience of

the FE sector, but they can consult sector experts for advice. The FE Commissioner has already said he will be making recommendations to them about the college's future.

They are not obliged to consult any specific person about redundancies, though the college has stressed it envisages no changes to staffing as a result of the appointment of administrators.



Graham Newton
Partner, BDO



Matthew Tait
Partner, BDO



Danny Dartnail
Business restructuring
partner, BDO

much earlier stage.

"I have also asked officials to check whether we have proper procedures in place for whistleblowers."

This comes after the FE Commissioner's report made

reference to concerns that had been raised during their visit about whistleblowing.

Milton added that the government's immediate focus is on minimising disruption to staff and learners.

surpluses.

The college's finance record for 2016/17 shows an automated financial health score of 'Good'. However, when this is compared to the annual accounts there are material differences, particularly in relation to loans. When the finance record is amended to reflect the annual accounts the automated health score is 'Inadequate'.

Financial control and management accounts have not been effective in controlling or

FA financial oversight in the dock

'We were genuinely shocked by what we found'

Exclusive

The FE Commissioner, Richard Atkins, was due to visit West Kent and Ashford College following their Ofsted grade three late last year. In the week before the scheduled visit, he was tipped off by another principal that Hadlow College had run out of cash and the finance director was about to quit. They had approached the other college for help, but instead, the principal alerted Atkins to what "sounds really serious".

Here, in Atkins' own words, tells FE Week editor Nick Linford what he found when he arrived at Hadlow College in early February.

Four of us went into the college four times in early February, including former principals and chartered accountants, and we were genuinely shocked by what we found. After the tip-off, they were about to run out of money. I knew when we arrived things were going to be difficult. When we walked through the door the vice-principal, Mark Lumsden-Taylor, had already resigned and was on gardening leave. He still lived on the premises but had already left his employment by the first day we arrived.

The principal, Paul Hannan, was in the college on the day we arrived. He was not well and he left the college at midday to see a doctor and he did not return, and I do not think he ever came back from that moment. I was also told the vice-principal was suffering from ill-health. So when I arrived, I was confronted with both the vice-

principal and principal saying they were suffering from ill health.

But I was able to meet with key governors and other senior leaders, and it became really obvious to us very quickly – the governors had been failing in their fiduciary duty. Hadlow was completely running out of money and would not be able to

"There was a real determination not to receive difficult feedback"

make the payroll in February without exceptional financial support.

There had been very poor communication and lack of transparency and we had serious concerns about clerking and about audits. We could see mission drift, very overly complex subsidiary company arrangements, over-complex relations between the two colleges and governance.

There were also irregularities in additional learning support funding which we had first begun to identify at the end of area review. Then there were what I would describe as inaccurate self-assessments, with Hadlow still self-assessing as "outstanding" for overall effectiveness and for leadership. And something I see in a number of colleges that



Richard Atkins

fail – there was a real determination not to receive difficult feedback. They were still celebrating their Ofsted "outstanding" from nine years previously, and they found any form of difficult feedback during area review, or during our intervention, very difficult to deal with. They couldn't recognise it.

We found things like Betteshanger, which we struggled at first to understand – the vineyard, the cookery school. Neither seemed to be financially

"Hadlow would not be able to make the payroll in February"

successful, nor core business.

Given the combination of running out of money and the very poor governance and leadership at the college in previous years, it was

inevitable this college would end up in administration. I'm saddened that has happened, but I think it was absolutely appropriate.

The education administrator has a legal responsibility to take forward investigations into the various concerns we have about what we found when we went there in February, in terms of mismanagement, poor financial info and potential irregularities, of which there are several.

Are you tough enough? FE Commissioner on the hunt for deputy and advisers

FRASER WHIELDON
FRASER@FEWEEK.CO.UK

The Department for Education is on the hunt for a new deputy FE Commissioner and four advisers for the commissioner's office.

According to an advert posted on the Cabinet Office website, the deputy commissioner role can earn up to £140,000 a year for a maximum of 200 days' work

and would involve supporting the commissioner, Richard Atkins, in diagnostic assessments, interventions, local provision reviews, and structure and prospects appraisals.

Colleges that are at risk from a quality or financial issue can receive a diagnostic assessment from the commissioner, where their approach to managing risks is appraised.

The much more serious formal interventions involve the

commissioner assessing the capacity of the existing governance and leadership at a single, troubled institution, and recommending changes to help its outlook, and that of its learners.

Formal interventions have previously taken place at Hadlow College (see above), West Kent and Ashford College and North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College to name a few.

Local provision reviews were

announced in April, and involve looking at an area, rather than an isolated institution.

The DfE was criticised by the Association of Colleges at the time for not including small "non-viable" school sixth forms, which it said are too costly and compromise too much on quality.

A structure and prospects appraisal is currently being carried out at Hadlow, and involves reviewing options for changing an

institution's structure.

Deputy commissioners also lead the FE advisers, who can earn up to £120,000 a year for the same maximum number of days, and who help determine the best way in which further education can be delivered in any given area.

Anyone interested in either role has until midday on 5 June to submit their applications, with final interviews scheduled for between 28 June and 3 July.

News

T-level students in rural areas still at disadvantage, despite DfE 'tinkering'

BILLY CAMDEN
BILLY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Exclusive

The flexibilities added to the controversial industry placement in T-levels are "helpful" but they still leave rural counties at a "distinct disadvantage", according to a principal involved in the pilots of the programme.

Last week the government launched a "package of support" to encourage more employers to offer the 315-hour minimum placements that students will need to complete in order to pass the new technical qualifications.

The biggest change was that placement opportunities can be offered with up to two employers, as opposed to one long one, as originally planned.

For students with special education needs and disabilities, they will be allowed to use on-site facilities, such as a college-run restaurant or hair salon, for a maximum of 105 hours of the placement, while students studying at young offender institutions can complete their full placements in these

simulated environments.

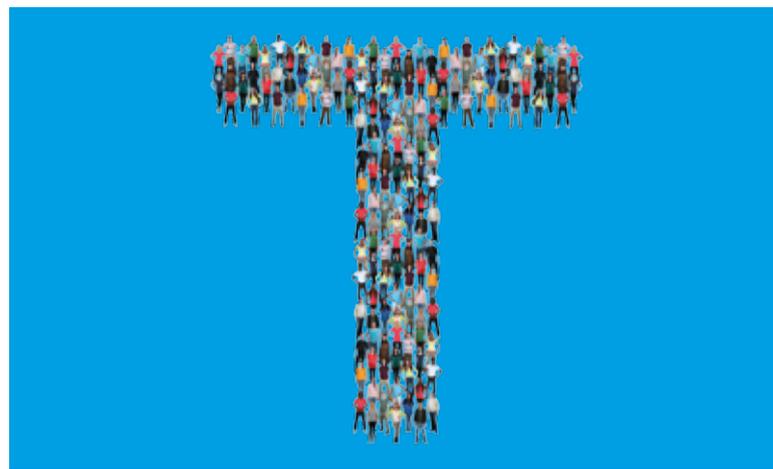
Any student's part-time working hours can also be counted towards the required hours of placement, as long as the job is "occupationally related to the students' chosen specialism at level 3 and it takes place at an environment away from the provider setting and the student's normal learning environment".

A pilot using £7 million will also be run in 2019-20, ahead of the T-levels roll-out, to trial the offer of financial incentives to employers to see if it encourages more people to sign up.

The DfE also confirmed placements will be formally recorded in hours – a minimum of 315 – as opposed to 45 days. It said that this "better reflects how industry professionals in some industries work and allows for shorter working days where needed".

There is no extra support for student transport, which leaders have called for.

Jo Maher, principal of Boston College, which is involved in the T-level pilots, said rural counties "remain at a distinct disadvantage due to no movement on the 315-hour minimum requirement and rural transport issues, which result in long travel-to-work patterns".



"Rural deprivation levels mean that many learners are unable to access a car and are heavily reliant on sparse and lengthy bus routes," she told *FE Week*.

"We have already had to purchase a minibus to address transport issues for our pilot, which is part of the capacity-building funding scheme, and that was for just 10 per cent of eligible learners."

Maher said her college has more than 600 eligible T-level learners moving forward, but if the industry relevant to their T-level is in the nearest city, not town, this "impacts both their placement and ability to secure part-time work that

meets the 'relevance' requirement of the new flexibilities".

"Furthermore, there is lots of employer support in the changes but nothing for providers, who are already stretched working to support their existing learners," she continued.

"There are subject specialisms, such as creative and design, that would be better served with a proportion of the hours conducted back at the provider, for example, working on industry-assigned live briefs or employer project requests, as many of these jobs are freelance or home-based in the industry."

Ian Pryce, the principal of Bedford College, said the DfE deserves credit for trying to be flexible but "placement remains a problem".

"Most of our students work part-time and earn good money. They view 315 hours of unpaid work as an unfair burden, not a selling point," he told *FE Week*.

"Measuring hours is the wrong way to go, too, it has to be about quality of experience, not length. It feels like tinkering, rather than addressing the unattractiveness and insecurity of placements of this length."

Other flexibilities announced by the DfE include "bespoke 'how to' guides, workshops and practical hands-on support for employers – designed alongside industry bodies to make it as easy as possible for them to offer placements".

"This new package of support is designed to help ensure we can deliver high-quality placements for every T-level student from 2020," said education secretary Damian Hinds.

The first three T-levels, to be taught from September 2020, will be in digital, education and construction.

PhD-level apprenticeships are a 'perfect fit' for today's jobs market, says UVAC director

JESSICA FINO
JESSICA.FINO@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Exclusive

A university membership organisation has criticised those opposing PhD-level apprenticeships, saying such resistance shows a "bewildering lack of understanding of higher education provision and contemporary skills programmes".

Writing for *FE Week* (see page 16), Mandy Crawford-Lee, director of policy and operations at the University Vocational Awards Council, argues that "the whole concept" of knowledge, skills and behaviours or professional values "fits perfectly" with level 8 occupations, such as surgeons or dentists.

She was hitting back at criticism from some in the FE sector, including the Institute of Apprenticeships, which last month said these proposed apprenticeships were not in the "spirit"

of the programme.

"Let's knock on the head the idea of the appropriateness of apprenticeships at this level and the notion that level 8 can't be about skills; a failure to do so is a failure to recognise the diversity and complexity of employment today," Crawford-Lee argues.

She said she suspected part of the problem was that "many people are wedded to the idea that apprenticeships must remain a social inclusion route simply for the young or the disadvantaged and associate skills training", particularly for those at levels 2 and 3, and as something delivered exclusively by colleges and independent training providers.

Instead, she believes an "objective glance" at the skills needs of the UK economy would confirm the need for level 8 apprenticeships, and "any employer engaged in their development should be congratulated".

Crawford-Lee added it was "disappointing" that the existence and

use of professional doctorates doesn't seem to be understood by some in the skills sector, "given that there is a substantial track record of developing occupational competence at level 8".

FE Week revealed last month that plans for PhD-level apprenticeships had been thrown into doubt after the IfA's approval funding committee deferred approving the first PhD-level apprenticeship.

This was "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 at "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 an IfA board meeting in January showed a discussion concluding with an action for "the DfE to explore



the concept of level 8 apprenticeships further and agree a policy position".

The DfE told *FE Week* last month that "discussions are ongoing regarding these new proposals" and "we are looking carefully at what the priorities of the programme should be from 2020 onwards".

Asked if there was any update this week, the IfA said there was not.

In her opinion piece, Crawford-Lee urges the DfE and IfA to "stick to the concept of apprenticeship as an employer-led and productivity-focused skills programme", avoiding giving providers the idea that the

importance and value of higher-level apprenticeships are "not adequately supported by government policy and messages".

The debate around whether the public should fund PhD-level apprenticeships comes as many sector leaders, including the IfA, have warned of an imminent apprenticeship budget overspend.

The latest to add their voice to the concern is the Public Accounts Committee, which published a damning report into the progress of the apprenticeships programme this week (see page 4).



DR NEIL BENTLEY-GOCKMANN OBE

Chief executive,
WorldSkills UK



Solving the productivity puzzle: what can we learn from Russia?

The WorldSkills competition has been a springboard for some countries to reform and develop their skills training, writes Dr Neil Bentley-Gockmann, chief executive, WorldSkills UK

I have been fascinated by how other countries use skills competitions to inform the development of their skills systems ever since my first speech as chief executive of WorldSkills UK in November 2015. I highlighted the need to mainstream international learning to ensure that the benefits of participating in WorldSkills had a broader and deeper impact.

The more I learnt, the more confident I became that undertaking global benchmarking would improve outcomes. After all, we have been competing internationally successfully at WorldSkills (informally known as the 'Skills Olympics') since 1953; but in all those 66 years we have failed to properly utilise our involvement in the way other countries do.

Research undertaken by the RSA,

in partnership with WorldSkills UK and the Further Education Trust for Leadership (FETL), looked at how four major players in WorldSkills – Russia, Switzerland, Singapore and Shanghai – use competitions to develop their skill systems.

The findings https://www.worldskillsuk.org/media/5968/rsa_globalskillsinnovationuk.pdf clearly show that the four systems have integrated WorldSkills in a variety of ways to help achieve wider public policy objectives. Examples include: developing their economic strategies; enhancing the status of technical education; and improving standards and quality. A particularly compelling case study relates to Russia, which only joined WorldSkills as a member in 2012, yet has enjoyed a transformation on an unimaginable scale.

Russia has one of the world's largest number of university graduates, together with adult literacy at close to 100 per cent. However, this does not mean that young people in Russia

are well-prepared for the workplace. Indeed, Russian employers report considerable difficulties in recruiting suitably skilled staff. This led to a comprehensive strategic review of its technical and vocational education and training system in 2013, which included expanding opportunities for different sections of the population to

“Four participants have integrated to help achieve wider public policy objectives”

gain vocational skills throughout their working lives.

The competition standards developed and used by WorldSkills have been central to these Russian reforms and are fully embedded in their systems. The standards are used to inform assessments, qualifications and training

for workers, educators and trainers and also to anticipate future skills challenges. Since the reform and given the commitment to using WorldSkills as a tool for improvement, participation amongst young people in vocational education has increased from 43 per cent to 59 per cent in Russia.

This certainly provides us with food for thought and shows just what can be achieved by learning from other countries. Capitalising on our unique access to the latest global trends in skills development was the driving force behind the WorldSkills UK Productivity Lab, which we set up last year. This programme is designed to help our partners in business, education and governments explore how mainstreaming skills excellence can enhance productivity through sharing global insights and transferring our knowledge and know-how about our training and assessment methodologies.

The Productivity Lab has already generated interest from industry and organisations in the sector who, like

us, are passionate about embedding world-class standards. NOCN will be working with us on a programme with industry leaders from the construction and manufacturing industries to provide them with access to the latest global thinking in skills development. This programme will include a “seeing is believing” visit to the WorldSkills competition this summer in Kazan, Russia, where, alongside seeing the development of world-class standards in action, participants will be able to engage with international counterparts and policymakers from 80 countries.

I firmly believe that WorldSkills UK can play an ever more effective role in mainstreaming international benchmarking to help make sure the UK stays at the cutting edge of global best practice in skills development. And this will help with the development of the next generation of world-class technicians that industry needs in order to be more productive and competitive, to attract inward investment and protect and create jobs.



Department for Education

Deputy Further Education Commissioner and Advisers

The role of FE Commissioner was created in 2013 as an independent adviser to ministers. The FE Commissioner has responsibility for assessing the capacity of leadership and governance in colleges that have, or are at risk of, serious weakness in terms of quality or financial health. The FE Commissioner is supported by a team of Deputy Commissioners and Advisers.

As part of the FE Commissioner's team, Deputy FE Commissioners lead assessments of underperforming colleges. FE Advisers assist Deputy FE Commissioners to undertake such assessments. This includes reviewing the position of the college and advising the FE Commissioner, ministers and the chief executive of the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on the relevant course of action. Deputy Commissioners and FE Advisers then work with the FE Commissioner, college and the ESFA to ensure the necessary changes are delivered swiftly.

We want you to apply if you have an outstanding track record of senior college leadership, which may have been gained from experience as a principal or deputy principal. You will have exceptional communication skills and the ability to influence, persuade and engage stakeholders at the highest levels, in addition to excellent management, financial and interpersonal skills. You must be able to draft clear, concise reports following college visits and have the ability to work

effectively with ministers, civil servants, college leaders and key stakeholders. You will show resilience and the capacity to maintain a positive approach in challenging circumstances.

Deputy FE Commissioners and the wider team of FE Advisers work directly with the FE Commissioner. A key element of the role for Deputy FE Commissioners will be the leadership and management of the FE Adviser team and deputising for the FE Commissioner, including in policy discussions at the DfE and in ministerial meetings. Appointments for these roles will be on a two-year fixed term contract. Deputy FE Commissioners are remunerated at £700 a day. FE Advisers are remunerated at £600 a day. The expected start date for these roles is September 2019. Inductions will take place in July/August prior to start date.

Closing Date: 12 noon on Wednesday 5 June.
Late applications will not be accepted.

How to apply: Please visit the following link for more information and a candidate pack <http://bit.ly/FEC-DCA>

Interviews will take place between Monday 24 June and Wednesday 3 July in London.

Newham Adult Learning Service (NALS) is one of the most exciting and successful adult learning services in London and our vibrant centres across Newham have brilliant dedicated specialist facilities. Newham Adult Learning Service's has been graded 'Good with Some Outstanding Features' by Ofsted.

NALS works in close partnership with other Newham adult learning providers to provide a diverse programme and strong progression routes to meet the need of 8000+ part time adult learners annually. Ofsted used these partnerships as an example of 'Best Practice' on their website.

The London Borough of Newham has a diverse learner population, and NALS is committed to providing a positive contribution to the wider social and economic agendas.

Curriculum & Quality Manager

£48,975 - £53,253 pa inc LW FE Lecturers Scale 45-48

Ref: LBN01907

Full Time
Beckton

The permanent Curriculum & Quality Manager will lead the development of the part time adult learning curriculum and drive the service's 'Direction of Travel', which aims to improve quality standards across all programmes from its current Ofsted grading of Good to its aspiration of Outstanding.

Key responsibilities will include:

- Curriculum & Programme Development
- Driving up the quality of teaching, learning & assessment
- Ensuring readiness for future Ofsted inspections
- Leading the self-assessment & quality improvement planning process
- Ensuring full compliance with awarding body standards

Newham
Equal opportunities for all.



- Staff training & continuous professional development
- Monitoring of learner achievement
- Line management of the Curriculum Team & the Observation of Teaching, Learning & Assessment Team
- Management of examinations across the organisation.

About You

NALS is looking for a highly skilled and experienced Curriculum & Quality practitioner with excellent leadership and management skills who possesses a passionate commitment to excellence in learning.

Proven team building skills and the ability to effect improvement through effective coaching, mentoring and performance management is essential. So too is an in-depth knowledge of the Ofsted inspection framework and experience in supporting the facilitation of Ofsted inspections.

The successful candidate should have a background in the delivery of both community learning and adult skills provision as well as ESOL, English, Mathematics and Family Learning. They will also have an up-to-date knowledge of the current devolution of funding to the GLA.

As a minimum, candidates must hold a full teaching qualification. The possession of an internal quality assurer qualification would be an advantage as would ILM or CMI leadership and management or curriculum and quality level 5+ qualifications.

The role will involve travel between 6 centres across the borough so possession of a car and full, clean driving licence is desirable.

For further details see our application pack online at www.newham.gov.uk

Closing Date: 2 June 2019



Director of Awarding
Full time / Permanent contract
Colchester based – with some travel
Salary based on experience

With an ambitious growth plan, we need a Director to change and shape our awarding function for the future. You will already be a strong leader with experience in the further education or awarding sectors, preferably with a curriculum or quality background. Our awarding function includes product development, customer experience, assessment, certification, quality assurance and compliance.

The awarding team are ready for change and need a visionary leader to inspire them to be the best they can be.

You will be responsible for developing and delivering an innovative plan to implement strategy and ensure our customers have an outstanding experience throughout their whole journey with us.

You will be a key player in the future success of our organisation.

About Gateway Qualifications

Gateway Qualifications is an Awarding Organisation with over 30 years of expertise. We offer a huge range of regulated qualifications, apprenticeships and Access to HE Diplomas and can develop new qualifications and quality assure inhouse training.

If you feel that you are the perfect person to take up this exciting opportunity please apply by visiting our website for further information <https://www.gatewayqualifications.org.uk/careers/vacancies/>.

If you would like an informal discussion please email our HR Manager, Debbie Dear at debbie.dear@gatewayqualifications.org.uk.



Craven College
Craven College, Skipton - Enriching lives through learning

PRINCIPAL & CEO
Based in Skipton, North Yorkshire

Salary commensurate with AoC benchmarked salaries

Closing date: Monday 03 June 2019 at 12noon

Interviews: Over two days on Wednesday 26 June and Thursday 27 June 2019

We are looking for an innovative and strategic Principal & Chief Executive; a leader who will build on the existing strengths of Craven College and lead us on the journey to being an outstanding provider of further and higher education.

This job offers an exciting opportunity for a current or aspiring Principal: a people person, someone with a track record of successful strategic institutional change. You will support the Board to develop and deliver bold and ambitious plans for the College, whilst retaining a focus on excellent FE and HE provision for our students and our local communities. Developing the sustainability of the College is a key priority and you will need to build a strong profile and create and maintain excellent networks and stakeholder relationships, particularly with employers.

You will evidence a commitment to continuous improvement, together with the leadership skills to inspire and motivate staff to share the strategic vision for the College. An understanding of the sector is important, because with the Board and senior team you will need to anticipate and respond creatively to challenges and changes from the external environment. The ability to deliver a value for money service for a College with a turnover of £15m, together with a sound understanding of governance is essential.

For further information about the role and the College, and to apply, please visit:

www.craven-college.ac.uk/principal

✉ jmatthews@craven-college.ac.uk | ☎ 07725 676 951



We are a forward thinking college formed in 2017 through a partnership between East Berkshire College and Strode's College with three main sites in Berkshire and Surrey.

As a new, vibrant organisation, our ambitious teaching and learning strategy is rapidly transforming our colleges.

Our new teaching management contract offers Heads of Departments a generous salary and excellent non-working day entitlement of up to 52 days plus bank holidays.

Are you a talented leader who will value and develop our teachers to be outstanding? These two exciting roles are based at our Langley College in Slough, Berkshire.

Head of Construction and Engineering

You will lead our fantastic Construction & Engineering provision, serving the growing needs of our locality including Heathrow. It's an exciting time to join us, benefitting from a significant investment in facilities at Langley College and a strong portfolio of courses including apprenticeships.

Head of Childcare, Health and Social Care, 14-16 and Enrichment

You will lead our strong Health and Care provision, including our successful Access to HE provision. This role also offers an ambitious individual the opportunity to develop cross college leadership to lead our small partnership 14-16 year old courses and be a significant player in further developing our vibrant student enrichment offer.

Contract: Permanent

Salary: up to £43,624 per annum depending on qualifications and experience

Closing Date: Midday on Monday 3rd June 2019

Interviews will be held week commencing 10th June 2019

Please apply at <http://www.windsor-forest.ac.uk/jobs-a-careers.html> and complete an online application form.



Constructing New Futures

Langley College is part of the Windsor Forest Colleges Group and is its centre for technical and vocational training and apprenticeships. It has benefited from a £30 million investment in its campus and is equipped with the latest industry standard equipment, workshops and studios – including its own multi-trades bungalow.

With a strong reputation for its construction curriculum, we are seeking a number of skilled and experienced construction teachers and trainers to join our progressive team for 2019/20.

With a competitive salary (up to £39,752 for teachers with QTLS) and up to 58 days leave (plus bank holidays) these roles provide the ideal opportunity to progress your career.

The roles:

You will bring your extensive trade experience and professional qualifications to the classroom delivering full-time programmes, evening courses and apprenticeships ranging from Levels 1 to 3, practical and theory.

Permanent roles (full or part-time considered):

- Plumbing Lecturer
- Electrical Lecturer
- Engineering Lecturer
- Carpentry Lecturer
- Multi-trades Lecturer

Sessional opportunities in:

- Gas Assessor
- Construction (multi-trades)
- Construction Technicians

Closing date: Monday 10 June 2019 (midday)
Interviews 18 and 19 June 2019.

(*Applications will however be shortlisted on a rolling basis and we reserve the right to interview and appoint before this closing date. We therefore encourage you to apply at the earliest opportunity to avoid disappointment)

The College will also support successful candidates to acquire a recognised teaching qualification or assessing qualification, if they do not already possess one.

Please apply at <http://www.windsor-forest.ac.uk/jobs-a-careers.html> and complete an online application form.



Part of the Windsor Forest Colleges Group

Principal (Assistant Chief Executive)

Competitive Salary



NEW TEAM, NEW FUTURE



Barnet and Southgate College is on a journey to be the most innovative, inspirational and employment focused learning organisation in the education sector and we now require a new Principal, who will also serve as our Assistant Chief Executive, to ensure we are providing outstanding learning which will enrich the personal and professional lives of our students and employers.

We have retained the services of FE Associates to support us with this crucial appointment. Interested parties are advised to have an initial conversation with our lead consultant, Jo Johnston, ahead of the closing date. This can be arranged by contacting recruitment@fea.co.uk.

For more information and a candidate pack visit:

www.fea.co.uk/bsc/

Closing date: Noon on Friday 14th June 2019

Dates for interview: Monday 24th and Tuesday 25th June 2019



PRINCIPAL AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

SALARY: in the range £120,000 - £140,000 per annum, plus an excellent benefits package



An outstanding opportunity for an individual with vision and drive to lead a dynamic team in a large, vibrant and welcoming college.

Sparsholt College Hampshire delivers a broad education offer across two locations and University Centre Sparsholt. While maintaining the reputation of Sparsholt College as one of the leading land-based FE and HE colleges in the country, the college has doubled student enrolments with the turnaround of GFE and sixth form provision at Andover College, building a diverse, innovative and successful college community with more than 6,500 students and a c£29 million annual turnover.

In advance of the retirement of our current Principal next year, we are seeking to recruit a high calibre and inspiring individual **no later than July 2020** to lead the college, University Centre and our subsidiary companies into our next phase.

Reporting to the Board of Governors, this role will appeal to an ambitious Principal seeking large-scale challenge, or an exceptional Deputy/Vice Principal who has the proven track record and skills necessary to succeed in this role. You should have strong commercial acumen, experience of

curriculum development and delivery and outstanding communication skills. A background in land-based education is desirable but not essential.

The benefits package includes a competitive salary, 30 days holiday entitlement plus bank holidays and college closure days, private medical insurance and eligibility to join a defined benefit pension scheme. In addition, a family house on the Sparsholt countryside campus is provided for the better performance of duties.

Visit www.sparsholt.ac.uk/recruiting/principal-and-chief-executive to learn more about this exciting opportunity and to download an information pack and application form. Alternatively, contact governors@sparsholt.ac.uk or 01962 797309.

Closing date for application: 10 June 2019

Assessments and Interviews will be held on: 8 & 9 July 2019

We are committed to equal opportunities for all, irrespective of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, marital status, religion or sexuality. The college is registered with the Disclosure and Barring Service and the successful applicant will be required to apply for an enhanced disclosure



Deputy Principal - Development

100k p.a

Vice Principal - Technical & Professional Education

80k p.a

Vice Principal - Quality and Access to Learning

80k p.a



TRANSFORMING LIVES – THAT'S WHAT MAKES US OUTSTANDING

At Barnsley College we encourage all of our students and staff to dream big and we are proud to say that studying at Barnsley College helps to inspire our learners and transforms their lives.

We are now seeking three new talented, ambitious and hardworking senior leaders with high drive and high expectations to work with our new Principal and CEO, Yiannis Kouris, and our highly effective leadership team, to not only maintain our outstanding position but to propel us into a future of growth through technical and professional education delivery.

We have retained the services of FE Associates to support us with these crucial appointments. Interested parties are encouraged to have an initial conversation with FE Associates Managing Director, Matt Atkinson. This can be arranged by emailing recruitment@fea.co.uk

Closing date: Noon on Wednesday 12th June 2019

Interviews for Vice Principals: Wednesday 19th and Thursday 20th June 2019

Interviews for Deputy Principal: Wednesday 26th and Thursday 27th June 2019



For more information and a candidate pack visit:

www.fea.co.uk/jobs

EDITORIAL



Insolvency could have been avoided had the ESFA spotted Hadlow College's crippling loans in 2017

This week the government published the FE Commissioner's Hadlow College findings and recommendations, based on four visits in February.

The description of what they found in terms of both leadership and financial failure is shocking, but will come as little surprise to *FE Week* readers.

We have been following the saga since being first to report the departure of the man in the middle of the scandal, the deputy principal at the time, Mark Lumsdon-Taylor.

But the report also hints at a major failing on the part of the Education

and Skills Funding Agency in terms of failing to implement their intervention regime.

The report reveals that had the ESFA looked at Hadlow College's published accounts in December 2017 they would have seen the full extent of the multi-million-pound loans and graded them as being "inadequate" for financial health.

Had that happened, a referral as part of the formal ESFA intervention process would have been made to the FE Commissioner's team.

It is likely the resulting review would have exposed

the seriousness of the situation by mid-2018 and a successful application to the restructuring fund could have been made.

Instead, the financial crisis only came to light in January 2019 after the FE Commissioner was tipped off that the college had run out of cash and the finance director was about to quit.

By then, it was too late to apply to the restructuring fund and the new insolvency regime was being implemented.

So had ESFA staff, more than a year ago, correctly graded the college as "inadequate" for financial health then

the administration and "perilous position" as described by skills minister Anne Milton may never have come about.

Milton has said that an independent review will now take place to consider whether the ESFA financial oversight regime is fit for purpose.

The DfE should also review whether a college should ever again be allowed to go without an Ofsted inspection for more than nine years.

Like an ESFA financial score, a visit from Ofsted inspectors following Hadlow College's falling achievement rates

could have triggered FE Commissioner intervention.

The DfE review findings will probably never be published, but keep an eye on the three administrators now taking ownership of the college's affairs.

They have a legal duty to investigate relevant activities leading up to the court order and will hopefully report on the extent to which the financial failure was hidden from, or missed by, the ESFA.

Nick Linford, Editor
news@feweek.co.uk

Readers' reply



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Government reveals flexibilities for T-level industry placement

Sensible move, though born out of desperation? Better solution would be to enable more SMEs to offer apprenticeships! Core integrated policy approach to T-levels and apprenticeships still fundamentally flawed.

Graham Hoyle

My main priority is the students in Hadlow College insolvency. Very much looking forward to hearing the statement from the former deputy chief executive in June. He has a lot of explaining to do.

Carl Lewis

Apprenticeships programme 'out of kilter' with DfE's own objectives, PAC warns

PAC should celebrate higher spend on better-quality apprenticeships and employers prioritising their own needs. MBA apprenticeships can improve

perceptions and understanding of apprenticeship model... but must be balanced with low-level apprenticeships. What's happening with levy underspend?

Andrew Dakers

PAC apprenticeships progress report: the 6 recommendations

I have to agree with recommendations from Commons PAC. The DfE, ESFA and IfATE need to sort it out!!

Chris Hayden

Spring-clean of standards under way as IfA reveals outcome of digital review

Does the institute take into account learners' concerns about the credibility and longevity of the institute when considering the exclusion of a mandatory qual? Credibility is earned and removal of a qualification impacts on uptake...

Paul Smyth

Scandal-hit Hadlow College first to go through insolvency regime

As very few are not on a knife-edge then it could open a floodgate - even those seen as successful can drop dramatically (West Notts). Surely proper funding and, for example, sorting the levy out would be cheaper than intervention and bailout?

Marches Skills
Provider Network

Hadlow College scandal and government response is an FE watershed moment

The consequences of the new measures will be massive, with, I suspect, a fair share of unintended ones. There will be issues that literally affect all constituencies.... leaders, governors, learners and local communities. I hope that the FEC/DfE have thought them all through!

Tony Allen

REPLY OF THE WEEK

Government reveals flexibilities for T-level industry placement



Allowing multiple T-Level placements is great, making them happen is a completely different proposition.

Good luck with that, DfE.

Terry Fennell

Experts

LAWRENCE
BARTON

Managing Director,
GB Training



Devolved budget could drag adult education out of the doldrums

The chance for local people to have more of a say in adult education looks like a non-starter, says Lawrence Barton

The planned devolution of the adult education budget (AEB) heralds a significant advancement of adult education services, but early signs of inertia and mismanagement before the August 1 handover date signals an early death for this key initiative.

Our adult education system is failing to meet the demands we place upon it. With or without Brexit, our globalised economy means the UK needs talented and highly skilled workers. Instead, we are languishing in the doldrums through a combination of factors: an over-reliance on public-sector employment; a nationwide skills shortage, falling participation rates in training and levels of literacy and numeracy that could be much improved.

The UK's skills needs are like a

patchwork quilt, with no two regions the same. Our existing funding system isn't adequately addressing

“There is a bias in favour of FE colleges over private providers”

these varied requirements, which is where devolution can help. It is about giving local people a greater voice by narrowing the gap between decision-makers, training providers and employers.

By transferring power to the regions, responsibility for decision-making will be put in the hands of those best placed to address local needs. It creates a structure based around local planning, coordination and demand. At least

that's the theory.

The problem is that this devolution is being mismanaged and delayed. Initially intended for 2018, the 2017 snap general election delayed the necessary legislation, which postponed transition by a year.

Regional infighting has also hampered progress. Devolution to some areas of the country, including East Anglia, the northeast and Lincolnshire has been shelved while local issues are resolved. The Sheffield City Region deal, meanwhile, after initially being disrupted by legal action, has only just been resolved after being hampered by local disagreements.

Rather than seizing devolution as an opportunity to tackle problems with the existing system, the devolution framework retains inherent flaws. A bias in favour of FE colleges over private training providers remains, despite evidence from the Skills Funding Agency's own research that shows employers are more satisfied

with private training providers.

Devolution will see responsibility for roughly £700 million – about half of the overall AEB – transferred to six combined authorities, which are made up of two or more local authorities, and the Greater London Authority. Due to a diktat by central government about £450 million of that pot is allocated to FE colleges, representing 8 per cent or so of their total income.

“We're on course for more of the same”

This effective ring-fencing of funding for FE colleges represents a missed opportunity to free up the education budget, foster competition and drive up standards for the betterment of learners, employers and the economy. It also undermines efforts to address

the issues of financial mismanagement prevalent within the college sector.

The recent example of North Hertfordshire College, which recorded a £5 million deficit in 2017-18 and received a recent £2.5 million government bailout is just the latest example of what the National Audit Office described in 2015 as the “rapidly declining financial health” of the FE college sector. For devolution to be a success it needs to bring with it a meritocratic approach to funding, prioritising those with a proven track-record of delivery and learner outcomes.

Shifting responsibility away from central government to regional officials more in tune with local needs can only be a good thing, but for this initiative to be a success the transition must be carried out effectively and opportunities to tackle existing problems inherent with the current funding system addressed. As things stand, we're on course for more of the same.

MANDY
CRAWFORD-LEE

Director of policy and operations,
University Vocational Awards Council
(UVAC), University of Bolton



Why apprenticeships are more than a path to social inclusion for the young

Skills and the apprenticeship system in England must encompass level 8, ditching the notion that apprenticeships are primarily about craft and technical level roles, says Mandy Crawford-Lee

The recent “wobble” by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) on whether to support the development of level 8 apprenticeships has been welcomed by some in the skills sector. We've heard the opinion, reported in the FE press, that PhD-level apprenticeships are purely academic programmes and not in the “spirit” of the policy on apprenticeships.

Such comments show a bewildering lack of understanding of higher education provision and contemporary skills programmes. Ask a member of the public if a surgeon or dentist – both level 8 occupations – need practical skills and the answer obviously would be yes. Indeed, the whole concept of knowledge, skills and behaviours or

professional values fits perfectly with such occupations.

The existence of the professional doctorate used in a wide range of sectors also seems to be ignored in these debates. The UK Economic and Social Research Council expects individuals undertaking professional doctorates to “contribute to both theory and practice in their field and to develop professional practice...”

Indeed, professional doctorates could help turbo-boost the apprenticeship programme at this level across many sectors and occupations by bringing practice closer to learning. It is disappointing that the existence and use of professional doctorates doesn't seem to be always understood, given that there is a substantial track record of developing occupational competence at level 8. It is therefore not surprising that employers are developing apprenticeship programmes at level 8 as they recognise their contribution to understanding and applying knowledge, as well as developing

research-informed practice and lifelong learning skills, enhancing the route from degree apprenticeships to professional careers.

Put simply, I suggest that knowledge, skills and behaviours are rather important in the nuclear industry, advanced clinical and nursing practice,

“Let's knock on the head the idea that level 8 can't be about skills”

in education, in training (extending the notion of “prac-academics”) and for research scientists and engineers where level 8 apprenticeships could be, and are being, developed. From a skills and productivity perspective, the occupations where level 8 standards are being developed and proposed tick

all the boxes.

So let's knock on the head the idea of the appropriateness of apprenticeships at this level and the notion that level 8 can't be about skills; a failure to do so is a failure to recognise the diversity and complexity of employment today.

I suspect that part of the problem is that many people are wedded to two ideas. Firstly, that apprenticeships must remain a social inclusion route simply for the young or the disadvantaged; and secondly, that associate skills training, particularly at levels 2 and 3, are something to be delivered exclusively by colleges and independent training providers. While FE does play a key role in the delivery of skills programmes, so do higher education providers, employers and both professional and regulatory bodies.

Apprenticeships are now led by employers rather than further education, with economic productivity a key policy driver; an objective glance at the skills-needs of the UK economy would confirm the need for level 8

apprenticeships, and any employer engaged in their development should be congratulated. It's high-time we drop the notion that apprenticeships are primarily about craft and technical level roles. If we don't, we will totally undermine the ability of apprenticeship to tackle the UK's No 1 economic challenge – the blight of low productivity.

It would be economic folly to ignore the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to become occupationally competent in key level 8 occupations. The Department for Education and IfATE, perhaps with help and encouragement from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Treasury respectively, need to stick to the concept of apprenticeship as an employer-led and productivity-focused skills programme. Not to do so provides an example of where the importance and value of degree apprenticeships are not adequately supported by government policy and messages.

TOM TUGENDHAT

Member of Parliament
for Tonbridge and Malling



Hadlow's woes will show us whether the new guidance works

A thorough investigation is needed to understand how we got into this position in the first place, writes Tom Tugendhat, Hadlow College's local MP

The application for educational administration by Hadlow College is a watershed moment for further education. It will be the first time the College Oversight guidance has been used to steer an FE provider out of trouble. In some senses, this is an opportunity to see if the guidance works. But my overwhelming feeling is of concern for the students and staff, and disappointment that we are even considering this at Hadlow College.

I've represented Tonbridge and Malling in parliament for four years. Over that time I've had an excellent relationship with the college. I knew Paul Hannan, the former principal of the Hadlow Group, and his former deputy, Mark Lumsdon-Taylor, and

when asked, I put a lot of work into securing funding for the college.

We had some monumental battles, primarily about FE funding with the then Skills Funding Agency, and I have been proud to get millions of pounds for further education in Kent. That's why this news is so disappointing.

Hadlow College matters because it is different; its land-based teaching has attracted students from across the county. Over the years it has become a major landowner in the Hadlow area and has seen its teaching expand. Hadlow Rural Community School, on the same site and part of the Hadlow Group, is a wonderful example of somewhere where students do their GCSEs and gain other qualifications through a unique method of teaching.

Kent is known as the Garden of England, and for centuries its agricultural heritage has been at the forefront of growth in the economy. As the industry looks to adapt, and the county deals with new pressures,

it needs the workforce skilled in agricultural learning. Hadlow College provides this like nowhere else.

That's why my main priority is the students. Courses must be completed, and land-based learning must remain on the site. It's something I've pressed home to the skills minister, Anne

“Courses must be completed, and land-based learning must remain on the site”

Milton MP, at the Department for Education (DfE) and Richard Atkins, the FE Commissioner, over the past few weeks. Simply transferring students somewhere else won't work

for Hadlow. It can't – because there's nowhere else like it.

Just two weeks ago, following my latest meeting at the DfE, I wrote to Ms Milton to highlight this. I'm still talking to them and I am carefully watching their approach.

So far, the DfE has been responding to the further challenges we face. Hadlow College is part of a wider group, including the rural community school, and also West Kent and Ashford colleges. Though more traditional in their approach, the relationship between each establishment means they have deep roots in our community. In Tonbridge and Malling, almost everyone knows someone who has studied, or is studying, at one of the Hadlow Group's colleges.

In Kent we are not immune to financial difficulties in further education. West Kent and Ashford College came into the Hadlow Group in 2014 because of the financial

problems with the then K College. While this acquisition hasn't affected the finances of the group, clearly FE funding needs reform.

It's why I'm pleased the DfE College Oversight guidance was introduced earlier this year. The route forward is defined, if uncertain. It shows a clear and co-ordinated response from the government to colleges in financial difficulty. We will have to see if this works.

What is clear is that a thorough investigation is needed to understand why we got into this position in the first place.

But my thoughts are with the staff, students and all those who work at the college. The uncertainty is leaving us all, including all businesses who work with the college, with doubt as to what the long-term impact will be. I'll be working closely with the interim principal, Graham Morley, over the coming months to make sure this continues.

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Joanne Sherrington

Interim principal,
Craven College

Start date May 2019

Previous job

Vice principal (finance and resources), Craven College

Interesting fact

She is a keen musician and fly fisher



Phil Briscoe

Principal,
Nottingham College

Start date June 2019

Previous job

Vice principal (quality, teaching and learning and the student experience), Barnsley College

Interesting fact

He played semi-professional rugby for 14 years



Charlotte Briscall

Director of customer experience,
digital and data, ESFA

Start date September 2019

Previous job

Head of digital experience, Sainsbury's

Interesting fact

She competed in many national dance competitions and went on to qualify as a ballet teacher in her mid-20s

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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

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Difficulty:
Easy

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Difficulty:
Medium

Solutions: See right

Spot the difference To WIN an FE Week mug



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Last Edition's winner: Paula Flaherty

Solutions

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

Difficulty: Easy

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Difficulty: Medium

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