

Twelve months of change for Skills Minister and FE Week — a review of 2014

The past year was a dramatic one for *FE Week* which saw a change of editor and a major re-design with publication of our 100th edition. Reporter Paul Offord looks back at the highlights of 2014, the 16 *FE Week* supplements and 35 newspapers published.

EDITION 87 (JANUARY 6) TO EDITION 92 (FEBRUARY 10)

The new year heralded a new era for the paper with *FE Week* deputy editor and chief reporter Chris Henwood taking over from edition 87 (January 6).
The paper revealed in edition 88 (January 13) that South London college Lesoco had crashed to a grade four Ofsted rating and in edition 91 (February 3), it was reported that the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) had published a list of 1,477 Qualification

and Credit Framework (QCF) level two to four qualifications it said would not be approved for funding in 2014/15.
It was revealed in edition 92 (February 10) that Jobcentre Plus (JCP) advisers had been told not to direct 18 and 19-year-olds to the government's flagship traineeship scheme because it would put their benefits at risk.



EDITION 93 (FEBRUARY 24) TO EDITION 98 (MARCH 31):

The paper reported in its first edition after the half-term break (February 24) that the government was launching a consultation on plans to launch new post-19 outcome-based performance measures for FE.

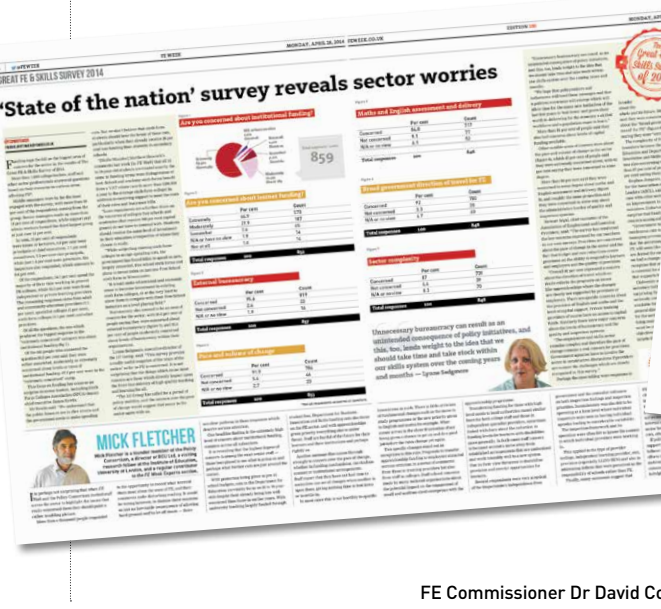
Then *FE Week* dedicated a supplement (February 28) to National Apprenticeship Week 2014.
Edition 94 (March 3) told how Warwickshire-based provider Bright Assessing had been ordered to stop running qualifications by awarding organisation NCFE after it investigated allegations of malpractice (March 3).
The paper reported in edition 96 (March 17) that then-Skills Minister Matthew Hancock had told providers that colleges facing a funding rate cut for their full-time 18-year-old learners would be protected from the move



EDITION 99 (APRIL 21) TO EDITION 103 (MAY 19):

Edition 99 (April 21) reported on calls for college chief executive pay levels to be published alongside those of principals.
A new logo and redesign for the paper was unveiled for edition 100 (April 28), which carried the results of The Great FE & Skills Survey of 2014. The Policy Consortium and *FE Week* polled more than 1,000 college leaders, staff and other sector professionals, who revealed their biggest concern was the future of funding.
Edition 101 (May 5)

exclusively revealed that the results of FE Commissioner Dr David Collins' inspections of failing colleges would be made public.
Then, edition 103 (May 19) reported that Dr Collins had collected his first scalp, after it was announced Lesoco principal Maxine Room was standing down. It followed criticism by Dr Collins of the college's leadership and governance.



EDITION 104 (JUNE 2) TO EDITION 108 (JUNE 30):



The paper reported in edition 104 (June 2) on Lambeth College principal Mark Silverman's reaction to the announcement that staff would take part in an "indefinite strike" over contract changes from June 3. The strike ended on July 9.

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The results of an *FE Week* investigation into multi-million pound funding of Gazelle by UK colleges was published in edition 107 (June 23). It provoked criticism of public money being used on "expensive initiatives which have little educational impact".
Edition 108 revealed that the number of potential fraud cases referred

to the SFA had more than doubled between 2012-13 and 2013-14. There were 108 new allegations in 2013-14 and 52 the previous financial year.
The paper went global with a supplement (June 27) on the first world-class apprenticeships study tour organised by the International Skills Standards Organisation.
Reporter Freddie Whittaker followed delegates across America and Canada, reporting on success stories and issues faced by their apprenticeship schemes.



EDITION 109 (SEPTEMBER 8) TO EDITION 115 (OCTOBER 20):

After the summer holidays, *FE Week* reported in edition 109 (September 8) that the Department for Education (DfE) had told providers not to top-up new free meals allocations — after it emerged that a number of colleges wanted to boost the £2.41 hand-outs to as much as £5 with Bursary Fund cash.
Edition 111 (September 22) then reported on sector dismay after the DfE made a U-turn and announced that top-ups would be allowed after all.

after they merged in 2012 — yet governors were now looking at dumping the name.
Then *FE Week* published its first in-depth interview in edition 113 (October 6) with Skills Minister Nick Boles (following his appointment on July 15), where he backed a review of Functional Skills.

The same edition also exclusively revealed that a number of University Technical Colleges were running at around 10 per cent capacity last academic year.

The paper also covered new ground by attending the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat party conferences and reporting on them in a supplement (October 10).

In edition 112 (September 29), *FE Week* reported £290k was spent on rebranding Lewisham and Southwark colleges as Lesoco



EDITION 116 (NOVEMBER 3) TO EDITION 122 (DECEMBER 15):

The future of the SFA was called into question in edition 116 (November 3) following the announcement that Education Funding Agency chief Peter Lauener would take on the running of both bodies.
The paper dedicated a supplement (November 17) to coverage of The Skills Show 2014 at The Birmingham NEC.
The *FE Week* team then produced edition 119 (November 24) from a 22nd floor suite at Birmingham's Hyatt hotel, while covering the Association of Colleges annual conference at the neighbouring International Convention Centre.
The front page reported Dr Collins' call for change at Ofsted after it rated Midland-based Bournville College's leadership outstanding despite a "critical cash position".
Edition 120 (December 1) reported that there had been a 13.7 per cent fall in all-age apprenticeship starts, which were at 440,400 last academic year, having been at 510,200 the previous year, and 520,600 in 2011/12.



Top 10 feweek.co.uk stories

- 1. Colleges under fire over Gazelle's £3.5m (June 20, 13,367 hits)** — An *FE Week* investigation into funding of Gazelle by UK colleges provoked criticism that public money was being spent on an unproven organisation
- 2. College principal takes 'temporary leave of absence' as chair of governors becomes interim chief (June 27, 10,789 hits)** — Warwickshire College principal Mariane Cavalli had, it was announced, taken a "temporary leave of absence" and would be replaced on an interim basis by chair of governors Sue Georgious. This story only appeared online, as it broke the day after edition 108 went to press
- 3. Bright Assessing loses third and final appeal stage after 'malpractice' was found (May 16, 8,990 hits)** — Awarding organisation NCFE detailed evidence of alleged malpractice at Bright Assessing uncovered through an investigation. This story only appeared online, as it broke the day after edition 103 went to press
- 4. Who will certificate Bright? (May 8, 7,865 hits)** — Awarding organisations OCR and Ascentis followed NCFE in cutting ties with Bright Assessing
- 5. Leading London college tumbles to inadequate (January 9, 6,913 hits)** — Lesoco was graded inadequate by Ofsted
- 6. Shock funding cut for 1,500 adult quals (January 31, 6,228 hits)** — The Skills Funding Agency announced that as many as 1,500 qualifications faced the public funding axe as it looked to introduce a 15-credit threshold
- 7. Twitter row principal calls off CEO move (May 16, 5,890 hits)** — Basingstoke College of Technology principal Anthony Bravo had signed up to take on the chief executive job at Bradford College Group, but withdrew having apologised on Twitter for retweeting an offensive message
- 8. Reforms signal 'death' of teen apprenticeships (March 7, 5,467 hits)** — Leading sector figures warned an "enforced" employer's fee for 16 and 17-year-old apprenticeships under government funding reforms could spell the end of the programme
- 9. EXCLUSIVE: BIS to go public with commissioner's failing college judgments (May 1, 5,089 hits)** — Reporter Rebecca Cooney revealed that the results of FE Commissioner David Collins' inspections of failing colleges would be made public
- 10. Apprentices minimum wage to rise to £2.73 an-hour (March 12, 4,768 hits)** — It was announced by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills that the National Minimum Wage for apprentices would rise by 5p an-hour to £2.73. This specific story surrounding the rise appeared only online