

FE Week

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Parent anger over handling of Daventry UTC's closure

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An angry parent of a student "devastated" by the news that her university technical college would close in the summer has demanded to know why the school took on new learners even though it knew it was in trouble.

Daventry UTC, which opened in 2013, announced in early December that it would close its doors at the end of August 2017 due to low student numbers.

John Dove, whose 14-year-old daughter Maisie began at the 14-to-19 vocational institution in September, is now angrily questioning the decision to allow new students in 2016/17.

"I'd like to know why they even took the kids in this year," he told *FE Week*.

"I believe they knew full well that if they didn't get the roll up to a certain number it was going to close. It's not something that happens overnight," he said.

Mr Dove said the school's closure had left Maisie in tears.

She had been badly bullied at two other secondary schools in Daventry, and had been out of school for a year until she was old enough to attend the UTC – where she was having a much more positive experience.

"Maisie was devastated, absolutely devastated, as were we. Having finally found a school where she was settled and happy at, to have the rug pulled from under our feet like



that was pretty disgusting really," he said.

The school had just 151 students enrolled in 2015/16, down from 169 in 2014/15 – despite a capacity of 600.

It was hit with a financial notice to improve by the Education Funding Agency in April, due to concerns over its financial management.

When *FE Week* put Mr Dove's complaint to Daventry UTC principal Russell Ball, he insisted the decision to close had been made by the Education Funding Agency "two days before parents and children were informed".

But the DfE told *FE Week* that the decision to close, which it said had come at the request of the school, was the culmination of a process that began with the financial notice to improve eight months earlier – suggesting that its leadership team would have had a good idea it was going to close at the start of 2016/17.

The UTC has said it would work with local education providers to "bring about a smooth transition for existing students", including the

opportunity to transfer to Silverstone UTC.

This engineering specialist school is located about 20 miles away from Daventry, in the famous British motorsport racing ground.

FE Week's sister paper *Schools Week* reported in early January that the cost of transport services between Daventry and Silverstone, which would amount to £1,400 a year for each pupil, will be met by the DfE.

Mr Dove told *FE Week* that a transfer to Silverstone was Maisie's "first, second and third" choice because of the bullying at her other schools.

He said he had believed the transfer was going to be "automatic" but was subsequently told he had to apply for a place for Maisie from September, with no guarantee she would get in.

Mr Ball insisted to *FE Week* that "all children who choose Silverstone will be given the opportunity to transfer – guaranteed".

Daventry is the sixth UTC to announce closure, with 48 currently open.

Inadequate Gateway SFC pulls out of Leicestershire area review

JUDE BURKE
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A struggling sixth form college has pulled back from its ongoing area review, after a special intervention by sixth form commissioner Peter Mucklow.

The Leicester-based Gateway SFC received an 'inadequate' grade from Ofsted in October, and Mr Mucklow made the recommendation based on a visit he made in November.

His report into the 1,600 learner SFC, published in late January, said: "The college should stand aside from implementing structural change within the context of the area review and focus exclusively on improving quality standards with the aim to achieve an improved inspection rating at the

next full inspection (expected by February 2018)."

Suzanne Overton-Edwards, Gateway's principal, told *FE Week* that it had withdrawn from the Leicester and Leicestershire area review, which began September 12, as a result of Mr Mucklow's report – though not entirely.

"Whilst not being as fully involved in the area-based review process as we have been, we are still maintaining contact with the process and key personnel and look forward to returning to full discussions with colleagues about any structural changes in the future, once the improvements we are making are evident to Ofsted," she said.

Mr Mucklow's recommendation appears to fly in the face of the government's intention for the area reviews to be a "one-off"

restructuring of the sector "to achieve long-term sustainability".

It may also limit the Gateway's restructuring options in future.

Currently the option to convert to an academy is only open to SFCs through the area reviews, and financial support through the restructuring facility is only available as help towards the cost of implementing the area review recommendations.

Ms Overton-Edwards however declined to comment on the effect stepping back from the area review would have on Gateway's future restructuring options.

The Department for Education also declined to comment on the recommendation and its impact.

Meanwhile, the first merger recommended through the area reviews is due to go ahead on February 1.

The link-up between Dearne Valley College and the RNN Group, made up of Rotherham and North Nottinghamshire Colleges, was suggested in the Sheffield review, which completed in June.

Martin Harrison, Dearne Valley College's principal, said: "The merger offers the opportunity for us to combine the expertise of our staff, our facilities and our resources to allow greater capacity to offer a comprehensive and employer-responsive education and training offer to South Yorkshire, North Nottinghamshire and beyond."



Peter Mucklow



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NEWS

Large drop in number of standards lacking end-point assessors

JUDE BURKE
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The proportion of learners on apprenticeship standards without an approved assessment organisation are dropping rapidly, according to new figures.

Statistics published in October showed 42 per cent of all starts (1,790 out of 4,240) until July had no assessment organisation to choose from – a situation that former top skills civil servant Dr Sue Pember described as “diabolical” (pictured).

However, FE Week has crunched the numbers in the latest government data, released on Thursday (January 26), and found that the proportion of courses without assessors had fallen by more than half to 18 per cent in October.

In all, 82 per cent of apprentices were on standards with at least one approved assessment organisation at the end of October 2016.

There were 9,550 overall starts on the new standards by the end of that month, which meant that 1,680 apprentices were still forced to start on programmes that didn't have any end-point assessment organisations in place.

And 950 of these without an end-point-assessor – representing 10 per cent of all starts – were on standards that had their



first start back in 2014/15.

The lack of assessors is significant because all apprentices on the new standards, which are gradually replacing frameworks, are required to pass an end-point assessment to complete their apprenticeship.

These must be carried out by AOs that have been cleared for the task by the government, on the Skills Funding Agency's register of apprentice assessment organisations.

Dr Pember told FE Week in October that it was “diabolical” to allow an apprentice “to start a programme without explaining not only what the end test will contain, but where it will be, what shape it will take and who will be the organisation to oversee and manage the process”.

There are currently 159 standards approved for delivery, of which 81 have at least one assessment organisation in place, while 78 are without.

So while the number of standards with an assessment organisation in place is rising, the proportion without is still hovering around the 50 per cent mark.

The latest statistical release included provisional data on apprenticeship starts between August and October 2016, as well as final data on starts from previous years.

It showed that the number of standards to have attracted at least one start has increased to 90 – up from the 56 in October's SFR.

And while 35 of these standards have not yet secured an assessment organisation, compared with 33 in October, this represents

a significantly smaller proportion than before – 39 per cent compared with 59 per cent.

Six of these standards had their first starts in 2014/15, meaning that some apprentices have been studying for more than two years without knowing how they will be assessed at the end of their apprenticeship.

Five of these standards – electrical/electronic technical support engineer, manufacturing engineer, mechatronics maintenance technician, product design and development engineer, and product design and development technician – were developed by the automotive Trailblazer group led by Jaguar Land Rover.

A spokesperson for Jaguar Land Rover told FE Week: “Although EPA is outstanding, we are still very confident that the solution will be in place when it is required.”

The sixth standard, relationship manager (banking), was developed by the financial services Trailblazer group led by Barclays.

A spokesperson for the bank told FE Week that it had no concerns about the lack of an end-point assessment organisation for the standard.

The Department for Education said in October that it was working with the Skills Funding Agency to encourage more assessment organisations to apply to the register.

Starts up ahead of the levy – but apprenticeship offers drop

PAUL OFFORD
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Apprenticeship starts have slightly increased despite a fall in vacancies, according to the latest government stats.

Provisional figures for the first quarter of this academic year were shown to be 155,600, according to the January 26 Statistical First Release, up by 2,500 on 153,100 over the same period a year ago.

However, the latest vacancy numbers taken from the ‘find an apprenticeship’ government website showed 12,810 fewer apprenticeships on offer, a 20 per cent fall, in the first quarter of 2016/17 compared with the same period last year. Traineeship vacancies fell 29 per cent (610 fewer).

As the figures also reveal, applications to become an apprentice rose 35 per cent (up 150,770) in the same period.

So it seems that as the volume of vacancies from employers has shrunk, the number of people applying for them continues to rise.

Mark Dawe, the boss of the AELP, expressed “concern” at the latest vacancy numbers, adding: “We need to make sure that the incentives for employers are sufficient to make sure that more apprenticeship opportunities become available.”

FE Week has spoken to various sector insiders, and one popular if unsubstantiated theory is that some employers who will end up paying the levy are waiting for the apprenticeship reforms to take place from May 1, when they will be able to start using their credit.

Non-levied employers might also be waiting until May given their fee contribution for apprenticeship standards will fall from a third to 10 per cent.

Vacancy numbers do not include the

times when employers enrol their existing employees as apprentices.

“Apprenticeships offer people a ladder of opportunity to get on in highly skilled jobs,” said the skills minister Robert Halfon. “With 780,000 apprenticeships started since May 2015, we are well on our way to turning this country into an apprenticeships nation.”

“I want to build on this success and keep increasing the prestige and quality of apprenticeships to ensure they are on par with traditional academic options.”

The government was forced to concede earlier in the week that qualifications achievement rates data for 2015/16 would not appear in this latest round of published data.

The Skills Funding Agency last month said it would “shortly publish provisional 2015 to 2016 qualification achievement rates and minimum standards” covering apprenticeships and education and training.

“We aim to publish the final QAR data following publication of the next SFR at the end of January,” it said.

But the agency conceded in an online bulletin on January 25 that this would not now happen.

This follows major problems reported by FE Week that saw providers struggle to upload QAR information onto a troublesome online data collection system called the Hub.

FE Week reported on January 9 that there had been a week of problems, provoking repeated complaints though the online forum FE Connect.

The main issue accepted by SFA was that the QAR was incorrectly only including learners as timely, where they had an actual end date in the 2015/16 year.

It meant, for example, that a learner who had a planned end date before the end of 2015/16, but who actually finished in 2016/17, ie after August 1 but within the required 90 days, wasn't being recognised.

All age apprenticeship programme starts Q1 August to October - provisional figures

	2015/16	2016/17
Under 19	59,700	58,300
19-24	46,500	45,300
25+	46,900	52,100
Total	153,100	155,600

NEWS

Report shows college struggle with 'endemic' sexualised behaviour

JUDE BURKE
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Ofsted has blasted a college for "endemic" sexualised behaviour and incidents of sexual assault in a damning new report.

In November, the inspectorate awarded Hereward College the lowest possible grade for its most recent inspection, which saw it fall from the 'good' rating it had earned just 18 months ago.

That report said the college's safeguarding was "ineffective", and brought to light a number of alleged incidents of peer-on-peer abuse – at least one of which was under investigation "by another agency".

The scale of the problem has now been laid

bare in detail, in a monitoring visit report published earlier this month.

Based on a visit in December, the new document said that a "worryingly high proportion" of the safeguarding incidents had "involved sexualised behaviour" or "in some cases sexual assaults by one learner on another".

"Leaders do not have a sufficiently wide range of strategies to tackle this endemic issue," it found.

Consequently, it urged college leaders to "urgently devise a specific strategy" to deal with "incidents of unwanted sexual attention paid by one learner to another".

A spokesperson for the Hereward said the college had taken the report on board and had "put in place a number of actions to make the

necessary improvements".

A new safeguarding manager, who will enable the college "to progress safeguarding issues more rapidly", has been in post since January 3.

"The college is moving forward with a new chair of governors, new board members, a new interim principal and a determination from its dedicated staff to embrace the challenges that the college faces, a resolve to put things right and build upon the good work the college has done and continues to do in supporting its students," she said.

Hereward is currently led by interim principal Geoffrey Draper, who was appointed in November after the former principal Sheila Fleming left at the time of Ofsted's visit in October, reportedly due to an illness.

A college spokesperson confirmed to FE Week that Ms Fleming, who took up the post in 2011, is still on sick leave from the college, but refused to say whether she is being paid.

The college provides full-time learning programmes at pre-entry level to level three for people with disabilities and additional needs, and offers both day and residential provision. It had around 570 learners over the previous full-contract year, and receives high-needs funding for around 280 learners.

As previously reported in FE Week, the FE commissioner is understood to have urged neighbouring Henley College Coventry and City College Coventry to consider merging with Hereward.

A number of issues raised in the report

related to the specific needs of the college's learners.

These included shortcomings in its newly revised safeguarding policy, which it said "fails to explain the college's approach to child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, restraint, intimate care or bullying, all of which are important issues for this group of learners".

The policy also failed to address "how learners with profound and multiple learning difficulties or communication difficulties might communicate their concerns or disclose if they were being abused or harmed".

The report conceded that the college had begun to review its admissions policy, and one local authority has now agreed to "avoid placing learners with challenging behaviours at the college".

However, it noted that leaders and managers had "paid insufficient attention to how to manage the current mix of learners more safely and effectively".

"Leaders and managers acknowledge that they are finding it challenging to balance the delivery of the accredited curriculum with the need to increase greatly the focus on personal, social and health education, and in particular sex and relationships education," it said.

The report found that leaders had "given initial thought as to how to help learners to behave more safely", but that further work was needed.



Hereward College

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EXCLUSIVE

SFA in dock after hundreds of learners struggle

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Another highly profitable training provider has suddenly gone bust in mysterious circumstances, leaving hundreds of learners on the hook for thousands of pounds of student debt.

John Frank Training, a London-based provider with a satellite office in Preston, went into liquidation on November 30, leaving no assets, despite recording a profit of £1.3 million in the first half of 2016.

The Skills Funding Agency is now investigating the circumstances of the firm's sudden collapse – but its former learners are struggling to claw back their loans cash.

These students took out loans to pay for their training, but never actually saw the money, as loans money gets paid directly to the provider. In this case it was JFT, which went bust with a loans black hole of nearly half a million pounds.

The SFA is currently refusing to write off their debts, even though they won't get the training through JFT.

The provider, run by its owner John Frank, used the government's advanced learner loan scheme to deliver and subcontract courses in areas such as IT and health and fitness, and had been allocated £10 million in loans facilities over the last two years.

Of this, £6.4 million was paid for around 2,200 learners to complete their training with the provider.

However, another £464,000 of SFA funding is thought to be missing, which FE Week understands should have covered another 500 learners who are yet to complete their training – and may not now get the chance.

One of the learners who has been left out

of pocket approached FE Week alleging the government had been “negligent and incompetent” in the aftermath of JFT's demise.

She said: “I've emailed the SFA three times and got no response and the loan company haven't been helpful,” she said. “They finally

emailed me on December 22 to say transfer your loan to a new provider. I've tried to do this but you can't transfer if you have already started a programme.”

She added that the responsibility lies with the SFA, and asked “surely I should be refunded or transferred? It isn't my fault he

closed down overnight”.

She claimed that up to 500 students had been left in a similar position: expected to pay back loans for courses they can't now complete.

FE Week was told that the affected learners will not be able to cancel the loans, but if they

ALL ABOUT JOHN FRANK TRAINING AND THE MAN IN CHARGE

As well as being a sole director of JFT, John Frank (pictured) was also appointed a director of Anydriver School of Motoring Limited on July 23, 2012, though that company is also now dissolved.

JFT was founded in December 2011 and had a registered office in Preston, according to Companies House.

It was a major provider of training, with an SFA advanced learner loan facility - some of which was subcontracted - of £4,329,224 in 2015/16 and £5,000,790 in 2016/17.

According to the SFA register JFT were also a subcontractor for apprenticeships and traineeships across four providers, with contracts totalling over £700,000.

Clive Morris, from the firm Marshall Peters, was appointed as the company liquidator for voluntary winding up last November.

FE Week understands that John Frank is currently living in Liverpool with his family, but that he is often to be found at his property in Marbella, Spain.



Pictures from <https://www.youtube.com/user/johnnyfrank1> and <https://twitter.com/jfrtraining1>

How to recover loans cash when provider collapses

are able to transfer to another provider, their training would be paid for.

It is understood that accounts presented to the provider's meeting of creditors showed that JFT made a profit of £1.3 million between January and August last year, a period of good business. Just a few months later, in November, the company was wound up.

This is the second loan provider to wind up leaving large numbers of students out of pocket in recent months. In September, FE Week reported on the demise of a complex web of training providers owned by Paul Alekna, who left creditors looking to recover more than £3 million of assets.

A spokesperson for the SFA, which is among JFT's creditors, owed around £42,000, said it was "looking into" the issues with JFT.

"Our priority is to help ensure learners can continue with their courses with minimal disruption, and we are actively working to identify suitable alternative training providers or colleges with whom learners can complete their studies," she said.

"The Student Loans Company has already written to all affected advanced learner loans-funded learners. Any learner with questions or concerns should contact us at SFA advanced learner loans."

The Student Loans Company declined to comment on the matter, other than to say "it is the role of the SFA to regulate and authorise providers".

Lee Morris of Marshall Peters, the liquidator said: "As liquidator, we have a duty to investigate issues with transactions and to identify whether there were antecedent transactions which can be clawed back into the estate for the benefit of creditors. I cannot tell you where that investigation is up to, because it could jeopardise future outcomes."

A number of other providers who used JFT as a subcontractor, as well as awarding organisations and other creditors, have confirmed to FE Week that they have launched internal investigations of their own into their dealings with the provider [see box outs].

JFT's former operations consultant, Craig Hughes, spoke to FE Week about the company's downfall and said he believed "over 500" learners were affected.

He said the set-up at JFT had been a "very closed-up shop", and alleged that John Frank dealt with all of the finances himself.

After JFT went bust, Mr Hughes said he wanted to distance himself from the company "as much as possible" because it was "an awful situation".

Mr Frank is understood to spend much of his time in the south of Spain, where it is believed he bought a house last summer.

FE Week has made repeated attempts to contact him without success.

However, a former employee said he had passed on our enquires and that Mr Frank had told him that he did not wish to comment.

The SFA has previously recognised they have a problem overseeing loans funded provision, particularly where much of it is subcontracted.

Since August, the SFA has banned new subcontracting contracts for advanced learner loans, with a complete ban coming into force from August 2017.

In addition, growth requests for advanced learner loans were paused in September last year, while in November the SFA introduced caps for how much loan money can be allocated to a provider.

For example if an approved loans facility is £500,000 or less, a maximum growth limit of £250,000 will apply.

LEAD PROVIDERS

JFT was a named subcontractor for four lead providers, according to the latest Skills Funding Agency list of declared subcontractors, from July 2016.

The largest contract was for £260,000 with Softmist Limited, a training procurement consultancy specialising in government-funded work-based training, which trades under the name Skillspoint. It was acquired by national outsourcing organisation Staffline Group in 2014.

In a statement, the director of Softmist told FE Week: "We have launched an internal investigation on this matter."

Summerhouse Equestrian and Training Centre LLP had a £216,000 contract, and confirmed to FE Week that JFT was their subcontractor for apprenticeship and traineeship provision, but not advanced learner loans.

Peter Thompson, its development and operations director, said: "Our first priority is always to protect the learners."

"Summerhouse has worked with the affected learners, their employers and two other training organisations to, where

possible, transfer the programmes to another provider to ensure learners are not disadvantaged."

Ixion Holdings Limited, a not-for-profit group of companies that is a subsidiary of Anglia Ruskin University, had a contract worth £144,441 with JFT, and gave it an award for 'outstanding subcontractor' in 2015.

Chief operating officer (skills, employment and enterprise) Jacqueline Oughton told FE Week: "John Frank did not have a contract in 2016/17 with Ixion Holdings." She declined to comment on past contracts.

Rochdale Training Association, a company which provides lifelong learning, development and business support services, had a contract with JFT worth £121,000 last July.

But a spokesperson said this week it only had four students with JFT at the time of liquidation.

Chief executive Jill Nagy declined to comment because "we have such little dealing".

Lead provider Name	Contract value with JFT
IXION HOLDINGS (CONTRACTS) LIMITED	£144,441
ROCHDALE TRAINING ASSOCIATION LIMITED	£121,000
SOFTMIST LIMITED	£260,000
SUMMERHOUSE EQUESTRIAN AND TRAINING CENTRE LLP	£216,000

Source: SFA list of declared subcontractors

CREDITORS

At its liquidation JFT owed £373,064 to 41 creditors, according to a statement of company affairs uploaded to Companies House last December.

This ranged from £200 owed to City and Guilds, to £67,830 to Ruby Elite Training, which specialises in personal training qualifications.

The creditors also included government bodies, with a sum of £42,888 owed to the Skills Funding Agency, £2,500 to HM Revenue & Customs in VAT, and £10,000 for PAYE.

A training provider named 360 GSP, which is located in Wembley, London, and which specialises in information technology, is owed £40,460 and a spokesperson told FE Week about its experience, saying: "Sadly, this is correct and John Frank Training left many learners in a position without a learning provider."

"We have continued to provide

training to the John Frank learners to allow them to complete their courses, as we felt that it was not right to leave the learners high and dry."

The spokesperson said JFT's sudden end came as "a shock", but 360 GSP has been working with the SFA to provide "alternative arrangements" for learners, and it hopes to "finalise this shortly".

"We did not sub-contract with John Frank Training, we were a delivery partner responsible for providing training to the learners and we too were negatively affected by John Frank Training going into liquidation," they said.

A spokesperson for the liquidators confirmed that it is investigating whether any transactions took place before JFT folded, which could give cause for cash for the creditors to be "clawed back".

AWARDING ORGANISATIONS

A number of awarding organisations were also listed on JFT's website.

A spokesperson for NCFE said: "JFT is a centre that was approved under our normal approval process to deliver several of our qualifications.

"It did not register any learners on any of the NCFE qualifications it was approved to deliver.

"We are aware of the allegations that have been made against this centre.

"In such circumstances, where there may be an impact on learners, we follow our routine investigations procedure.

"We have now invoked this procedure and are taking all the appropriate action."

Pearson, which is also a creditor of JFT to the tune of £4,304, told FE Week that it was looking into the dissolved company.

"Pearson monitors the quality of all the centres we work with through a rigorous and published process," said its spokesperson.

"We are currently looking into concerns about this centre so cannot comment further on this case."

He added that Pearson would "do all we can to support learners in finding a suitable alternative centre to complete their qualifications".

Active IQ told FE Week: "We have assisted separate training providers in supporting some affected learners who have managed to complete their studies elsewhere.

"To date we have had no response from repeated attempts at communicating directly with John Frank Training Ltd and approval was withdrawn from this centre at the end of November 2016 as a result of lack of response."

A spokesperson for the YMCA said: "We approved them as a centre a few years back but they've never registered a single learner with us and we removed them from our provider list last November. We're now in the process of updating our website."

Widespread implications for FE from g

Existing providers to get £170m institutes of technology windfall

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The extra £170 million the government has promised to set aside for a new wave of “prestigious” institutes of technology will go to existing providers, FE Week can reveal.

The title will in effect work as a badge of honour given to specially chosen FE providers that excel at higher-level technical education, like the old Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) status.

The government first announced plans for the institutes in July 2015, then again in its post-16 skills plan in July.

Now, a green paper unveiled on January 23 has confirmed that a new £170 million in capital funding is to be spent on creating IoTs to “increase the provision of higher-level technical education”, and ensure that it is available “in all areas”.

The paper explained, for example, that a person “could study a level three (A-level equivalent) at a local college, before moving on to study a higher-level technical

qualification at an institute in a nearby city”.

But it also said the government would expect most of the IoTs “to grow out of high-quality provision”.

The Department for Education told FE Week that the new institutes are to be based at existing providers.

This means they will effectively amount to a quality mark, like the former CoVE status. In this case, colleges were told, by the former Learning and Skills Council in 2001, that they would receive “up to £300,000 in the first year they join the CoVE programme”.

The DfE also confirmed this week that the £170 million would come as capital funding across the next three years, and would therefore work out at around £57 million per year for each of 2017/18, 2018/19, and 2019/20.

A spokesperson said that details would be announced in due course, leaving it unclear whether independent training providers could apply for the money, or if it would be restricted to colleges.

Sally Hunt, the University and College Union’s general secretary, has written exclusively for FE Week about the new industrial strategy on page 17, and doesn’t

believe the extra capital funding will make a significant difference.

“For all the soundbites about rebooting Britain as a high-skill economy, the total of £170 million is the equivalent of 10 misfiring rockets,” she wrote.

Mark Dawe, chief executive of the AELP, said: “Independent training providers, with their expertise and experience, are ready to take the lead or be active partners in the establishment of each of the new institutes of technology.

“Our training provider members work with 350,000 employers and so the links to make quick progress happen already exist.”

Wide-ranging reforms to technical education, in which the new institutes are likely to play a role in implementing, were first revealed exclusively by FE Week last May – and then announced by the government two months later.

They followed a review led by former Science and Innovation Minister Lord Sainsbury, which detailed plans for a radical overhaul to replace 20,000 courses with “15 high-quality routes”.

The green paper was generally less than



complementary about FE, indicating that the government felt the sector’s underwhelming performance had created the opening for the new institutes.

The report said that too many of FE colleges “only offer a broad, generalist curriculum at lower qualification levels” and that “the sector has too little provision of higher-level technical qualifications”.

Having read the green paper, AoC boss David Hughes said: “I am pleased that the role of colleges from level three, through four and five, to degrees has been understood and that the institutes of technology will build on the specialisms that exist across the college sector.

“We want an investment approach which supports every college to provide excellence.”

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Gill Worgan, Principal, West Herts College

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Derek O’Toole, Principal, Hopwood Hall College

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government's new industrial strategy

Maths and English centres of excellence proposal for colleges

The green paper also acknowledged the huge problems that colleges are experiencing with maths and English resits.

It committed the government to exploring new ways "to support FE colleges to be centres of excellence in teaching maths and English".

Since 2013, all 16- to 18-year-old students who do not already have a grade C in GCSE English and maths have had to continue studying these subjects – and in 2015, this was further tightened to require those with a grade D to study GCSE rather than an alternative.

According to the green paper, "emerging evidence from Professor Sir Adrian Smith's independent review into post-16 maths provision points to a number of areas where action will need to be taken to improve basic mathematics provision in FE colleges.

"A total of 70 per cent of young people who do not achieve A*-C GCSEs in these vital subjects and who go on to full-time post-16 study do so at FE colleges. Yet still too far

many of these young people fail when they retake them."

Because of this the government "is reviewing the effectiveness of current policy to help as many young people as possible leave compulsory education with a good standard of maths and English".

Last year's annual Ofsted report said that while the policy's intention to improve literacy and numeracy levels was "well intentioned", the implementation was "not having the desired impact".

GCSE resit results were disappointing last summer, and new progress data unveiled by the Department for Education last week showed that FE colleges are not progressing in these key subjects.

Shadow skills minister Gordon Marsden told FE Week: "The government's announcement that it wants to support FE colleges to be centres of excellence in teaching maths and English is certainly an admission it has failed. The policy should be remodelled as soon as possible."

Ambitious new commitment to 'encouraging lifelong learning'

There were encouraging words in the green paper for those, including Labour MP David Lammy, campaigning for more funding for adult education and a return to widespread "night schools".

It acknowledged a "growing challenge" within lifelong learning, saying: "People are living and working longer, but training across working life is going down."

The paper committed to exploring "ambitious new approaches to encouraging lifelong learning, which could include assessing changes to the costs people face to make them less daunting; improving outreach to people where industries are changing;

and providing better information".

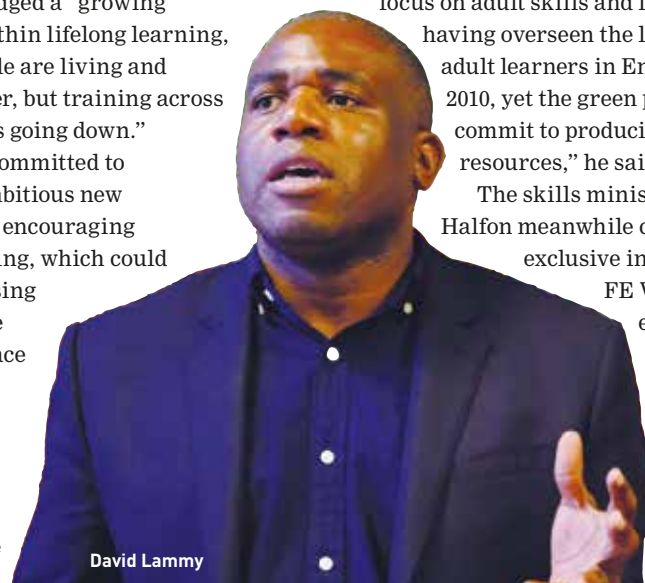
Mr Marsden told FE Week this did not go far enough.

"If the government was serious about an industrial strategy, there would be a strong focus on adult skills and lifelong learning, having overseen the loss of 1.3 million adult learners in England since 2010, yet the green paper does not commit to producing a strategy or resources," he said.

The skills minister Robert Halfon meanwhile confirmed in an exclusive interview with

FE Week that adult education was now firmly back on the government's agenda.

See page 12 for a full report.



David Lammy



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NEWS

At long last: Institute for Apprenticeships

PAUL OFFORD @PAULOFFORD
ALIX ROBERTSON @ALIXROBERTSON4

The government has finally announced who is to make up the board of the Institute for Apprenticeships. This will come as a relief to the sector after FE Week's front page last week reported concern that the government remained silent on board members, under three months before it is supposed to become "fully operational".

It has now emerged that the board is comprised of a majority of employers as planned, but also two college principals.

This has been welcomed by chief executive of the Association of Colleges David Hughes, but the immediate response from the independent training provider sector was one of disappointment that it is not represented (see quotes below).

The government has also published the long-awaited IfA operational plan, which included a diagram to explain how it will work with other bodies (see below).

FE Week can also reveal that the first deputy director for the new apprenticeships

policing body has been appointed.

Anastasia (Ana) Osbourne, formerly employed in the Enterprise Directorate at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, was introduced as the IfA's new 'deputy director of approvals', to an audience of over 100 delegates at a private Trailblazer Conference.

The conference, which was run by the Department for Education, took place in Birmingham and was attended by employers

who have been designing apprenticeship standards.

According to the Department for Education's deputy director job pack, the deputy director of approvals will carry out four main functions.

Ms Osbourne will be expected to "coordinate and support the operation of the approvals process for apprenticeship standards and technical education standards".

She will also "work with route committees and others to ensure excellent quality assurance practice governs the approvals process including induction, standardisation, monitoring, review, risk assessment and feedback mechanisms".

Finally, her position awards her responsibility for building "effective relationships with stakeholders" and working with "analysts and others to develop occupational maps".

“ Pleased ”

This is a strong list of board appointments for the new Institute of Apprenticeships. I am particularly pleased that two of our leading principals have made it through the selection process. Both Asha and Bev will bring enormous experience and insight into the needs of employers, communities and apprentices as well as the passion and dedication to help make the IfA a success. The appointment of two FE college principals shows that the government recognises the critical role they play in every community as a crucial part of the education system as well as contributors to economic growth, delivering the industrial strategy and as drivers of social mobility.



David Hughes,
Chief executive
at the AoC

“ Extremely disappointing ”

As independent training providers deliver over three quarters of apprenticeships in England, it is extremely disappointing that the independent sector isn't represented. Time and time again throughout this four-year process of reform, it is independent providers in partnership with thousands of employer-customers of all sizes who have steered the policymakers back towards workable solutions that support the overarching reform principles. We would urge the government to expand the board's membership at the earliest opportunity to secure the required expertise from the independent provider sector.



Mark Dawe,
Chief executive
at the AELP

“ Fantastic ”

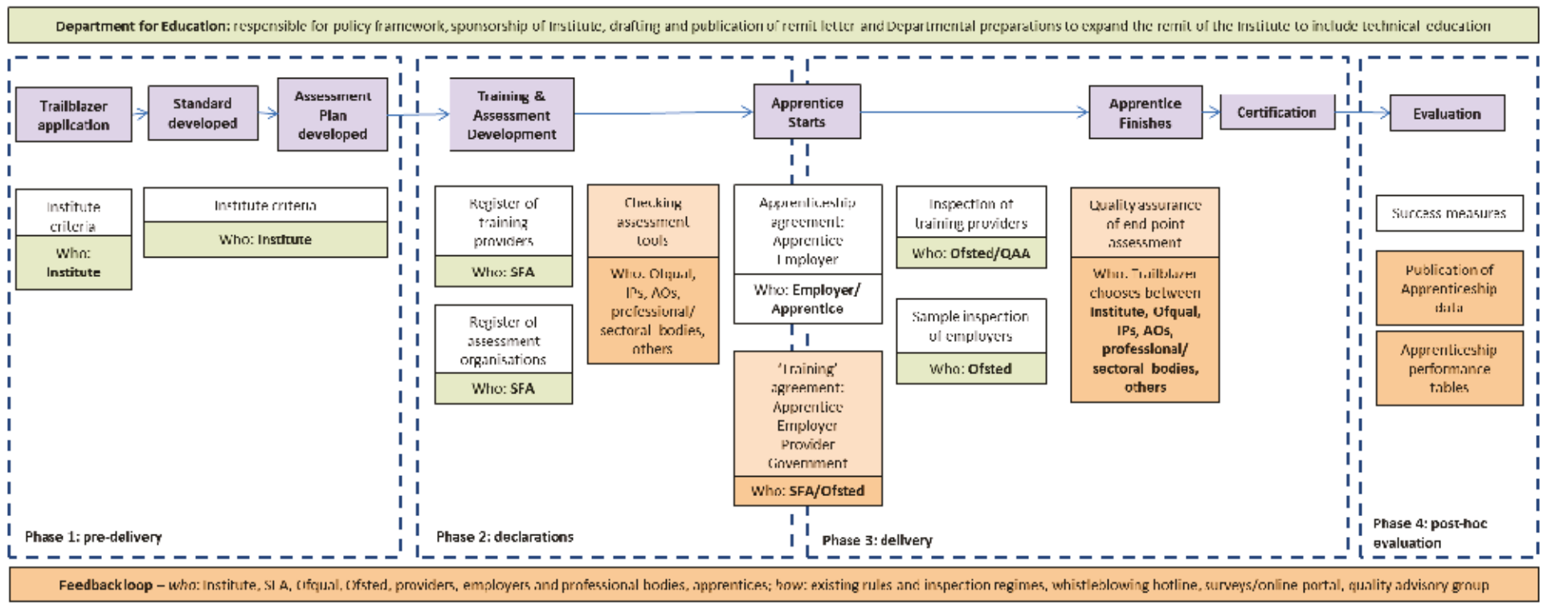
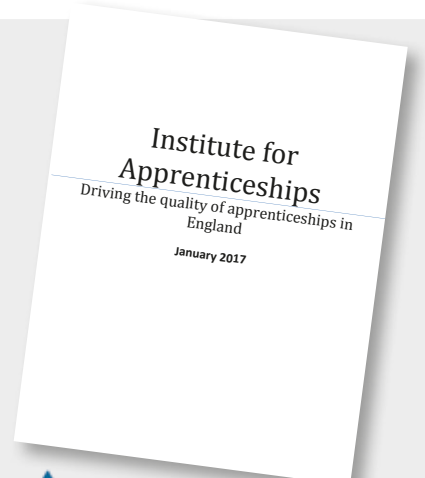
It is fantastic to see such a diverse board who will bring their varied and high-level experience to the Institute for Apprenticeships to ensure apprenticeships are of the highest quality they can be. With employer expertise at its heart, the Institute for Apprenticeships will play a crucial role in raising the prestige of apprenticeships and ensuring employers can get the skilled workforce they desperately need.

Robert Halfon,
Apprenticeships and skills minister

“ Excellent ”

I believe this is an excellent high-calibre board that will help the Institute drive up the quality of apprenticeships. Today's publication of the draft operational plan is the culmination of lots of hard work and engagement over the last six months and I am very grateful to all the stakeholders who have helped us prepare it.

Antony Jenkins,
Shadow chair for the Institute for Apprenticeships



ps board members have been announced

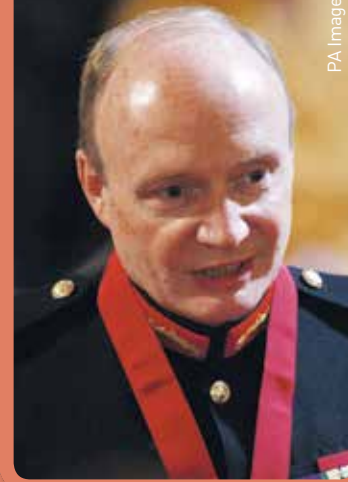


Dr Katherine Barclay

Chair of the Life Science and Industrial Sciences Apprenticeship Trailblazer

Currently Pfizer UK lead for academic liaison, with responsibility for delivering apprenticeship reform at a national science industry level and collaborative early talent management strategies at undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate level

A Chartered Chemical Engineer and experienced people manager



Sir Gerry Berragan

Was a career soldier for 37 years finishing as Adjutant General, responsible for all Army personnel matters

Was the Army's Apprentices Ambassador in 2008 to lead the effort to make the Army the largest apprenticeships provider in the country, offering more than 45 nationally-recognized training schemes



Bev Robinson

Has over 20 years' experience in further and higher education colleges

Sits on the Lancashire LEP Skills and Employment Board and is non-executive director and chair of the Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Economic Development Company

Director of the National College for Onshore Oil and Gas

Principal of Blackpool and the Fylde College and previously member of Lord Sainsbury's panel on Technical Education



Paul Cadman

HR Director for Walter Smith Fine Foods Limited since 1998

Walter Smith Fine Foods Limited were chosen as Medium Employer of the Year winner in recognition of their commitment to developing local young people through apprenticeships in the National Apprenticeship Awards ceremony in 2013

Has been one of the Government's Apprentice Ambassadors since 2012 and is chair of two Trailblazer groups: developing butchery apprenticeship standards and Learning & Development standards



Dame Fiona Kendrick

Chair and CEO of Nestle UK and Ireland since 2012

Former commissioner for the UK Employment and Skills.

Former President of the Food and Drink Federation.

Awarded a Damehood in the 2015 New Year's Honour's list.



Dame Asha Khemka

Principal and Chief Executive, West Nottinghamshire College Group since May 2006 – one of the largest colleges in the country

Over 25 years' experience in further education

On a number of boards, including the Education Honours Committee

She is the Founding Trustee of the Inspire and Achieve Foundation, whose main objective is to raise aspirations of working class young people



Robin Millar CBE

Chair of Blue Raincoat Chrysalis Group

An Honorary Professor at the London College of Music, a Fellow of the Association of Professional Recording Services and a member of the UK Human Genetics Commission

He served on the creative Industries Sector Skills Council, National Skills Academy and then as a trustee of the Creative & Cultural Skills between 2006-2016. He is currently serving on the Industry Steering Group advising on setting up the new National College for Creative & Cultural industries



Toby Peyton-Jones

Started his career as an officer in the Royal Engineers

After an international career including working in China and Germany he was appointed to the Executive Management Board of Siemens Plc in 2008 heading up HR for Siemens in the UK and now Northern Europe

Throughout his career he has been a passionate international voice championing education and particularly vocational education most recently as a Commissioner for UK Commission for Employment and Skills

EDITORIAL

The IfA board lacks balance



Independent training providers will have every right to feel aggrieved that they are not represented on the new board of the Institute for Apprenticeships.

The government sensibly wants a relatively small number of board members, and the plan has always been for the majority of them to be 'employers'.

But it clearly felt provider representation was still important, as two of the eight spaces went to college principals.

Would it not have been useful, and well as symbolic, to have given one of those spaces to someone from the independent sector, especially considering it delivers the vast majority of apprenticeships?

Sure, there will be a much larger stakeholder group, which we are told will help the board access wider sector expertise.

But the lack of board representation will be viewed as symptomatic of wider lack of understanding at the heart of government about the independent sector contribution.

Let's hope this is just an oversight, and when practically possible the imbalance can be addressed.

Nick Linford, editor
news@feweek.co.uk

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@AndyWWestwood

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Halfon puts lifelong learning back in the spotlight

PAUL OFFORD @PAULOFFORD
ALIX ROBERTSON @ALIXROBERTSON4

Lifelong learning is firmly back on the government's agenda, according to the skills and apprenticeships minister Robert Halfon, who says the government's new industrial strategy includes provisions for adult education.

The green paper released on January 23 acknowledged a "growing challenge" with training for older people, and committed to exploring "ambitious new approaches to encouraging lifelong learning". Proposed measures could include ways to make the training costs people face "less daunting", and provide better information to ensure older people who are retraining learn the skills that are actually needed by employers.

"We wouldn't have put this in the industrial strategy if we weren't serious about it," Mr Halfon told FE Week, just a week after more than 60 MPs wrote him a letter calling for more commitment to adult learning.

"At the moment government and I are looking at it in terms of how does it meet skills needs, how do we help the socially disadvantaged, how does it work for the modern age," he said.

According to government figures, there are around 1.5 million fewer adults aged 19 or over participating in adult FE than there

were during the Labour MP David Lammy's stint as minister between 2007 and 2008, when the figure stood at 3.75 million.

Asked whether it was fair to say that the government had neglected this important policy area while concentrating on 16 to 19 learning, Mr Halfon dodged the question, replying: "This has not just been an issue for this government. In terms of skills in general it has been the same story over 20 or 30 years."

It is also so far unclear whether there will be an adult skills strategy, or a lifelong learning framework.

"It will fit in the framework of government priorities," he said, "meeting our skills deficit, helping the disadvantaged, ensuring that people get jobs. Those are the priorities."

In his first speech to colleges last November, Mr Halfon said that the wider sector "is essential for social justice – ensuring that individuals from the lowest-income backgrounds get on the ladder of opportunity and benefit from the best education and skills training".

Former business secretary Sir Vince Cable, who is currently working on a research project for the National Union of Students into how FE reforms should be tailored for learners, welcomed the new commitment to adult education.

He said: "One of the things that I managed to save from the Treasury when I was in

government was adult community learning. That kept quite a lot of the part-time, non-accredited learning that is the basis of proper adult education."

He added that the work done for such learners was "wonderful", and that any further support for providers was to be welcomed.

Earlier this month, more than 60 MPs led by Mr Lammy wrote to Mr Halfon, demanding more government commitment to lifelong learning. The signatories also included Angela Rayner, the shadow education secretary, and Gordon Marsden, the shadow skills minister.

Mr Lammy has told FE Week: "While I do welcome the commitment to exploring new approaches to lifelong learning, and I know the minister does share my concerns, this is an urgent issue that has been ignored by successive governments."

Former top skills civil servant Sue Pember, who is now director at adult learning provider membership body Hoxex, said: "It is good news this is being given such prominence in the industrial strategy."

"We would like to see any lifelong learning framework addressing the poor basic skills of the workforce, support those with low skills into further training and start preparing those who are at the risk of losing their present jobs because of technological advances into learning new skills."

COMMENTS

DfE advertises for over 100 paid advisors to help with Sainsbury reforms

This is very odd. Trailblazers are 'panels of experts defining standards' and they routinely rely on the voluntary contribution of all concerned, employers and others.

National Occupational Standards have long been created on the same basis. Why start paying now? Surely DfE colleagues know that this is normally done voluntarily, and they don't need to pay? And, incidentally, though the tone of the article is critical about the money being wasted, the sums on offer are very small. Too small to encourage anyone to get involved who might not otherwise, and far too small to interest anyone doing the work on a consultancy basis.

Iain Mackinnon

Digital Apprenticeship Service will go live in February

Yes, but will it actually work??

Randy Jackson

I hope it works. I have a scenario for the designers to consider. 1. Employer has a digital account with more multiple authorised users able to procure apprenticeships. This may be common in a large employer. However, no one is actually co-ordinating spend and the account is drained because the employer has contracted with multiple providers. Consequently, when the money unexpectedly runs out the employer is invoiced for their 10%. Is this just a case of buyer or provider beware? Is there a warning system to alert the employer that they may have insufficient funds?

Matt Garvey

Apprenticeship starts rise despite fall in vacancies

This fall in the number of apprenticeships advertised/available was inevitable as employers are holding fire on starting any apprenticeships until after the apprenticeship levy has come to play. Numbers of available apprenticeships for the next year are set to be substantially lower than in previous years whilst employers get to grips with the changes due to be implemented in the next few months!

Helen

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Closing date for applications:
Noon, Monday 13th February 2017

Interviews:
22/23 February 2017





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Group Vice Principal – FE

The postholder will be accountable for financial management, curriculum management, resource management including, where appropriate, commercial operations, quality assurance and improvement. The main duties and responsibilities will include meeting the WCG ambitious targets for growth in learner numbers, to lead on the further education curriculum

portfolio across the Group, and support the Principal and Group deputy Principals in the production and evaluation of the College’s Strategic Plans. The successful candidate will have excellent knowledge of further education and must be able to demonstrate understanding of the purposes of effective strategic and operational planning.

Head of Workbased Learning - Construction and Motor Vehicle

The Head of Workbased Learning is responsible for the leadership and management of the Motor Vehicle and Construction Workbased Learning curriculum area. Main responsibilities will include developing and helping to grow the apprenticeship provision, as well as the planning and management of staff in the specialist area.

Commercial Courses Manager

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Head of Department for Motor Vehicle - Warwickshire

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Head of Department for Construction (Including HE)

The Head of Construction (Including HE) is responsible for the management of the curriculum area, with direct accountability for the success and positive progression of the student cohort. The postholder will ensure that each student has access to and receives an outstanding experience including high quality teaching, learning and assessment that will ensure our students develop the Warwickshire College ‘T-shaped’ employability skills to gain a competitive advantage as they progress towards and along their chosen careers.



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Image: BBC broadcaster & journalist Kirsty Wark chairing AAC Conference in 2015. Kirsty will return as conference chair in 2017.



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EXPERTS



**PIPPA
MORGAN**

Head of education and skills policy,
Confederation of British Industry (CBI)

Perverse incentives must be removed

The skills sector needs an effective market strategy that drives employer investment and supports providers to deliver high quality at scale, says Pippa Morgan

This week saw the launch of the government's industrial strategy – and it was great to see skills feature so highly in it. For businesses, a stable, long-term strategy designed to support the fundamental drivers of our economic success must address the question of training.

There was a lot to like. From strong support for technical education, to looking at building more level four and five skills, to progressing with post-16 maths, many ideas in the paper chime with business priorities.

But our challenge in skills hasn't been lack of policy, it's been effective delivery. How the system works on the ground – how it influences the behaviours and meets the needs of learners and businesses – is what really matters. The government's approach must be built on understanding what drives employer investment and supports providers to deliver high quality at scale; rather than an approach that begins with Whitehall and works its way out, we need a more effective market strategy.

The urgent need for this kind of approach is evident with the apprenticeship levy – now little more than two months away – and three key related issues being raised by companies.

Firstly, unclear definitions of success. The pages of FE Week constantly detail gloomy predictions for the new system, with 'Employers turn backs on young' a recent example, and there are certainly some causes for concern. We need to be honest that the aim of the reform is that provision changes and adapts to demand.

We can be clear about what success looks like: it will be making sure provision grows in areas that give learners real returns, through good careers. That will involve challenges and must avoid defending existing provision, simply because it exists.

Secondly, preparedness. From transfers to the new agreements, we have been working with officials to improve key aspects of the system in recent months. But policy and system design has been taking place when companies needed to be planning, creating schemes and recruiting. Of the 21 months since the levy was announced in summer 2015, it's taken 18 months and counting for government to design, build and prepare itself for the levy – giving firms and providers an incredibly short window of clarity before

the system goes live. And large parts of the longer-term system – rules around transfers, the Digital Apprenticeship Service, and the role and influence of the Institute for Apprenticeships – are not yet ready.

Employers and providers have tried to fill this gap as best they can, but contracts written last autumn are currently being revisited to ensure they remain compliant with the system as we understand it now.

For a system that requires the support of employers and providers to succeed, this timeline breeds growing frustration in many businesses. This is particularly true in the devolved nations, where progress on real system reform – and interoperability with the others – is especially slow.

Our challenge in skills hasn't been lack of policy

The third key issue is how the levy will change business behaviour. The CBI has always been clear about the real risk that, if poorly designed, the levy could have perverse incentives, such as firms training fewer apprentices, or being forced to rebadge existing provision to reclaim levy money.

To encourage the growth of better provision, the system of 2017 will need to adapt and adjust as we go through the early years and transition into a whole new system. This must start with a proper transfer regime that allows firms to share more than a sliver of their levy money within their supply chain or sector.

An effective regime for allowable expenses – such as time developing much needed new standards – will also help turn those perverse incentives round. If we really care about delivering a skills base for our new industrial strategy, then this is essential.

What we now need is a proper strategy for the skills market that deals with these issues, giving employers confidence to invest, offering providers stability throughout the substantial changes they need to make, and challenging the system where change doesn't happen. The partnership approach of industrial strategy is the right road, but it is very late in the day to get the levy on track.



**IAIN
MACKINNON**

Managing director,
The Mackinnon Partnership

Why pay for advice that is already free?

For two years, employers have been hashing out the details of the new apprenticeship standards – the government's offer to pay professionals to do the same undervalues their contribution, says Iain Mackinnon

This is all very odd. The Department for Education wants to waste our money paying for expertise it could get free of charge. In doing so, it's undermining and undervaluing the contribution of the many employers who currently work for free in Trailblazer groups. And it's weakening the principle of employer leadership, which has rightly been a central plank of the apprenticeship reforms.

What's got me annoyed is the department's recent advert for Technical Education Panels of Professionals. It ought to be uncontroversial. This is the next step in implementing Lord Sainsbury's report on technical education, moving on from high-level aspiration (which everyone applauds) to sector experts knuckling down to the nitty-gritty of defining standards, which is where it will get difficult.

But why offer to pay? What does the department think employers have been doing for the last few years in Trailblazer groups? In the six I'm involved with in the maritime sector, employers turn up again and again to slog through the detail of creating new standards for apprenticeships, then the supporting assessment plan, and none of them gets paid extra to do so. Yet still they come, because they're committed to making apprenticeships work in their sector.

One of the groups I support is comprised entirely of small companies in the workboat sector (high-spec boats with a crew of two or three, which support the offshore energy industry or construction projects). They meet on Merseyside or in Southampton, and in both cases most of the members have to travel long distances. We typically meet for four hours, so each of them is giving up a day after you factor in the travel. Yet still they come.

Employers often get a lot of stick in the skills world, and of course there are some who evade their responsibilities, cut corners, and game any opportunity they can. But there are plenty more who give a lot of time to the pretty thankless task of defining standards, shaping apprenticeships, and

improving training in their sectors.

The DfE doesn't need to pay. It can, and does, get all this huge – and hugely valuable – work for free.

So why pay? The clue may lie in the shift of emphasis from "employers in the driving seat" to "panels of professionals". The DfE has confirmed to me that it's "not about watering down the commitment for an employer-led system", but that it "felt it was important to have representatives from professionals and trade bodies who also have experience of working on industry standards".

I agree, but why pay? They will and do turn up anyway for Trailblazer groups. It's their job: influencing discussions like these is central to what they do.

Yet still they come

And we need to keep the focus on employers. I agree with the government's mantra that these reforms should be employer-led, even if it doesn't always feel like it; employers may be in the driving seat, but DfE's in charge of the Highway Code. This latest twist does feel like it's weakening that commitment.

In one of the Trailblazer groups I'm involved with, we have two colleges, two trade unions, a professional body, the sector regulator, the awarding body we use, and two sector skill bodies, plus a good range of employers and two employer co-chairs to share the load.

We all work together because we want to create a good set of apprenticeships that will appeal to employers, and which will get more of them to take on apprentices.

We've been going two years now, and still they come. Despite the time cost – which is far greater than any of us imagined – and despite the frustrations – ditto – still they come.

I doubt very much that the maritime sector is unusual. The DfE has misjudged this, and undervalued the voluntary commitment of so many. It doesn't need to pay. And it'll stay true to the principle of employer leadership if it doesn't.

EXPERTS

The government's new industrial strategy is another grandiose vision that lacks funding and changes nothing in practice, says Sally Hunt

When it comes to policy on further education, things move at a fast and furious rate. Initiatives arrive like buses, several at a time, and usually revolve around fixing the mess the last lot made.

Unfortunately, we never come close to addressing the elephant in the room: what further education really needs to prosper is proper investment.

Theresa May's new industrial strategy is a case in point. It's another grandiose vision, with technical education at its centre, but once again the taste is of the same old wine in new bottles.

Much was made of the £170 million to be invested in new institutes of technology when the plans were trailed earlier this month. Yet the ministers who were rolled out to give more details on the Sunday political programmes failed to do so.

The sum of £170 million – the equivalent of 10 misfiring rockets or, to put it in Brexit terms, about three and a half days on Boris's bus – is clearly not going to fund a range of buildings around the country. At less than £20 million a region, the people most likely to be rubbing their hands are the brand consultants and sign-writers.

The sad truth is that while politicians talk about parity of esteem between technical and academic education, their actions



SALLY HUNT

General secretary,
University and College Union

support to get into higher education or an advanced technical course, or the middle-aged man who needs a quick boost of digital skills to get another job?

The same old wine in new bottles

All we need is cash

tell a different story. Last year, working with London Economics, UCU showed that the annual public investment for each apprentice aged 19 and over in England stands at just 18 per cent of what is spent on each higher education student annually, while the equivalent for other adult learners is even lower, at just 15 per cent.

This announcement does little if anything to genuinely address that fundamental problem. A real industrial policy would place investment in education and skills at its heart, and look to build human capital and capacity at every level so that our country is skills-ready, and everyone plays their part.

Indeed, when most experts agree that

without the extensive retraining of adults, there will be a shortage of skilled workers, it becomes clear that government policy must address the funding crisis in adult education rather than tinker at the edges.

The great expansion of higher education in recent decades has contributed to successive increases in productivity as well as creating significant benefits for society too. It is hard to imagine now that just 30 years ago only one in six young people went to university.

What we need to see now is a similar expansion of further education. How can we have a skills policy worthy of the name if we do not invest in the mum who wants to learn English so she can apply for a job, the bright school leaver who needs a bit of extra

Yet the truth is that we have lost over one million such people from further education since 2009. As UCU has argued, we would need an additional 15,000 teachers even to begin to restore the capacity that has been lost from the sector.

The industrial strategy contained all the banalities one would expect when politicians talk technical education: a proper alternative for people not going to university, praise for the German model, a cursory nod to improved careers advice and a mention of lifelong learning. Worryingly, the limited section on lifelong learning seemed to suggest that the answer was for people to finance their studies through loans.

However, my message to the prime minister is simple. Instead of another new initiative, give us something that will make a real difference: a clear mission to boost learning for all and, at last, enough funding to match.



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CAMPUS ROUND-UP *with Sam King*

Chichester College has it covered



A stitch in time: Shelagh Legrave, Anna Stephenson-Knight and deputy principal Andrew Green

Students and staff at Chichester College have made colourful blankets out of recycled grey utility covers to keep homeless people in the local area warm.

Working with Blanket Angels, a local homeless charity, students and staff at the West Sussex college produced 57 blankets to distribute to those in need.

The blankets include labels with information about local shelters, plus contact details for organisations which can offer them help and support.

Set up by Anna Stephenson-Knight, the charity usually works with local sewing clubs to create the blankets that not only provide

warmth and comfort – but also details of where homeless people can seek help.

Anna said: “I’ve been really pleased by the response from the college. All day, people have been dropping in to design and make blankets – including people who have never used a sewing machine.

“I’m amazed we have made so many, I’m really grateful to all the staff and students who have given up their time for us.”

Shelagh Legrave OBE, Chichester College’s principal, added: “As a college we pride ourselves on our community involvement, and enjoy helping out with projects like this one where we can.”



Art therapy: Shannon Wade, left, and Alice Buckmaster with their work
Chris Killingback with his sensory cushions

Art students’ feast for the senses

A group of fine art students have used their creativity for a good cause, creating artwork for people with dementia in order to help them trigger happy memories.

The group of extended diploma level three students from West Suffolk College researched dementia, and created artwork based on the five senses, all around the theme of happiness.

The artworks will be displayed around St Peter’s House, a residential care home in Bury St Edmunds.

Amongst the art is a painting of a boat on a beach made with real sand and rope, sensory cushions, a multicoloured painting with

working lights, and pictures with touchable, embroidered flowers.

One of the home’s residents, Pam Norman, was impressed with the students’ work, saying: “It’s very, very good. They have spent a lot of time and thought about it and people will appreciate it”.

Kathryn Smith, director of operations at the Alzheimer’s Society, said: “It’s great to see this coming together of generations in Suffolk.

“It’s very interesting and moving to see this work transformed the students’ perceptions from being scared to being comfortable to work so collaboratively with people affected by the condition.”



Delicate flowers: Tom Ogden, centre-right, and drummer Joe Donovan, centre-left, take part in a Q&A

Blossoms bloom in Salford

English indie pop band Blossoms performed a secret gig for creative media and music students at Salford City College’s FutureSkills centre.

Media students were on hand with video cameras as the band performed six songs from their chart-topping debut album ‘Blossoms’, including hits ‘Charlemagne’ and ‘Honey Sweet’, which were filmed as part of the BBC Introducing series.

The singers also participated in a Q&A hosted by presenters from BBC Radio Manchester, with fans from around the world sending in questions for the band’s

frontman Tom Ogden and drummer Joe Donovan to answer during a live broadcast.

The band, from Stockport in Greater Manchester, formed in 2013, and were recently nominated for British Breakthrough Act of the Year at the 2017 BRIT Awards.

David Gate, creative music tutor at Salford City college, said: “This is the biggest event we’ve ever had at FutureSkills and it was an honour to have Blossoms perform here. We have the perfect gig venue here, so we’re now looking forward to hosting more of the same in 2017.”

Warm welcome for refugees

North Shropshire college has begun holding integration classes for local refugees to help them with their English skills and teach them key phrases.

Currently, there are 12 students in the class; 10 from families taken in from Lebanon by the UN, and two from Bangladesh.

Alongside English skills, there will be a focus on employability, with training also covering interview techniques.

Everything they learn in class, including names of medication, is designed to help the students transition into their local communities and let them access healthcare.

The class, which is being delivered with help from Refugee Action, a national refugee

charity, has been running since September 2016, and will continue until summer this year.

The charity assists with refugee resettlement, homelessness and poverty, and offers help and advice to asylum seekers who are adjusting to their new environments. It also offers resources to organisations who are looking to help with the process.

Rosemarie Sellers, who tutors the group, said: “They are a pleasure to teach. I wish all of my students were as polite as they are. It’s an honour to be able to help in any way I can.”

Refugee Action reports that the United Kingdom is accepting up to 20,000 Syrian refugees by 2020.



Give me shelter: Some of the refugees in the class

College lecturers tie Titchmarsh to a tree for Channel 4 programme

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Tethring a TV presenter high up to a tree is something that many people will go through their entire lives never having done, but the chance arose for three forestry lecturers from Plumpton College. Samantha King reports

To mark the 90th anniversary of AA Milne's beloved children's character, producers from Channel 4 decided to mark the occasion with a programme called 'Winnie-the-Pooh: The World's Most Famous Bear', a programme exploring his history, friends and exploits.

To get to the heart of the matter, producers recruited Plumpton College's forestry lecturer Dean Bell, and his colleagues Matt Moss, a programme manager for foundation degrees in forestry and woodland management, and Ollie Perry, a programme manager for level one and two students, to help tie the show's

presenter Alan Titchmarsh to a tree overlooking Ashdown Forest – one of Winnie's favourite haunts.

Tying him to the tree took the lecturers around five minutes, with a further 10 spent keeping the ropes out of shot.

Dean Bell said: "We were asked if it was



Out of their tree: (L-R) Matthew Moss, Alan Titchmarsh, Ollie Perry and Dean Bell

Can't see the wood: Mr Titchmarsh in Ashdown Forest

possible for us to put Alan Titchmarsh in the tree. To fasten him in, we used a rock-climbing harness instead of a tree-climbing harness. It was thinner, which allowed us to get it higher up his

body and he could put his coat over the top of that.

"The rope was tied securely around a

branch and fastened to Alan and his harness so there was no way he could move. We daisy-chained the tail of the rope and tucked it down the back of his jacket, and his left leg covered another bit of rope."

Luckily, Mr Titchmarsh had himself trained as an arborist, which made the process easier both for him and the forestry team securing him.

"He was very easy to work with, a very nice man, and he understood what we had to

do. He did train as an arborist, so he said it's been quite a few years since he's been up a tree but he has himself previously climbed. I don't think it was too alien what we were doing with him," he said.

The experience has helped to bolster the college's connections with the media industry, and inspired students to think about the various career pathways available to them with their qualifications; one of M Bell's students is already considering a career filming at height in the Amazonian rainforest.

"I've got a canopy access qualification that I got for future career options such as canopy research abroad, but a lot of people do it to get qualified so they can rig up a tree and film up and down the canopy," continued Mr Bell.

"We have the facilities at the college to show and emulate what you would learn in that course. It's good to show the students a different climbing method that you adopt in a certain situation such as filming."

The one-off programme first aired on the December 31, 2016, and is still available to watch online.

DO YOU WANT TO BE IN CAMPUS ROUND-UP?

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& MOVERS SHAKERS

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

Dame Martina Milburn, the chief executive of the Prince's Trust, has joined the board of City and Islington Westminster Colleges in central London.

A former journalist, Dame Martina became chief executive of the BBC Children In Need appeal in 2000, a post she held for four years before moving to the Prince's Trust, which has an annual turnover of £66 million.

She says she is "passionate about quality vocational teaching and offering students an outstanding learning experience", and hopes to bring her experience in leading large-scale organisations, community relations and managing change programmes to her new role on the board.

She said: "In my personal and professional life I have seen first-hand the excellent work undertaken at the City and Islington and Westminster Kingsway colleges.

"In fact, I was so impressed by their work I recommended the college to my nephew when he was looking for somewhere to study."

Westminster Kingsway and City and Islington Colleges merged to form the new

group on August 1, 2016. With a combined enrolment of over 26,500 students and a combined income of £85 million, the two founding colleges now form the largest FE institution in London.

The current principal of Myerscough college, **Ann Turner**, has been appointed as the new chair of the Lancashire Colleges.

TLC comprises 12 further education and sixth-form colleges in Lancashire, securing funds for education and training, and supporting collaborative work and projects.

Ms Turner has been principal at Myerscough College for more than a decade, since 2006. During this time she has helped establish the college's reputation as one of the UK's leading specialist land-based and sports colleges.

Alongside her principalship, she is the current chair of Landex, the national association for land-based colleges, as well as a director of the National Land-Based College, Cultiva, and a rural advisor to the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership.

Speaking of her appointment, Ms Turner said: "Individually, colleges have such a positive effect on the lives and education of

the county's young people and adults, but working together we achieve even more. I'm excited to take on this role and driving forward the next chapter for the Lancashire Colleges."

Ms Turner will take over from existing chair David Wood, who has been in the role 11 years, bringing in more than £20 million in additional funding for Lancashire during his tenure. He will step down in March 2017.

Wes Johnson has been appointed principal at Lancaster and Morecambe College, based in Lancashire.

Mr Johnson will step down from his existing role as campus principal at the Penrith-based Newton Rigg College after almost five years at the helm.

Mr Johnson joined Newton Rigg college in 2012 following its acquisition by Askham Bryan college and, under his leadership, has seen student numbers grow from 350 to around 1,000.

He has overseen a number of improvements to the college during his tenure, including the installation of a £3 million dairy unit at the home farm, updating existing buildings on the main campus, and a new equestrian centre.

Mr Johnson commented: "I look forward to taking up my new role, working with the local community and industry to ensuring the technical and professional qualifications the college delivers meet the needs of both individuals and businesses, and drives forward the economic wellbeing of the region."



DAME MARTINA MILBURN



ANN TURNER



WES JOHNSON

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FE Week Sudoku challenge

How to play: Fill in all blank squares making sure that each row, column and 3 by 3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9

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

Difficulty:
EASY

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

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Solutions:
 Next edition

Last Week's solutions

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

Difficulty:
EASY

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

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Spot the difference to WIN an FE Week mug



Spot five differences. First correct entry wins an FE Week mug. Email your name and picture of your completed spot the difference to: news@feweek.co.uk. Last Edition's winner: Russ Appleby, Hull College