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FE Week

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PAUL OFFORD
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There was a notable sigh of relief from the conference organisers when Skills Minister Nick Boles arrived on time and armed with a speech.

Given the severe turbulence across Whitehall following a Brexit result, there was scepticism as to whether the minister would address the conference and if levy plans had been derailed.

Charlotte Bosworth rightly states (below) that it was pleasing to hear the

minister provide reassurance of the government's commitment to apprenticeships.

But chatter among delegates during lunch focussed very much on the delay to the publication of detailed plans for levy implementation.

So little time, yet so much to find out, if providers are to successfully deliver the reform programme

Delegates at the Association of Employment and Learning Providers' (AELP) annual conference, along with thousands of providers and potential levy payers, are

crying out for the Minister to get on with it and publish the comprehensive guidance many of us were expecting this week.

There is so little time before April 2016, but still so much to find out and learn.

Following the Minister's address, it was indicated that FE Week can expect a conversation with the minister in the next month.

Is this a sign that we can be confident the guidance will be published before the summer recess? We can only hope.

This was our fifth AELP Annual Conference supplement, which was first published at the end of day one.

The FE Week team love a challenge and producing a 16 page supplement on site was certainly that.

I would like to thank our sponsoring partner, OCR, for once again supporting this conference supplement.

AELP and in particular the events team and Aidan Relf, deserve huge congratulations on organising another great event and thanks for such warm hospitality.



CHARLOTTE BOSWORTH

Director of Skills and Employment, OCR

Delay to levy detail will have caused concern

Even last week, we would all have expected that attending the AELP Conference, we would be treated to ministerial speeches and Q&A sessions that would have provided some much-needed clarity on the reforms that are affecting our sector. However, on Friday it probably became evident, in amongst so many other emotions and reactions, that we weren't going to have a business-as-usual week!

While Priti Patel's absence due to a cabinet meeting meant that we didn't get an update from the DWP, I suspect that delegates, like me, were more anxious to hear from skills minister, Nick Boles. Reassurance of the government's commitment to apprenticeships was welcome. However,

a further delay to the publication of more detail on the implementation of the levy will have caused concern.

As both an awarding organisation and a future levy-paying employer, we at OCR are keenly awaiting the detail of how the levy will be implemented and how the funding system will work. Given that the documents we were expecting this week will provide only indicative information, it is critical that Nick Boles delivers on his promise to publish these ahead of the summer recess.

It was interesting to note that some key themes were referenced again during the first morning of conference. We agree with Mark Dawe's assertion that apprenticeship

frameworks are not broken and the best standards are those developed with employers, providers and an awarding organisation. With the pace of change on apprenticeship reform, we are in danger of throwing out the baby with the bathwater, and should think again about what changes are required. We need to consider the future impact on apprentices of a lack of qualifications in apprenticeships, if that becomes the norm; and critically, if we are to have an employer-led system, we must listen to those employers who find their framework is fit for purpose and not reform everything for the sake of it.

It was reassuring to hear the minister also mention young people's voices, alongside his usual call for the views of employers. At the conference, we were pleased to be joined by a youth ambassador from YEUK, Michael Tran. Too often in the drive to have an 'employer-led' system, we have neglected to hear from this important group – the learners themselves. Michael talked about the three apprenticeships he has done. His experience of careers guidance (his head teacher encouraged him to apply for university rather than 'be poor for the rest of his life' if he did an apprenticeship) and poor pay levels for his first apprenticeship (£75

a week for 30 hours) show that there is still much work still to be done. And while Nick Boles acknowledged there is much work needed on teachers and parents to promote apprenticeships, it's difficult in the current climate to imagine how much progress can be made.

Another critical change that will be coming over the next few years will be the impact of devolution. Ann Limb's session reinforced that skills and apprenticeships will be key areas for those devolution deals. Given the localised focus of each LEP, it's not surprising that each LEP operates differently, although this obviously makes engagement a challenge. But with experience in meeting employer needs and responding to changes, the sector is well-placed to support the skills priorities that emerge.

In his speech, Nick Boles made reference to education and skills being more important than ever to the success of the country. This will not be news to anyone engaged in this sector, who will already know that the only way to resolve skills shortages is through more and better training. We must keep pushing government to deliver the answers to these important questions, so we can concentrate on delivering.



VIEW FROM CHAIR AND NEW CEO

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Ofsted has been accused of favouring traineeships that concentrate on classroom-based maths and English provision rather than getting young people out into the work place.

Association of Employment and Learning Providers' (AELP) chair Martin Dunford (pictured right) spoke out on the issue during the conference's opening question and answer session on Monday (June 27).

It came after the organisation's chief executive Mark Dawe (pictured below) claimed in FE Week two weeks ago that providers were being given "required to improve" gradings by Ofsted "based solely on English and maths outcomes, as Ofsted is not willing to accept destination data as robust evidence".

It provoked a strongly-worded letter to the paper from Paul Joyce, deputy director for FE and skills at Ofsted, denying that ratings of the subjects had an "overriding influence" on overall inspections.

Mr Dunford returned to this at the conference.

He said: "The extreme example [for traineeships inspections] would be, if you keep everyone in the classroom, everyone does maths and English, and never sees an employer.

"With the way Ofsted is judging at the moment, they would probably get a higher grade than somebody who has got a lot of young people in work for the first time, or re-entry to the labour market if they are in their early 20s."

Mr Dawe, who took part in the same question and answer session, added AELP had been in encouraging talks with the government and Ofsted on this issue.

He said: "We have had some really positive meetings - getting understanding of why this is important.

"It [maths and English] is important, but if it is the only thing you are judged on that isn't so good. I think we have that understanding now. If you get that right it [traineeships] will start to fly."

Conference chair Jan Murray (pictured right) challenged the pair. She said, "playing devil's advocate", they



Ofsted is not willing to accept destination data as robust evidence

MEMBERSHIP BOOST TO OVER 800

The AELP has passed 800 members for the first time, and picked up dozens of colleges in the process.

Mr Dunford told conference delegates in his opening speech that the organisation had never been more in demand.

It now has 804 members, including over 40 colleges.

The latest college to join was Burton and South Derbyshire College, which quit the Association of Colleges, as revealed by

FE Week last September.

A spokesperson said: "We're delighted that Mark Dawe has taken the helm at AELP at this critical time and look forward to engaging with the association on these and other important issues for the sector in the coming year."

Former chief executive of awarding organisation OCR, Mr Dawe, was appointed as the new AELP boss in March.



could be accused of sidestepping the issue.

Ms Murray added: "Young people need English and maths to get on in life, so how would you suggest they develop those skills?"

Mr Dawe replied: "Every young person going on to that programme should be assessed up-front for English and maths, and assessment should be carried



out at the end.

"But if a traineeship is, say a 10-week programme, it may not be long enough to get a qualification. If a job offer comes along, we can't say 'sorry you can't take the job because you haven't finished your English and maths' - that is not what we want to say."

He added functional skills were

crucially important for helping the learners to develop their numeracy and literacy.

He said: "I get it that with some students with a marginal C or D at GCSE, it's worth trying again to see if they can get that qualification.

"But for many who have really struggled with the subjects, you need to take a different approach and that is where functional skills are so successful."



THERE WILL BE A 'LITTLE DELAY' TO

PAUL OFFORD
@PAULOFFORD

A succession of key apprenticeship reform announcements will be further delayed following Brexit, skills minister Nick Boles (pictured) has admitted.

The government had been due to provide further funding information for apprenticeship reforms by the end of this month, with the Sainsbury review setting out new technical professional education routes into work, along with a new skills white paper, also expected imminently.

But Mr Boles told the Association of Employment and Learning Providers conference today there would be a "little delay" following the British public's decision to leave the European Union – although they can expect the documents before the summer recess.

He said: "We should all continue to assume and work on the assumption that the apprenticeship levy is coming in, as planned."

However, he added: "We had planned to be publishing further detailed information about the pricing of specific apprenticeship standards in the next few days.

"I'm sure you will understand that is now going to be a little delayed, but only a little – we still expect to get that information out well before the summer break."

It comes after FE Week reported on June 20 that the government was looking at slashing the amount smaller firms will have to pay towards the cost of apprenticeships training after the levy launch next April.

Employers of all sizes currently have to pay a third of training costs, with the Skills Funding Agency covering the rest, under the pilot for new apprenticeships.

That means a £1 employer cash contribution returns £2 funding – up to a cap – for the relevant standard.

But FE Week has learned the government is considering making a much bigger contribution after April 2017 for employers not using their apprenticeship levy pot – either because their wage bill is too small to pay into it, or because it has run out.

For every £1 invested by such employers, we understand that



the SFA will pay up to £9, according to plans.

The detail promised this month by the government and now delayed, was supposed to be for provisional funding bands, which

will set the maximum amount of funding available for each apprenticeship from April 2017.

More information was also expected, for example, on the provisional level of government support available towards the cost of apprenticeship training for non-levy payers; extra payments for hiring 16 to 18 year old apprentices; and the amount that will be paid for English and maths training.

In his speech Mr Boles also

mentioned Lord Sainsbury's review, which is set to form the basis of the first skills white paper in a decade.

FE Week revealed in March that it is set to bring an end to mixed provision and make 16-year-olds choose between academic courses leading to university, or around 15 new technical professional education routes into work.

Mr Boles told conference delegates: "We will also be going ahead soon – I cannot give you a particular date, but again before the summer recess – with the publication of the Sainsbury review.

"We will be going ahead with publication of that and the government skills plan and that too will not change in any important respect as a result of recent events."

The minister added he understood "some of you will have gleaned some details of it before publication".

This came after FE Week broke a string of exclusive stories about how Lord Sainsbury's report would be delayed.

It was originally expected in March, then pushed back to May – before we reported last month that it had been delayed until after the EU referendum.

Mr Boles closed his speech by attempting to reassure delegates about funding.

He said: "There are some very fruitful rivers for you all to be fishing in. The river of apprenticeship funding is going to grow, there is no question about that.

"The river of funding for adult education was secured in the budget.

"I hope you will be able to leave this conference today confident that you are in a growing business, in an activity which is going to be more important to the United Kingdom's future than it has been in the past."



APPRENTICESHIP REFORM DETAIL

SHADOW MINISTER HITS BACK AT LACK OF PROGRESS

PAUL OFFORD
@PAULOFFORD

Shadow skills minister Gordon Marsden has accused the government of wasting three years that should have been better spent promoting and targeting traineeships.

He told AELP conference delegates on Monday (June 27) that the original concept for traineeships when they were launched three years ago – that of improving job prospects for young people who have slipped through the education and training net – was a good one.

But he felt they should have been targeted more carefully at preparing learners for good quality apprenticeships.

Mr Marsden said: “I was a very strong supporter of traineeships when they were originally introduced by the government.

“It was the right concept, but ministers have frittered away three years failing to promote it, failing to explain it, and failing to target. Even now they are unsure of the direction they want to go with them.

“Are they entry points to the world of work – sometimes any sort of work handed down by Job Centre Plus – or are they stepping stones for achieving apprenticeships?”

The criticism follows calls for a review over the purpose of traineeships after FE Week revealed shockingly low progression levels to apprenticeships.

The government repeatedly refused to answer questions about how many young people had progressed from traineeships to apprenticeships — so FE Week obtained the figure through a Freedom of Information request to the Skills Funding Agency.

The figures showed that just 450 (nine per cent) of 5,200 completions for 19- to 24-year-olds in 2014/15 started an apprenticeship.

The figure was slightly higher for under 19s — with 2,280 (31 per cent) of 7,400 completions progressing — but it still meant that overall progression to apprenticeships stood at just 22 per cent. Publicly available statistics provide only overall “positive” progression numbers to a job, apprenticeship, further full-time education or other training.

Mr Marsden told conference delegates he understood providers’ wider concerns about traineeships.

“You want to be able to use the funding to do

something useful for those young people,” he said.

“But it is true that the government utilises traineeships as a key point of entry to get far more young people competitive as a starting point for high quality apprenticeships.

“The lack of promotion or a clear strategy is in my view hindering that progress.

“They must be progressive. If they are not, we are in danger of having some of the issues seen in the 1980s, where a generation of young people felt like hamsters never quite getting to the top of the wheel.”

He called for a “joined up situation, which takes me onto careers advice in schools”.

“I regard the complete inadequacy of careers advice over the last three to six years in schools to be one of the government’s biggest failings,” he added.

When asked last month to respond to concerns about low progression to apprenticeships, a Department for Business, Innovation and Skills spokesperson said: “We will continue to expand traineeships to create opportunities up and down the country so we can help as many young people as possible to get on.”



GET YOUR FOOT IN THE LEP DOOR

JUDE BURKE
@JUDEBURKE77

Learning providers should “push their foot through the door” with local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) and not be “downhearted”, the chair of one LEP told conference delegates on Monday morning.

Ann Limb, chair of South East Midlands LEP also urged members of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) not to worry about LEP board representation and to focus their attention on chief executives and skills leads.

Her remarks came after a welcome address by AELP chair Martin Dunford, in which he revealed that almost half of AELP members felt LEPs weren't involving them in strategic planning.

Ms Limb told the audience: “Every LEP does have a skills lead.”

“I would like to encourage you not to be downhearted by any reaction you've had, and to find out who that skills person is, to push your foot through the door if you need to in terms of getting a meeting,” she continued.

Honestly, the boards of the LEPs are the last places where you get any business done

LEPs' focus on apprenticeships and willingness to engage with private sector business provided a justification “to go and have that conversation” she said, and find “a way in which you might be able to work with them”.

Responding to comments by Mark Dawe, AELP chief executive, that some LEPs had colleges on their boards, Ms Limb said independent training providers shouldn't “worry about being there on the board” of LEPs.



“Honestly, the boards of the LEPs are the last places where you get any business done,” she said.

“The important thing, in any real sense, in terms of the real what we understand as ‘business’ – because that’s at such a high level, a strategic level – you do need to get in with the chief exec and the skills lead. That is critical.”

She urged: “That’s the level to get in at, don’t worry too much about board representation.”

Earlier in her speech Ms Limb had acknowledged it was difficult for ITPs to get in to the “LEP space” at the moment,

“because if LEPs are thinking about skills they are having, predominantly, to think of it in relation to the area based reviews”.

She added: “But I do think you can build on that, and this is an opportunity to try and position yourself as the area based reviews get implemented now.”

Ms Limb told ITPs not to think of colleges as “the bogey person”.

She said: “You’re equally as valid in the training space as they are. You just need to get in there and make your case.”

Ms Limb said the AELP “brand” was a

good one, but it wasn't as “well known as it should be” by LEPs.

She added: “But there’s an opportunity if you keep that brand in people’s minds, and keep it in mind because of what you deliver. Please don’t be too downcast. Please don’t get too swayed out of the zone that you know best, which is fantastic training delivered very effectively because more than ever those training programmes are needed, the skills are needed and valued by LEPs and you have a very significant part to play in helping us work with you to get people skilled up,” she concluded.





THE CHARTERED INSTITUTION FOR FURTHER EDUCATION

CHARTER STATUS COMES IN SEARCH OF SOME MEMBERS

ALIX ROBERTSON
@ALIXROBERTSON4

Over half of the delegates at the 2016 Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) conference have voted to reject membership of the Chartered Institution for Further Education (CIFE).

A majority of 54 per cent said they were not interested in applying for membership, or it was not relevant to their organisation, in a poll taken after the chair, Lord Lingfield, delivered a speech about the CIFE.

Just six per cent said they would be ready to consider membership now, while the remaining 40 per cent of voters said it might be something for the future.

The poll results came after Lord

Lingfield said in response to an audience question that membership of the CIFE would cost £5,000 per year, on top of the £3,000 entry fee.

Despite the conference survey results, a CIFE spokesperson told FE Week there have already been some applications for membership.

He commented that “there are organisations going through the review process” and the CIFE will “make announcements about membership as and when organisations go completely through the process and are accepted into membership”.

He also said that his speech at the AELP 2016 conference was Lord Lingfield’s first in this role.

Lord Lingfield himself was not phased by the poll results.

He told FE Week: “I was not in the least bit surprised. This is going to take a long time quite obviously.

“This will be for a small number of providers at first.”

He added that there was some interest at the event, saying: “I’m encouraged, I’ve just spoken with somebody who said, ‘this is perfectly the thing we have been looking for, for a long time’.

“I wouldn’t for one moment think the vast majority of the people here today are going to be flooding in.

“But I think that we shall see a trickle which is followed by a flow and that finally, when we’ve got some hundreds into memberships others will be considering it – it’s very early days.”

AELP chief executive Mark Dawe showed some reservations about CIFE membership.

He said: “We can see a Royal Charter is a valuable recognition, but it has to fit in to all the other quality systems.

“If some want to get involved great, but we also want to work with them to understand how this might fit into a wider quality system if it is going to.”

He added: “There’s a lot of discussion to be had yet. I think that the vote showed that there was still uncertainty and people weren’t going to just jump into this.

“The cost feels high and I’m sure that’s what put a lot of people off voting from definite to maybe.”

Plans were originally drawn up, by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, for the Royal seal of approval to be granted to high-achieving FE institutions in July 2012.

It was almost another year before the appointment of Lord Lingfield as chair.

The Queen then approved the grant of a Royal Charter to the Institution for Further Education in June 2015, and the body announced in October that it had been given the “Great Seal of the Realm” – the legal stamp of approval that led to its change in name.

Then in November it was announced that colleges and independent learning providers could apply for membership.

In January this year, FE Week also reported that a student’s competition-winning logo for Chartered Status for FE

providers had been abandoned.

Lisa Cassidy from The Manchester College was given the award in 2013 for her winning design, after a competition was launched by the Department for BIS.

The CIFE subsequently told FE Week that the logo would no longer be used.



The Chartered Institution for Further Education (CIFE) is an independent body run by its own professionals.

As chair, Lord Lingfield holds a “facilitator” role, but he confirmed at AELP 2016 that “as the organisation matures it will elect a leader from the sector and already it has an embryo council and a group of advisors all drawn from FE”.

He also commented that though fellowships will be granted to “distinguished leaders in the sector”, membership of the CIFE will be strictly corporate and “open in principle to all providers of FE in England on the condition that they reach and maintain the high standards of entry which the Chartered Institution is developing”.

Lord Lingfield added that prospective members must demonstrate to reviewers, the first group of which were appointed in April, “the highest quality of teaching and learning, of governance, of financial structures and probity, of initiative, of management, of leadership, of student satisfaction and that employers, both locally and further afield, are persuaded of the high quality of the students coming to them for jobs”.



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ALIX ROBERTSON
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REPORT ENCOURAGES LEADERS FROM

More applicants from outside the FE and skills sector should be encouraged to apply for leadership roles within it, a new report has claimed.

Mark Dawe, chief executive of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP), threw his support behind the findings — saying the apprenticeship levy due for launch in April will create an environment that requires “fresh thinking on leadership”.

The report, commissioned by the Further Education Trust for Leadership (FETL) and jointly produced by the AELP and 157 Group, was driven by signs of a growing trend towards providers recruiting from outside the sector.

Mr Dawe said: “Independent training providers often recruit from outside, as they operate at a business to business level with employers.

“The apprenticeship levy is a game-changer for the sector and so it is entirely right and

healthy for all types of provider to undertake some fresh thinking on leadership as this report advocates.”

The report included five case studies of leaders chosen from outside FE and skills — explaining their successes and ability to adjust quickly to the different types of demands placed on them.

These examples indicated that externally selected leaders tended to find little difference in the skills required of them in their new positions in FE, compared to their previous roles elsewhere.

However, the report warned that some governing bodies and boards remained doubtful of the need for recruitment from outside the sector — suggesting it is important for leaders to understand its culture and rules in order to be successful. It claimed this should be challenged if the sector’s leadership “is not to stagnate”.

Commenting on the findings, president of FETL Dame Ruth Silver said: “The rapidly changing landscape for the sector demands that we look ‘everywhere and elsewhere’ in forging a future for ourselves.

“This report is important because it demonstrates clearly the benefits of recruiting widely for the best leaders from outside as well as FE and skills, while also increasing guidance on how best to recruit, support and maximise the impact of these new leaders, both within the institution and more widely.”

Other suggestions included the need for organisations to rethink pre-interview advice and information, to present a more complete picture of the role and their organisation to non-sector applicants.

Similarly, the report recommended that organisations also communicate the rationale behind non-sector recruitment clearly to their

staff, to alleviate any reservations.

Where leaders have been hired from outside the sector, the report said they should be encouraged to retain their independent perspective for as long as possible, and efforts should be made to ensure other staff and key stakeholders understand their remit.

A further positive step proposed in the study was for the sector to encourage more engagement between new and established leaders from the different parts of FE and skills, and to drive forward discussions around innovative approaches to leadership thinking.

Finally, the organisations behind the report concluded that further research was needed to establish the full extent of recruitment from outside the sector, the levels of cross-sector movement in leadership roles and the degree of new thinking within the sector to respond to change.

THE MANCHESTER COLLEGE (PART OF THE LTE GROUP)

Mark Oldfield joined The Manchester College (TMC) as director of justice development in 2014 from Serco.

He now heads up its business development for the group.

With the aim of developing business skills in the college, he has looked outside the education sector for “different” kinds of employees with a broader skills base, not just specific subject knowledge.

He recommended that to make a success of this, providers need better induction processes.

Diaries of senior leaders have been reorganised at his college to “free up thinking” and business units have different governing bodies with appropriate expertise.

Paul Taylor, director of HR and people strategy, also joined the college in 2013 from Electricity North West Ltd.

He says its focus is on building a “blended” team with a range of skills.

He has shared his knowledge of how to use data and strategic thinking for successful leadership, but adds that this process takes time.



Paul Taylor Mark Oldfield

THE WORKERS’ EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION

The Workers’ Educational Association is the UK’s largest voluntary sector provider of adult education.

Chief executive Ruth Spellman and her board recruited Ian Hanham (pictured) as chief operating officer in 2015, for his financial expertise and understanding of governance and support functions, having worked in the commercial and charity sectors.

Mr Hanham realised the WEA was quite risk-averse, so worked to develop confidence in thinking about risk strategies as well as recruiting the right leaders to move forward.

The current leadership team is a deliberate mix of internal

expertise and external applicants with objectivity and different thinking.

Internal and external appointments are paired up where appropriate to provide a balanced working relationship and a range of skills, which requires careful judgement and emotional intelligence to make it work.

This change affects workload, taking up space and time, but the WEA says leadership conversations that go beyond the ‘day job’ are beginning to bear fruit.



Ruth Spellman

DERBY COLLEGE

Derby College developed a strategy to recruit from outside the sector when Mandie Stravino was appointed as chief executive in 2012.

She was an internal appointment so knew the culture of the organisation, but wanted to build a range of skills in the leadership team.

Her first appointment was Bernadette Doyle (pictured right), who came from industry. The college used a recruitment consultant so Ms Doyle knew what was expected of her.

Derby College says making an appointee aware of what the cross-over from industry to a curriculum leadership role entails is essential to avoid culture clash.

Ms Doyle says she found having a supportive second in command was also significant because this helps a new leader to focus on making changes rather than the everyday issues.

She says it is important to understand staff who do not want to move up but prefer to support, and to reward them with a key role in helping others think differently.



Mandie Stravino



MANAGEMENT OUTSIDE FE AND SKILLS SECTOR

HIT TRAINING



Managing director of HIT Training Jill Whittaker said bringing new blood into the organisation was vital — but maintaining its legacy mattered too.

Her strategy had been to recruit a commercial director with some knowledge of the sector — but also real expertise in maximising sales.

MS Whittaker says HIT Training is different to many other ITPs because it is sector specific (hospitality).

She knows the sector, the business and the network of related businesses inside out — which helps if there is a need to headhunt externally for a particular post.

Networking is key to this approach, and she says the organisation cannot trust this to recruitment agencies. Therefore, over the past 10 years she has developed a huge network of contacts in order to identify potential new leaders.



Jill Whittaker

LEICESTER COLLEGE



Skip Evans was recruited as a senior leader for international work at Leicester College in 2014 and is now the international manager. Before this he had worked in the civil service in Australia.

There was no strategy to recruit leaders from outside the sector for new thinking when he started.

He was employed to lead the expansion of the international area of business, as the team has previously consisted of only two staff doing administrative work, such as processing applications.

Mr Evans developed a strategy to expand beyond recruiting international students and now other colleagues at the college are being recruited with similar specific skill sets.

Mr Evans says he has been supported “amazingly” by the senior leadership team and given autonomy to take risks

and pursue new initiatives.

He says having the freedom to change and develop a team as a new leader is key and help from a good HR team makes the management process more positive.



Skip Evans

John Landeryou, who contributed to the ‘New Blood; the thinking and approaches of new leaders in the FE and Skills market’ report, here and in a day two workshop reflects on potential benefits from looking outside of the sector for future leaders.



JOHN LANDERYOU

Associate and project manager with AELP and former interim director at the Education and Training Foundation

So-called outsiders can generate new ideas

Take a minute to think how much of your working time is taken up doing things and how much is devoted to thinking; not just about what to do next, but about the future and how you could do things differently or better.

Have you got the balance right?

If we’re honest most of us don’t find enough time to think. But what with the radical changes to apprenticeships, area reviews and so on, there has never been a greater need to fundamentally question how we do things.

Refreshing the leadership team often stimulates new questions about how the business operates.

If this recruitment is from within the sector, there are clear benefits in terms of direct knowledge and experience.

But are we setting too much store by this and actually just recruiting in our own image and hiring people who are adept at solving yesterday’s problems?

Or should we be casting the net more widely and be more open to a wider range of applicants that might help us think about things in a

completely different way?

There does seem to be a trend towards recruiting more broadly; and not only in the more obviously transferable areas such as finance, HR and information technology.

According to those who have made the transition, there is very little difference in the nature of the leadership skills required in FE and skills compared to other sectors.

In most cases, what they lack in sector awareness is made up for in other practical areas, especially by their willingness to ask searching questions and challenge the status quo.

That’s not to say that recruiting from outside the traditional talent pool is easy.

Getting the message out about the attractions of our sector is a continuing challenge. So, if you do decide to go in this direction what do you need to consider?

Providing a clear picture of the challenges your organisation faces is key, especially for those who

won’t understand all the nuances.

Then there is the problem of designing a recruitment process that doesn’t place too much store on sector knowledge.

Once things get to the appointment stage, getting the right cultural fit between the individual and the organisation is key to achieving maximum benefit from outside sector recruitment.

Fitting in too easily, and being too different and unable to adapt are both sub optimal. There needs to be enough edge to bring something genuinely different but not so much that it will cause new colleagues to put up their barriers.

Once in the organisation, an extended induction including plenty of opportunities to develop that sector knowledge is vital, as is a set of clear parameters to work within.

The wider staff of the organisation needs to know why a so-called outsider has been brought in and what they may be able to contribute.

They also need to know that the individual has

permission to look at things in a very different way.

Asking apparently daft questions can be a powerful way of getting people to think about things from another perspective — but it helps to know that they might be coming.

If all this isn’t clear, misunderstanding can arise and the job becomes a whole lot more difficult.

There does seem to be a trend towards recruiting more broadly

There are benefits to the provider or college itself in this type of recruitment, but there are wider benefits too as we expand and diversify our sector leadership community.

Exchanges between groups of new and established leaders have proved very stimulating and it seems clear that we should be doing more to encourage these sorts of debates across all different types of providers.

Only by doing this type of system-wide thinking, and by being willing to look outside for new ideas, will we give ourselves the best chance of facing up to the current challenges and shaping our own future.




JUDE BURKE
 @JUDEBURKE77

HOTTEST TOPIC WAS IMPACT

Key sector figures have urged the government to continue with its apprenticeship reforms following Thursday's Brexit vote – and warned of the consequences if it doesn't.

The vote by the British public to leave the European Union came after a speech by skills minister Nick Boles on June 13 raised concerns that such a verdict could kill off the apprenticeship levy.

It has already led to the resignation of prime minister David Cameron, on Friday, and a mass exodus from Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn's shadow cabinet on Sunday.

Mark Dawe, chief executive of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, was among those who argued it was now more important than ever to press ahead with its apprenticeship plans.

He said: "If anything, the referendum result means that a skilled British workforce will be needed more than ever, so the target of three million apprenticeship starts by 2020 takes on a new significance."

Mr Dawe also stressed the need for "clarity" from the government on its levy plans.

He said: "I can understand they'll pause for a moment and think, but if we don't know what's going to happen it's going to be by default not happen in April."

Chris Jeffery, non-executive director for independent training provider Skills Group, reiterated Mr Dawe's call for clarity.

While she said it could be a "long time before you see the impact" of the referendum vote, she warned that "any delay regarding the detail is only going to frustrate providers even more and employers as well".

Their views were echoed by Professor Alison Wolf, who made the case for an employer levy to fund apprenticeship training in a report published days before the government first unveiled the charge last July.

She told FE Week that "skills policy has become more important than ever" in the light of the referendum result.

She said: "One argument for the apprenticeship levy was that firms had cut back their training expenditures over the years, in part because they found it cheaper and easier to use skilled migrant/immigrant labour."

Professor Wolf said that if the UK decided to

opt out of the free movement of labour within Europe "the need to increase our skilled, level three apprenticeship numbers will be more pressing than ever".

But Gordon Marsden, shadow skills minister, warned that if companies' "collaboration and cooperation with European companies in building things and winning contracts was being diminished, then obviously either their ability to or their need to recruit more highly skilled apprenticeships could become quite volatile."

Martin Doel, chief executive of the Association of Colleges, pressed the government to "make it clear as soon as possible how it will continue to fund education and training for the good of everyone."

And Shakira Martin, National Union of Students vice president for FE, cautioned that if the levy were scrapped "we're going to see the aspirations of so many young people wanting to get into training and work squashed".

She urged: "The government should be assuring young people that they have a future in the UK's skilled workforce, not removing our future chances."

But Nadhim Zahawi, the prime minister's

apprenticeship adviser, said the "apprenticeship levy and the enhancement of our nation's skills is a central government policy, and this will continue to be the case."

Others have raised concerns over the impact of the Brexit vote on the ESF cash the UK receives from the EU for skills training.

Sue Pember, director of policy and external relationships at HOLEX, urged the government to "stabilise their policy" around ESF-funded activities.

She said: "These funds have provided vital support for our adult education students and they will need to be replaced."

A spokesperson for the University and Colleges Union (UCU) said that colleges received "significant funding" from the ESF, and called on the government to "act quickly to quell uncertainty and set out its plans for sustainable further education funding now and in the future".

Janet Clark, education policy adviser at the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, said that it would be against any post-16 funding cuts but added that "future funding will depend on what happens to the economy".



T OF VOTE TO LEAVE THE EU



HELEN McANALLY

Founder and Director of Executive Search and Senior Appointments, Parkhouse Bell

I think it will be a good thing. Britain will have to ensure that its skills are meeting the needs of employers.



VIRGINIE ROMAN

CEO, London Skills and Development Network

Whether or not the UK government will step in to put in the funding to replace the European Social Fund - which has already been severely delayed - is a concern.



ARIT EMINUE

Director, DiVA (Apprenticeships)

Employers' knee-jerk reaction has been to freeze recruitment, and a few of them have said there will be redundancies. If the levy payers are not hiring, they're being taxed for something they're not using. And then will there be as much confidence in the levy?



SUE REYNOLDS

Operations Director, Train 4 Talent

The new minister needs to be clear that the government understands the nervousness of employers about what's happening in the City. We need to have a really strong prime minister.



MARION MARSLAND

Chief Executive, TICA

It's crystal ball gazing. If we'd voted to stay in, I'd have given you the same answer: who knows?



BEEJ KACZMARCZYK

Non-Executive Director, Learning Curve Group

A lot of our apprentices are from Eastern Europe. We filled jobs in health and social care, and construction or warehousing with migrant labour. Where are we going to get that from? From our own kids? They don't want the jobs.



FRANK McMAHON

Managing Director, YH Training Services

The uncertainty about the levy is not going to help the matter. The government needs to make a decision pretty quickly otherwise they won't make the April deadline.



MARK DAWE

CEO, AELP

It looks like it will increase the need for training and apprenticeships. British industry will need home-grown talent.



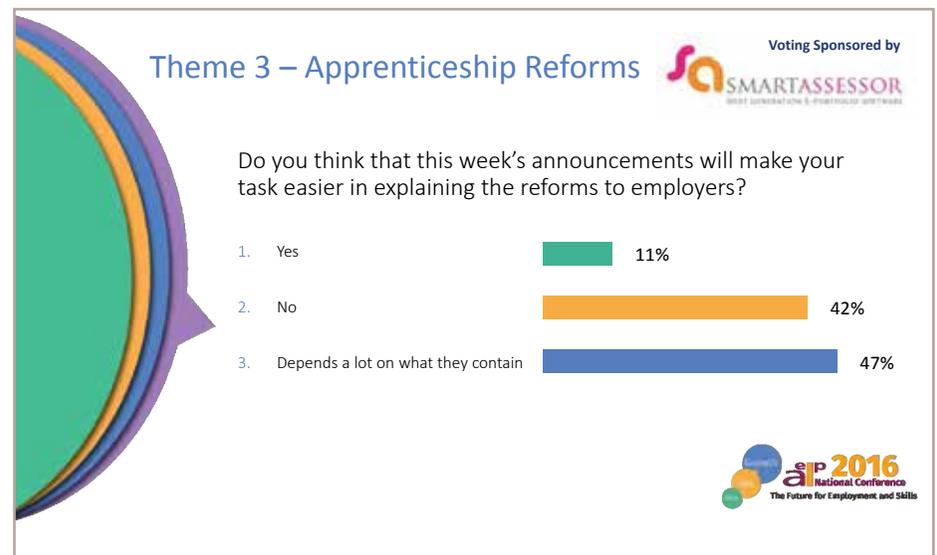
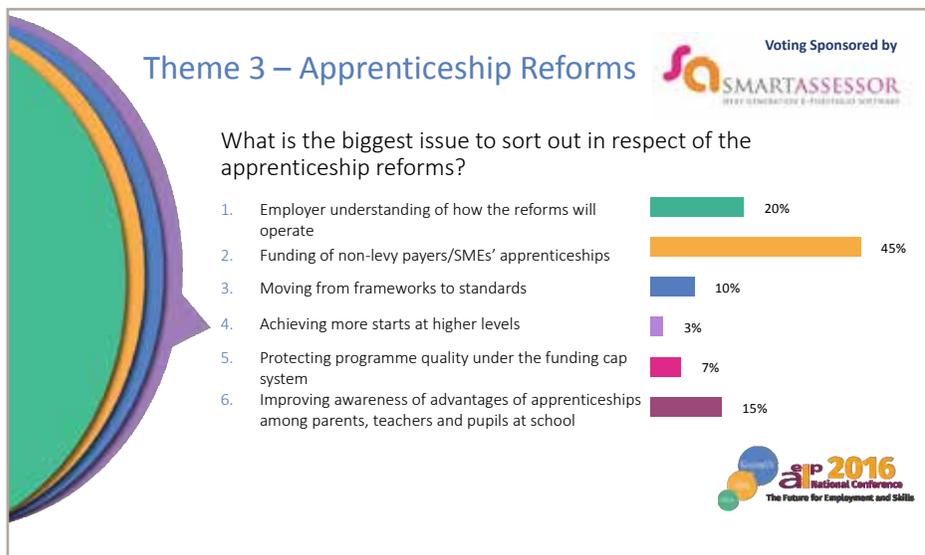
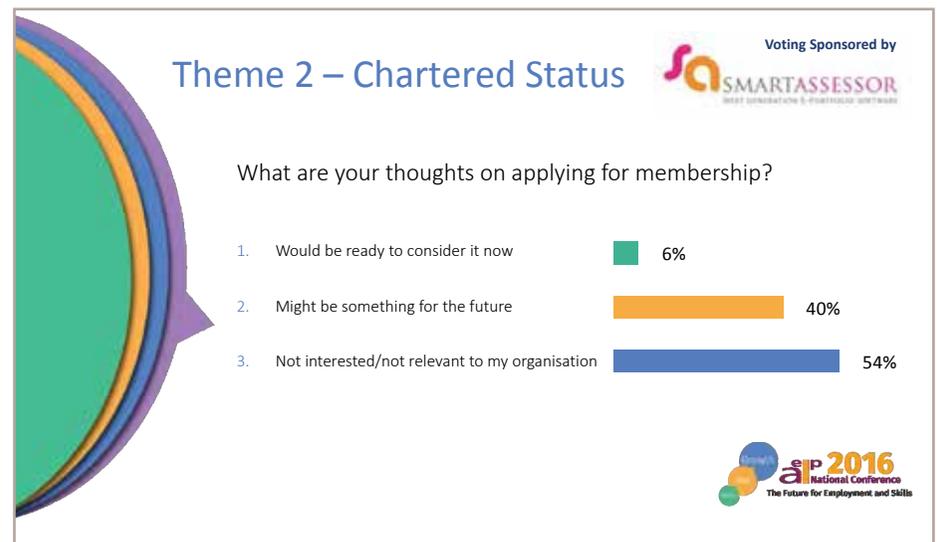
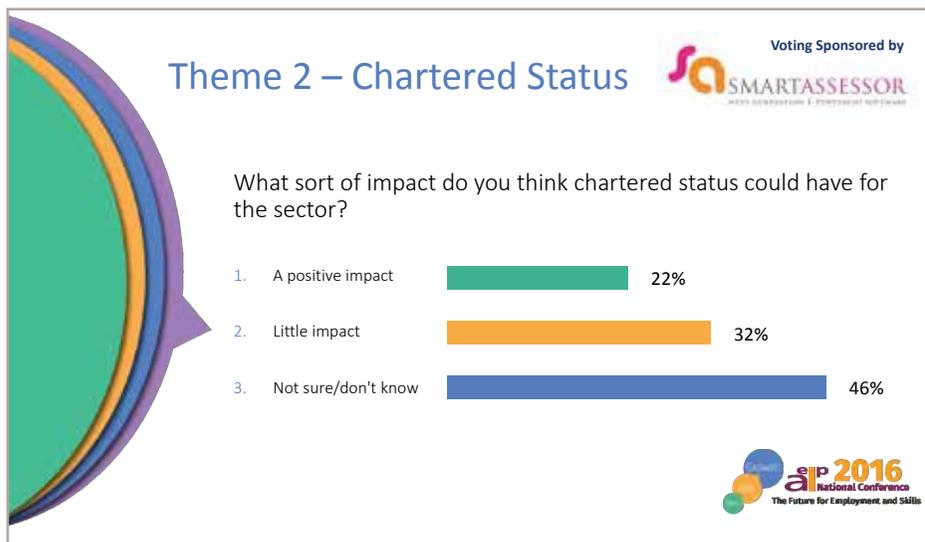
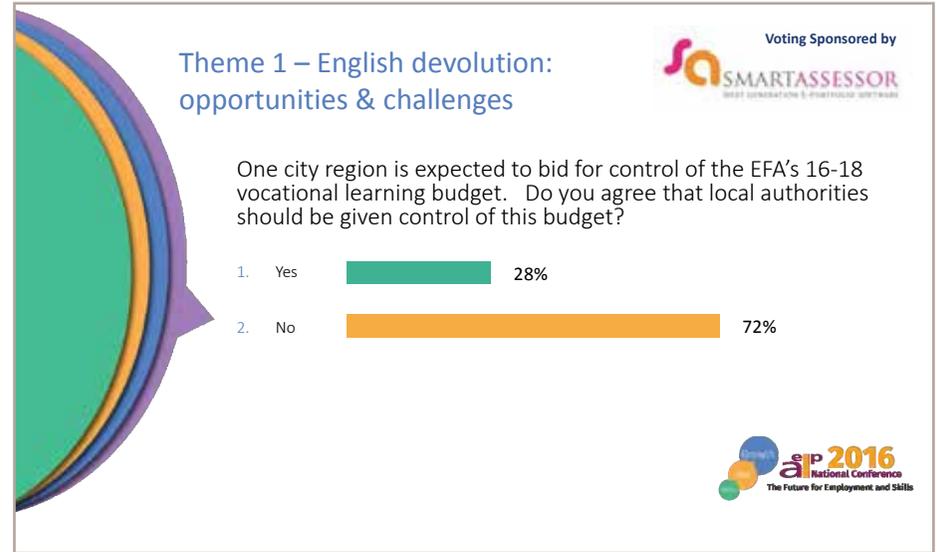
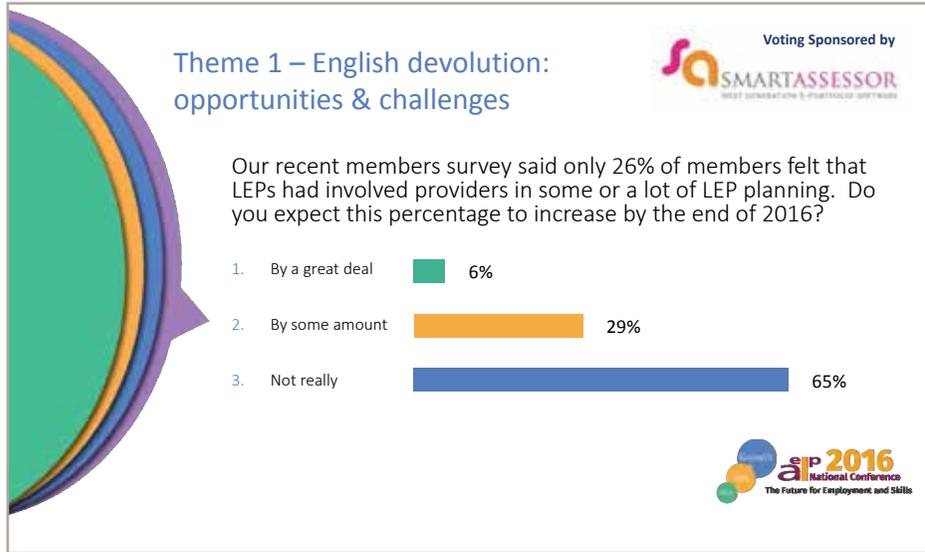
CHRIS QUICKFALL

Managing Director, Equality Learning (EQL)

We work with lots of government funding. No one knows what's round the corner. If the government don't have a clue, it's almost impossible for us to begin to respond.

DELEGATES PASSED JUDGEMENT

Delegates were given voting pads to use throughout day one of the conference. They voted on six key issues affecting the future of the FE and Skills sector. We have published the results in full here.



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*Gosia Seaman, HR assistant,
Richmond upon Thames College*

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*Tracy Roser, executive assistant to
the group chief executive,
EMFEC Group*

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*Jakub Pylat, account manager,
Lighthouse Adcomms LLP*

**For more information, please contact Hannah on:
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