

# FE Week

**GETTING A COLLEGE BACK IN THE BLACK**



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**LIFELONG LEARNING STRATEGY NEEDED**



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# COLLEGE HIRES NEW FINANCE CHIEF UNDER £338K FRAUD INVESTIGATION

ALIX ROBERTSON @ALIXROBERTSON4 EXCLUSIVE ON PAGE 4

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# DfE silent over intervention reports

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A stop appears to have been put on publication of FE commissioner intervention reports, despite growing numbers of failing colleges.

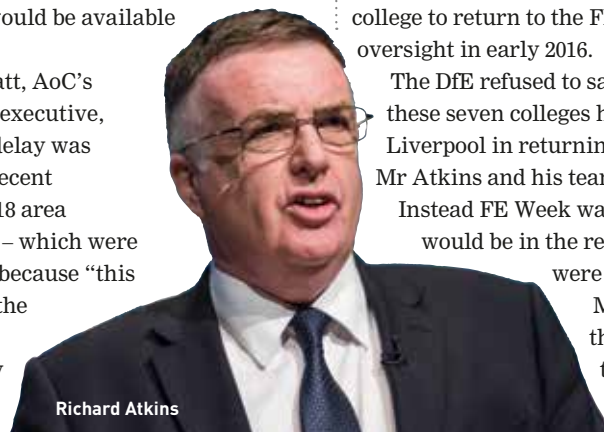
What's more, there is no sign of the FE commissioner's 2015/16 annual report, even though previous reports have been published in November or December.

The last intervention report, into City of Liverpool College, was published in October, although the document itself was dated August 2016.

FE Week believes that up to 18 colleges should have been subject to intervention by the FE commissioner and his team since then.

But when we asked about the missing reports, the Department for Education was unable to give any reason for the hold-up, and insisted they would be available in due course.

Julian Gravatt, AoC's assistant chief executive, suggested the delay was related to the recent publication of 18 area review reports – which were also overdue – because “this may be where the government's focus currently lies”.



Richard Atkins

Richard Atkins, who took over as FE commissioner in November, told delegates at last year's AoC annual conference that he and his team were “still finding the same things now that we found in 2013 [during interventions]”.

Intervention is triggered in one of three ways: an 'inadequate' Ofsted rating, a financial notice of concern from the Skills Funding Agency, or a failure to meet the SFA's minimum standards.

Since the publication of the last intervention report, 10 colleges have been given Ofsted's worst rating, while eight have been issued with financial notices.

Of the 10 grade-four colleges, seven have previously been subject to intervention – though it's not clear whether any of those processes had completed, and therefore whether a new intervention had been triggered.

City of Liverpool College became the first college to return to the FE commissioner's oversight in early 2016.

The DfE refused to say whether any of these seven colleges had joined City of Liverpool in returning to involvement by Mr Atkins and his team.

Instead FE Week was told that the details would be in the reports when they were published.

Mr Atkins said at the AoC conference that there had been around 50

interventions since 2013, and that there were around 20 colleges with which he and his team were currently involved.

A total of 46 reports have been published, based on interventions at 40 colleges and six adult and community learning providers.

Annual reports by Mr Atkins' predecessor Sir David Collins, in 2013/14 and 2014/15, included a recap of the previous year's interventions, and a summary of lessons learned and common issues.

The 2013/14 report was published in November 2014, while the 2014/15 report was issued in December 2015.

The FE commissioner role was created in 2013 with the aim of tackling underperformance in failing colleges through the intervention process.

It was later expanded to include leading on the area reviews of post-16 education and training, which began in September 2015.

Sir David held the post for three years until his retirement in November, when he was replaced by former Exeter College principal Mr Atkins.

A Freedom of Information request by FE Week in December revealed that Sir David had been involved in 49 interventions and 22 area reviews between 2013 and 2016, and had worked twice as many days as had been originally planned.

Mr Atkins said at the AoC conference that he hoped his workload would be “lighter after March” when the area reviews are due to complete.

## Adult education budget procurement launched

PAUL OFFORD  
@PAULOFFORD

The first ever procurement process for adult education budget contracts has finally been launched.

The education secretary Justine Greening greenlit the process two weeks ago, and FE Week understands the first letters and rubric have now been sent out.

The Skills Funding Agency first wrote to training providers in October and told them that their current AEB contracts would come to an end this July, and that they would not be automatically renewed as before.

A new guidance document, called 'Invitation to tender for education and training services – Adult Education Budget

2017 to 2018', reveals the funding and timetable arrangements.

The key section in the new guide states: “The minimum funding that is available is £110 million, for the funding year 2017 to 2018.

“The funding year covers the 12-month delivery period from August 1, 2017, to July 31, 2018.”

A further note confirms that responses must be submitted through the SFA's e-tendering portal before 5pm on February 27.

The results will be announced on May 19, while applicants must be ready to deliver on the contract start date, August 1.

Any provider that has already prequalified for AEB funding can apply via tendering site – and the letter sent out to providers

explains that a failure to tender would result in less cash.

It said: “In our October letter, we referred to the part of the Public Contract Regulations 2015 that allows us to directly award contracts up to a predetermined threshold level of £589,148 for one year.

“If you are unsuccessful in securing a new contract through the procurement, or you choose not to tender, we will offer you a new contract up to the value of your current 2016 to 2017 AEB allocation or this threshold value, whichever is the lower.”

The new guide document stated that applicants must be able to “demonstrate their readiness to deliver the service immediately when the contract starts”, and that “delivery must not be delayed in any way, such as by not having the appropriate staff, processes, premises or relationships that need to be established”.

Providers must also “have a track record in delivering high-quality education and skills provision for those targeted by the AEB”, while “an applicant must only contact the SFA by using the online message board attached to this specific ITT on the e-tendering portal.

“This is to ensure that the SFA can maintain the integrity and robustness of the tendering process, and guarantee that answers provided to questions are consistent.”

TASK	DEADLINE
Publication of ITT	27 January 2017
ITT closes	27 February 2017
Notification of tender results	19 May 2017
Mandatory 10 Day Standstill period	30 May 2017
Contracts issued	Contracts to be issued in June 2017
Delivery Commences	1 August 2017

Source: Invitation to tender for education and training services – Adult Education Budget 2017 to 2018

## NEWS

# The UK urgently needs a coherent national ESOL strategy

ALIX ROBERTSON  
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Two of the country's most senior educators have called on the government to produce a coherent national strategy for teaching English to immigrants, and put a stop to wasteful competition between different ministries and departments.

At present, responsibility for English as a second language is split between the Department for Education and the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Jenny Roden, the co-chair of the National Association of Teaching English and Community Languages, and Sue Pember, director of policy at adult learning provider membership body Hoxley and former senior civil servant responsible for FE funding, have said that the situation is failing tens of thousands of learners who desperately want to learn the language.

The DCLG provides funds for a selection of short-term English language projects for non-native speakers, and the DfE provides separate funding for ESOL classes in FE – which has been heavily cut alongside the adult education budget.

Between the 2012/13 academic year and 2015/16, the DCLG handed out almost £8.5 million for projects designed to “engage isolated adults”, according to the apprenticeships and skills minister

Robert Halfon in an answer to a written parliamentary question submitted in January.

A DCLG spokesperson told FE Week these projects are generally delivered by unpaid “small voluntary and community groups” – as the department fears learners may otherwise “be deterred from attending classes delivered by local colleges in larger, more formal settings”.

Around 39,800 adults have received teaching so far, and the focus is on people with “the lowest levels of English” rather than those “seeking work”.

Meanwhile, funding for the DfE's ESOL classes, which the FE sector has been delivering for decades, has significantly declined since 2009.

Ms Roden warned that the six projects, funded to the tune of £8.45 million over

four years by the DCLG, were unlikely to reach enough of the people who need them, particularly while college programmes continue to suffer.

“Unfortunately, DCLG-funded projects, which are short-term and targeted at certain groups, do not provide the sustainable funding which ESOL badly needs,” she said.

“The systematic reduction in ESOL funding from the Skills Funding Agency since 2009 has left providers struggling to provide even a basic service, with some closing down their provision completely.

“We believe that ESOL learners deserve better than this; what is needed is a strategy for ESOL, as exists in Wales and Scotland.”

Dr Pember, who was formerly the top skills civil servant, told FE Week that she too believes there is an urgent need to establish a coherent strategy for English language

teaching.

“If we are to meet the government's stated aims on integration, we really need an English language policy for England,” she said. Recent announcements about new funds for refugees are welcomed but these seem to be done in isolation from the main body of activity.”

In December 2016, a report on social integration authored by Dame Louise Casey found that English skills are “fundamental” to improving community cohesion and opportunities for immigrants, but identified “a significant gap in funding for pre-entry and entry-level English language courses”.

This isn't the first time senior figures in the sector have called for better ESOL provision. Martin Doel, the former boss of the AoC, pointed out in January last year that there had been a 50 per cent drop in funding available for ESOL courses between 2008 and 2015 – a massive fall of £160 million.

He made the observation in the wake of a controversial decision by the-then prime minister David Cameron to provide £20 million for English language tuition geared towards helping Muslim women integrate into British society.

Meanwhile in October, hundreds of college staff and students expressed their frustration over ESOL cuts at the Houses of Parliament.

NATECLA will carry out a survey with the charity Refugee Action to assess the effect of cuts to ESOL funding nationally, with results expected in September.



ESOL protestors outside the Houses of Parliament

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## NEWS

# New job for finance director despite £338k IT scandal

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EXCLUSIVE FROM FRONT

The deputy chief executive of a major London college who abruptly left his post last summer over financial irregularities was recently appointed the finance director of another college in the capital, which insists it had full knowledge of his situation when it hired him.

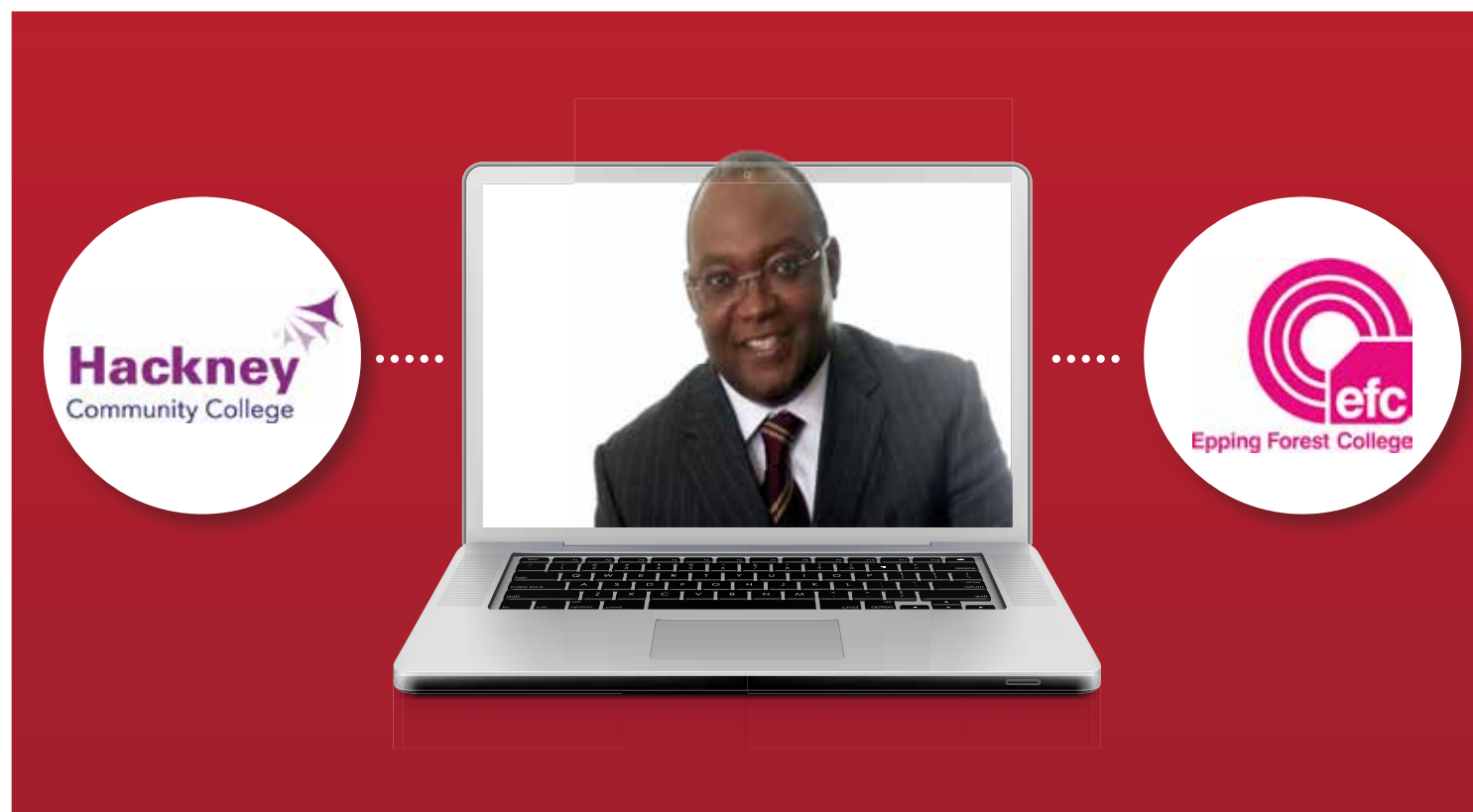
May 'Dare (pictured) left his job at Hackney Community College in August after he allegedly spent £338,000 of its money on IT supplies from a company which he secretly owned.

Some of his ex-colleagues have even accused his former employer of attempting a cover-up, though the college said the irregularities were discovered during an audit a few days after its merger with Tower Hamlets College last summer, and one day after he had gone on annual leave.

Gerry McDonald, the current group principal and chief executive officer of New City College Corporation (which now incorporates Hackney Community College, Tower Hamlets College and Redbridge College) told FE Week he left after "routine desk-based checks" found that the huge sum had been spent on equipment from his company, Newton Rachel Limited.

Mr McDonald said he "used his own company to purchase IT equipment on behalf of the college", but "did not declare this to the then principal or the board".

Despite this, some of Mr 'Dare's former Hackney colleagues told FE Week that the



new college had tried to suppress news of the scandal.

One complained to FE Week that it was "almost as if the people who have taken us over feel no compunction to respect the need to keep things in the public domain", while another said that "if Mr 'Dare has sidestepped procedures in the use of public funds, and been allowed to avoid answering allegations that he personally benefitted, it's just wrong".

Last month, he accepted a job as the director of finance and operations at Epping

Forest College, though a spokesperson told FE Week that he had made staff there aware of the dispute with his former employer "at the point of interview and before appointment".

Mr McDonald strenuously denied any cover up concerning Mr 'Dare's departure, which was first reported in Private Eye.

He told FE Week that Mr 'Dare, who sometimes goes by the name Kunle Oluwadare, "went on pre-arranged leave on August 5, before we had the opportunity to put the allegations to him. He then resigned, while on leave during the following week".

FE Week also asked Ian Ashman, Hackney Community College's former principal, up to the merger in August 2016 and current president of the Association of Colleges, about the allegations.

He said: "The college has properly reported the situation to the authorities and undertaken an investigation. It would therefore be inappropriate for me to make further comment."

FE Week understands Newton Rachel Limited was set up in October 2013, with Mr 'Dare and his wife as the sole directors and shareholders.

He was employed by Hackney Community College for almost 24 years from its inception in 1992, and was made deputy chief executive of corporate services in April 2016.

An employee told FE Week that staff at Hackney Community College had been informed of Mr 'Dare's abrupt resignation in August, and were told that "financial irregularities" had occurred.

They were sent a subsequent email by Mr McDonald, seen by FE Week, which said that the college had concluded an investigation into the matter and found "financial regulations were breached in relation to the procurement of IT equipment between 2013 and 2016".

Mr McDonald said that the college had not sought to recover the £338,000, because the goods it was used for had been received. He also stressed that "no settlement

agreement was or is in place", adding: "We have referred the matter to the police who are dealing with it as an alleged fraud and possible abuse of public office."

FE Week asked the Skills Funding Agency on what action they had taken in response to the scandal, and the impact on Hackney Community College, but a spokesperson said the agency had not intervened.

She said: "An independent investigation commissioned by Hackney Community College was conducted last year.

"The SFA is satisfied that the college implemented the recommendations and that no further action is required from the college at this stage."

FE Week contacted Mr 'Dare's new place of work, Epping Forest College, to find out if managers had been aware of his previous dealings when he was appointed director of finance and operations on January 3, 2017.

A spokesperson told FE Week that "at the time of the appointment" the interview panel had known he was involved in an ongoing employment tribunal case with Hackney Community College.

On January 6, FE Week reported that Epping Forest College had been rated 'inadequate' across the board, in an Ofsted report that warned of safeguarding failings.

Mr 'Dare told FE Week that he did not wish to comment ahead of his tribunal.

A University and College Union spokesperson said: "The episode involving May 'Dare and computer supply contracts exposes the need for rigorous checks in our colleges.

"Concentrating so much power in so few hands is not healthy and we are also unconvinced that outsourcing these types of roles is always necessary."

FE Week also contacted the college's auditors, TIAA, but was told: "We do not comment on work undertaken on behalf of our clients".

The Metropolitan Police was unable to comment.

## Hackney Community College comments

The email sent to Hackney Community College staff by principal and chief executive Gerry McDonald informed staff that the incident involved May 'Dare working alone.

It said there was "no evidence or reason to suspect that any other staff member/s were involved in this breach".

It also acknowledged faults on the part of the college, saying that "processes and procedures in relation to procurement had been applied inconsistently", and

"there were not sufficient checks in place to ensure that financial regulations were followed".

Mr McDonald's email concluded that financial regulations at Hackney Community College had subsequently "been reviewed, to include more specific separation of duties and tighter processes across purchasing and procurement", which would be "supported by systematic audits, management and governance checks".

## Epping Forest College comments

A spokesperson for Epping Forest College told FE Week that an incomplete employment tribunal called by May 'Dare against Hackney Community College had influenced the decision about his employment at the college.

FE Week understands from Hackney Community College that this tribunal was called on the grounds of constructive dismissal, which is when an employee is forced to leave their job against their will due to their employer's conduct.

"We felt the case between Hackney Community College and Mr 'Dare had not yet been satisfactorily concluded, and not wishing to prejudge the outcome, the college agreed to appoint him on a temporary basis until his employment tribunal case was resolved," he said.

He added that Epping Forest College also received a letter from Mr 'Dare's solicitor, which confirmed the tribunal is scheduled for March 2017.

## NEWS

## Two principals on IfA's board – but what happens to their £15k paycheques?

JUDE BURKE  
@JUDEBURKE77

One of the two college principals who will sit on the board at the Institute for Apprenticeships has refused to say what will happen to the salary she will receive

The Department for Education at long last named the eight people who will sit on the IfA's board on January 27. The roles – which first were advertised last June – attract an annual salary of up to £15,000, which the DfE confirmed would be paid to individual board members rather than their employers.

The new board includes the principals of West Nottinghamshire College, Dame Asha Khemka, and Blackpool and the Fylde College, Bev Robinson.

A spokesperson for Blackpool and the Fylde College told FE Week that Ms Robinson would not be keeping the cash, and that “any additional remuneration received in relation to this role will go to the college”.

However, West Nottinghamshire College refused to say whether Dame Asha would be doing the same.

According to the job adverts, which were posted on the Cabinet Office's public appointments site by the former Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, the roles involve a commitment of two days per month to “contribute across a range of the Institute's



Dame Asha Khemka

strategic and governance issues”.

The adverts called for applications from “senior figures with expertise in business, employer representatives, academics, and other senior representatives with expertise in particular aspects of apprenticeships and skills”.

A BIS spokesperson told FE Week last June that the £15,000 salary was higher than the £4,000 currently paid to board members of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, which will cease its work when the IfA is up and running.

It's not clear why the IfA remuneration package is so much bigger.

Membership of one of the DfE's new technical education panels of professionals,

which will help develop new technical qualifications, comes with a paycheque of £1,000 a quarter, according to adverts posted on behalf of the DfE last month, while panel chairs will earn £2,000 a quarter.

Crucially though, that cash will go to the chairs' or panel members' employers rather than the individuals themselves.

In return, chairs and panel members will be expected to meet every four to six weeks, and take on up to one day of additional work a month.

According to the most recent college accounts published by the Skills Funding

Agency, Dame Asha was the third highest-paid college principal in 2014/15, with a salary of £245,000 – a sum that increased to £254,000 in 2016/17, according to her employer.

She is principal and chief executive of the West Nottinghamshire College Group, which is made up of eight organisations including the college itself.

West Nottinghamshire College was rated ‘good’ by Ofsted at its most recent inspection in June 2012, and has around 26,000 learners.

Meanwhile, Ms Robinson's salary of £150,000 made her joint-50th highest-paid out of 330 college principals.

Blackpool and the Fylde College has around 18,000 learners, and was rated ‘outstanding’ by Ofsted in October 2013.

The first deputy director for the new body, which will police apprenticeships, has also been appointed.

Ana Osbourne, who used to work for BIS' enterprise directorate, will be the IfA's new deputy director of approvals, with responsibility for overseeing the approvals process for standards.

Meanwhile, the long-awaited draft operational plan for the IfA is currently out for consultation, until February 27.



Bev Robinson



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## NEWS

# Ofsted deny going soft on employers despite IfA notes

PAUL OFFORD  
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EXCLUSIVE

Ofsted has been forced to deny it would reduce its inspections of apprenticeship employer-providers to “samples”, despite the secret release of new guidance suggesting otherwise.

According to briefing notes leaked to FE Week from a recent stakeholder event for the Institute of Apprenticeships, Ofsted is slated to “continue to inspect training providers and sample inspection of employers”.

Confronted with our findings, a red-faced spokesperson for the inspectorate insisted that it “is not planning to change how we inspect training providers and employers”.

They said: “We will continue to observe on-the-job as well as off-the-job apprenticeship training to judge overall quality of training, learning and experience.

“Our inspectors visit some employers’ premises as part of the inspection process to observe and speak to apprentices and trainers in their place of work.”

The Department for Education however declined to comment, and told us to refer all our enquiries back to Ofsted.

FE Week reported last June that firms taking on apprentices had been advised by the AELP to stick “to their core business” and use experienced providers – after Citroën UK

was humiliated with an ‘inadequate’ rating following an inspection.

The watchdog’s damning verdict on the car manufacturer meant that a quarter of employers inspected under the new common inspection framework launched the previous September had been awarded the lowest possible rating.

The news provoked AELP boss Mark Dawe into a dire warning.

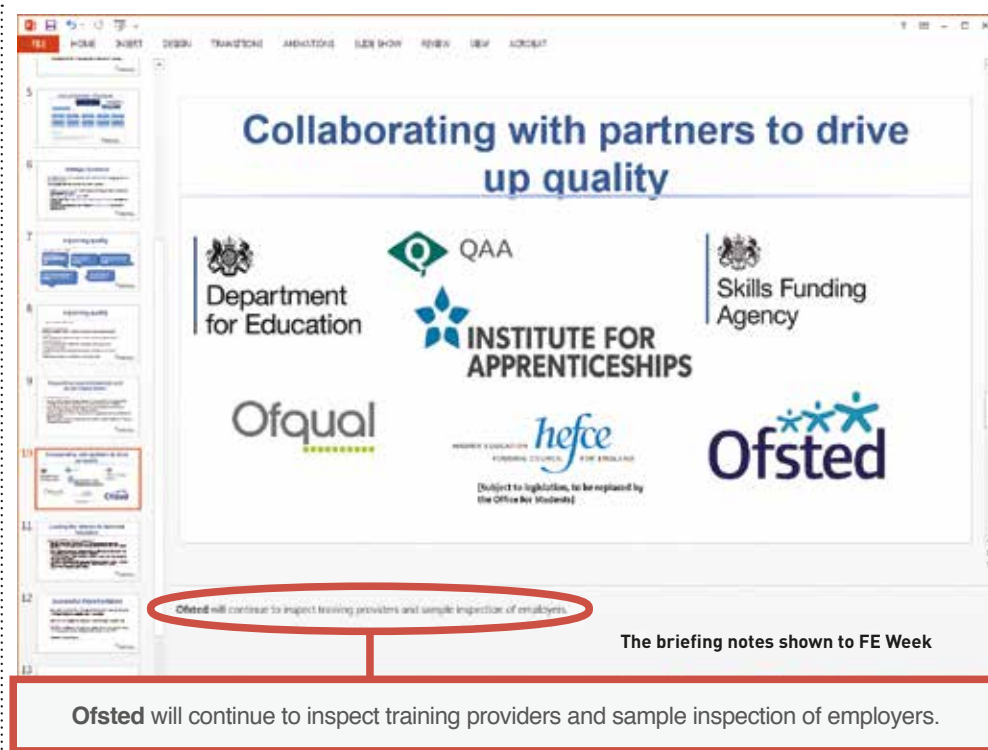
“Those organisations engaging with the apprenticeship programme for the first time under the [apprenticeship] levy may be better off sticking to their core business and instead using the services of an experienced training provider,” he said.

It soon emerged that Jaguar Land Rover, the British car manufacturer and employer-provider often lauded by ministers for its apprenticeship scheme, had itself been hit with a shock grade three rating after its own Ofsted inspection.

Concern remains among colleges and ITPs that the government wants Ofsted to go easier on employer-providers, for example in terms of performance monitoring and inspection, because ministers are understood to want more firms with apprentices running their own training.

Paul Joyce, Ofsted’s deputy director for FE and skills, attempted to allay such fears at the AELP’s annual conference last June.

He insisted there would be no special



treatment for employers that become providers in order to use their apprenticeship levy funding, after the new system goes live from April this year.

He told delegates that inspections would carry on “regardless of where that provision is delivered”.

“I can assure you we will not have a two-tier inspection system,” he added.

A DfE spokesperson told FE Week at the time that Mr Joyce’s comments on not having a two-tier approach “are correct” and said the government “will be inviting feedback on the administrative process”.

She added that ministers and civil servants “continue to work closely with Ofsted who welcome feedback to ensure that their inspection approaches are appropriate.”

## Work ‘til you drop: Government pushes apprenticeships for over-60s

PAUL OFFORD  
@PAULOFFORD

The over-60s are to be encouraged to start on apprenticeships, in a new government report on ways to boost employment prospects in later life.

The report, from the Department for Work and Pensions refers to retraining opportunities for people aged over 45, and even mentions those approaching or past the conventional retirement age.

Apprenticeships are referred to as an “all-age programme”, and it claims “older people can and do access apprenticeships”.

The report, entitled ‘Fuller Working Lives: A Partnership Approach’, suggests that “over

57,700” – or 11.3 per cent – of those starting an apprenticeship in 2015/16 were aged between 45 and 59, while some 3,500 were aged 60 years and over – representing just under one per cent.

The release of the document reflects the government’s recent change in focus of skills policy away from exclusively targeting the under-19s, towards adult education.

However, any moves to drive up the numbers of older people in apprenticeships would need to buck the trend of the last five years, which has seen start-levels remaining relatively stable.

For example, in 2011/12 there were 62,200 45- to 59-year-old starts, and 3,680 for over-60s. There were just over 57,000 45- to 59-year-old starts in 2015/16, and 3,560 over-60s.

Before 2007 government-funded apprenticeships were only available to people under the age of 25.

However, the new industrial strategy green paper published last week committed the government to exploring “ambitious new approaches to encouraging lifelong learning”.

This “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”.

Apprenticeships and skills minister Robert Halfon told FE Week that the government was firmly committed to boosting training for older people, saying: “We wouldn’t have put this in the industrial strategy if we weren’t serious about it”.

The Fuller Working Lives report now says that older workers can often be overlooked when it comes to new training opportunities. “Someone in their early 50s, however, can potentially stay with their employer for 15 to 20 years or longer,” it added.

“There is a clear case for investing in their future and, in so doing, that of the business.

“Some employers are already recognising the importance of retraining, with Barclays and Whitbread among those running apprenticeship schemes for older people, [while] other employers have schemes in development.”

It stressed that recent DWP research showed that only 15 per cent of respondents not currently retired and under 60 years old would like to stop work altogether and retire between the ages of 60 and 65.

It also referred to work being done by business communities, through local enterprise partnerships.

“DWP is working with a number of employers and LEPs who have recognised the importance of the ageing demographic to productivity and growth.

“For example, Enterprise M3 and Coast to Capital LEPs have launched an apprenticeship scheme for older apprentices in Surrey which aims to help older claimants into work.

“In 2014/15, only a minority of LEPs had identified older workers as an important group within the workforce. Now almost all LEPs recognise that older workers are crucial to filling skills gaps and are planning projects to support older workers.”

Age and starts	2011/12		2012/13		2013/14		2014/15		2015/16		2016/17	
	Full Year		Full Year		Full Year		Full Year		Full Year		Full Year	
Under 16	210	*	230	*	200	*	160	*	180	*	60	*
16	29,890	5.7%	25,080	4.9%	25,540	5.8%	28,020	5.6%	30,410	6.0%	17,180	11.0%
17	43,200	8.3%	35,810	7.0%	38,970	8.8%	42,070	8.4%	43,920	8.6%	17,580	11.3%
18	56,590	10.9%	53,430	10.5%	55,050	12.5%	55,600	11.1%	56,910	11.2%	23,430	15.1%
19-24	161,420	31.0%	165,390	32.4%	159,120	36.1%	160,180	32.0%	153,860	30.2%	45,310	29.1%
25-34	97,060	18.6%	101,180	19.8%	74,380	16.9%	97,650	19.5%	102,760	20.2%	25,060	16.1%
35-44	66,320	12.7%	64,790	12.7%	42,850	9.7%	57,070	11.4%	60,000	11.8%	13,590	8.7%
45-59	62,200	11.9%	61,060	12.0%	41,850	9.5%	55,730	11.1%	57,780	11.3%	12,630	8.1%
60+	3,680	0.7%	3,260	0.6%	2,480	0.6%	3,410	0.7%	3,560	0.7%	800	0.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>520,600</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>510,200</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>440,400</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>499,900</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>509,400</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>155,600</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Government statistics showing all-age apprenticeship starts

## NEWS

# Carlisle College becomes NCG fifth FE college member

## MERGER on the grapevine

JUDE BURKE  
@JUDEBURKE77

The nation's largest college is getting even bigger.

NCG has confirmed it will absorb yet another provider in the north following months of talks.

Further consolidation is also on the cards for London's colleges, with two mergers

involving five institutions moving forward.

Carlisle College is to become the fifth FE college member of NCG, when it joins the group in April.

The college emerged from the Cumbria area review with a recommendation to merge with Lakes College, but this move was rejected in favour of a return to talks with its previously mooted merger partner NCG.

The prospect of a merger between Carlisle College and Newcastle-based NCG was first raised last March, and came after the Cumbria-based college turned to its county council for a £700,000 loan in January 2016 to help address a "need for short-term cash-flow support".

Its chair David Carter said: "The principal

and governors see the merger with NCG as the best solution to securing the future success of Carlisle College and we are keen to benefit from the support, expertise, investment and resources of NCG."

Joe Docherty, NCG's chief executive, said the group shared the college's "focus on providing what employers and students in Carlisle need to develop skills for their local economy", and that he was "pleased to be able to back that with the expertise and capacity of a major national group".

Down south, meanwhile, Tower Hamlets College and Hackney Community College will be joined by Redbridge College from April 1, after the merger was signed off by the colleges' governing bodies.

The group also has a new name – New City College – following approval by the Department for Education.

The latest link-up, which follows an earlier merger between Tower Hamlets and Hackney colleges in August, means the group is now the capital's third largest FE college, according to a statement from the group.

Group principal Gerry McDonald described the merger approval as "very good news".

"It will lead to an even more robust organisation which allows flexibility for local innovation and the tailored support for students that our communities need and expect," he said.

Consultation has also opened on a

partnership between Barnet and Southgate College, and Waltham Forest College.

The consultation runs until March 1, with the aim of merging by August 1.

The two colleges had been in discussion about a possible three-way merger involving the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London, but this was "shelved by agreement" in October.

The sticking point in the three-way link up was differing approaches to governance and management, according to a statement put out by CONEL at the time.

The principal-designate of the merged college is David Byrne, who currently leads Barnet and Southgate.

Ann Zinkin, the college's chair, described the partnership as a "strategic merger of equals".

"Our ambition is to create a new and vibrant college that is better able to meet the economic and social challenges that London, our local boroughs and the wider country face," she said.

Paul Butler, who chairs Waltham Forest, said the merged colleges' vision was "to be an exciting place to learn".

All five London colleges were involved in the recent area reviews of post-16 education and training in the capital.

The London reviews are understood to have ended in November, but the final reports have yet to be published.



Carlisle College

Joe Docherty

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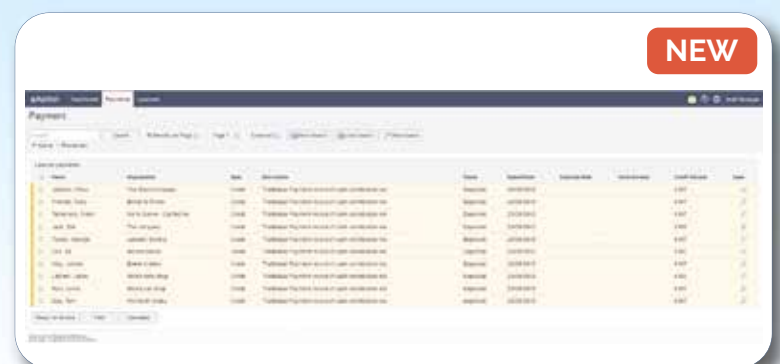
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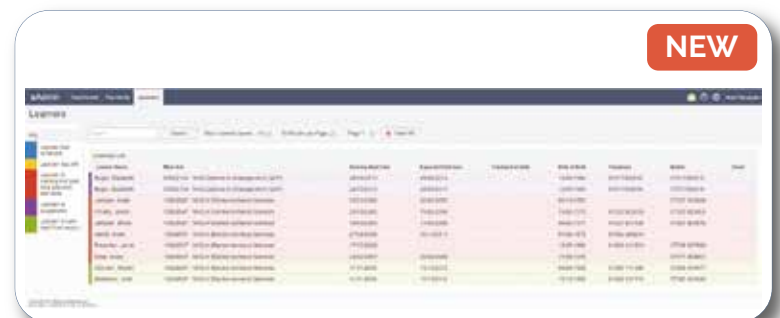
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## EDITORIAL

## Leave ESOL to the experts



We are morally compelled as a nation to do our absolute best to help immigrants who struggle with speaking English, to integrate smoothly into our rich melting pot of a society.

It's such an important policy area, in terms of helping secure jobs and preventing significant numbers of people from feeling isolated.

That's why I feel just as frustrated as Jenny Roden and Sue Pember that provision is being undermined by competing government departments.

DCLG seems to think it should be delivered by unpaid "small voluntary and community groups".

I'm inclined to think they should leave it to the professionals at FE colleges, who have taught ESOL for decades. I hope and suspect ministers at the DfE agree with this.

Everything needs to be pulled together and made the sole responsibility of the department dedicated to education.

It's hard to understand why there isn't a national strategy already in place. Drawing one up and increasing funding should be a key priority.

**Paul Offord, sub editor**  
news@feweek.co.uk

### FULLER WORKING LIVES REPORT TWEETS:

**Susan Pember @SusanPember**  
Excellent @halfon4harlowMP that DWP recognises the value of lifelong learning. Good to see joined by thinking

**Mandy Glover @Mandy\_Cohesion**  
#AndyBriggs it's attitude not age that counts, we need to be prepared to recruit, retrain & retain our older workforce #fullerworkinglives

**Shane Chownen @LWShane**  
Fantastic to see @LearnWorkUK Mid Life Career Reviews highlighted in @DWP new strategy for older workers

**DWP @DWP**  
Many businesses are already taking positive steps to retain older workers. Is yours? #FullerWorkingLives

**Yvonne Sonsino @YvonneSonsino**  
#fullerworkinglives Malcolm Boswell @acasorguk reports majority employers know they have problem with age management. Time to fix it!!



## AoC: fees overhaul to avoid £1m overspend

PAUL OFFORD  
@PAULOFFORD

The Association of Colleges has set out plans to overhaul its membership fees, to help prevent a £1 million overspend on its 2017/18 budget.

The consultation document was released this week as its chief executive David Hughes admitted to FE Week that it needs to reform to balance the books – in part because membership numbers are dropping as more colleges begin to merge.

The AoC currently has just over 300 members, but despite a significant projected fall, he insisted there were no plans to scale back its operations.

"I have actually been overwhelmed with responses from members," he said. "Lots and lots have said they think it's really good value for money and want us to carry on."

"We represent almost 100 per cent of the eligible colleges, who deal with three million learners and what they want is a professional organisation to represent their interests, and provide them with support."

"The membership side of the business feels about the right size. I think we are about the right size, but we need to see what we want them to do over the next three years."

The consultation will be held amongst the AoC's members, and proposes reducing

the rebate for the largest colleges "as mergers reduce college numbers".

The AoC wants a new membership fee-structure "of a single fee per college set at 0.1 per cent of turnover, with a reduced rebate for the largest colleges".

It concedes that the organisation is "not affordable" on its current fee levels, and says that "rolling forward as we are" will lead to a £1 million overspend on £6 million budget in 2017/18.

A fee cap of £38,500 would achieve overall income of £5.53 million.

Under the proposals, 89 colleges would see a fee increase of more than 10 per cent, while 68 colleges would enjoy a reduction of more than five per cent.

However, the AoC wants "to limit increases and decreases to five per cent", a move that would decrease overall income to £5.25m in 17/18.

Mr Hughes told FE Week that any decision on future fees would be made by the board, giving consideration to the responses to the consultation.

"If we did nothing we would probably overspend by £1 million," he said. "It is down to a combination of things. The number of mergers that will happen will mean that our income will go down considerably over the next three years."

"The dividend we get from AoC Create has also gone down because there are fewer



### Proposals for membership fees

- Set income at £5.5m for three years (17/18, 18/19 and 19/20)
- One fee per college – incorporating regional & national fee, based on audited income in 2015/16 for all three years
- Set fee level at 0.1% of turnover
- Maintain 25% reduction for SFCs and Landex members
- Reduce rebate from (current) largest 25% (by turnover) to largest 15% over three years – to be set at fixed amount
- Need to adjust the current cap for largest colleges to avoid too significant a reduction as mergers take place

projects around."

He said it would be "interesting" to see how people will respond to the consultation.

AoC is also looking at rationalising its regional structure.

It currently has nine regional offices, which Mr Hughes explained will be reduced to "five maybe six", with a new person possibly in place nationally to lead regional teams.

Three of the current regional arms – EMFEC, ACER, AoSEC – are external, contracted partners.

Mr Hughes insisted that the AoC was "not trying to cut them loose or undermine them" but trying to see "how can we make this work".

"There might be some compromises to be made. One thing that members want us to do is to continue the networks regionally."

The organisation will also be "consulting but not quite as formally" on its commercial arm AoC Create, and its other subsidiaries over the next year.

## COMMENTS

### Institutes of technology £170m windfall going to existing providers

Many of these colleges will take the money but run technical courses exactly as they do now, the extra money for being a "prestigious institutes of technology" will simply get used to support the college budget and waste money on non-jobs that maintain bureaucracy. The end result will be no change for the students or industry.

FE lecturer

### Halfon: Careers advice at colleges 'state of the art' but schools not good enough

Finally, we have a Minister who really does understand what we do. Bravo Mr Halfon.

Bob Smith

### SFA in dock after hundreds of learners struggle to recover loans cash when provider collapses

It's an interesting test case. If a company goes into liquidation having received money from the Student Loans Company for education and training that it failed to deliver, who is considered a creditor: the SLC, which paid the money; or the students, who failed to receive their education (and who appear still to owe the SLC)? Even further complicated if the students were at a sub-contractor of the company in liquidation! You can see why sub-contracting of loans-funded provision has been banned

Mike Farmer

### Large drop in number of standards lacking end-point assessors

It is good news that new EPA organisations are coming on line and being approved. I have to wonder how many of them are ready and have the capability to deliver however. If the volume of calls to my college from AO's who want us to do the actual work is representative, I would say that a good proportion of the accredited EPA organisations don't even plan to deliver, but intend to take a brokerage/management fee for developing the assessments, referring learners, and overseeing the quality of assessment done by a network of training providers. I wonder how many will fail to secure agreements which will offer sufficient capacity, availability and geographical coverage.

Mark Andrews



## ***‘Exciting Opportunities at Warwickshire College Group’***

**WCG** (Warwickshire College Group) is one of the largest groups of Further Education Colleges in the UK, operating from 7 college sites, and covering a diverse range of curriculum areas. It has 15,000 students studying 1,000 courses across all Subject Sector Areas from entry level to higher education as well as significant work-based learning activity. We have a number of exciting opportunities available which would be suited to enthusiastic individuals who have a passion for driving success in education.

## **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**

This is an exciting opportunity for a talented individual to develop and grow the offer in the Subject Sector Areas from entry level to higher education as well as significant work-based learning activity, and to develop an important revenue stream for the college. You must hold a degree or equivalent and have experience of operational management at a senior level in a complex and target focused environment.

## **Head of Department for Motor Vehicle - Warwickshire**

We are seeking a Head of Department for Motor Vehicle to be responsible for the management of the curriculum area. Through effective deployment of resources and College systems and procedures, the postholder will ensure that each student has access to and receives an outstanding experience. Whilst working within the core values and through continuous improvement, the post holder will develop the curriculum area to meet or exceed the College’s KPIs.

## **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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NCG is one of the largest and growing FE providers in the country, currently comprising four Colleges – with more seeking to join us – and two training providers, and has been rated as Good in a recent OFSTED inspection. NCG is currently introducing College Boards for each of its constituent colleges to provide improved oversight, especially around quality and curriculum, at a local level.

The successful candidate will oversee and coordinate activity of the newly implemented College Boards, act as Company Secretary for trading subsidiary boards ensuring that they operate effectively, and provide advice, guidance and support to the NCG Corporation and its committees on powers, procedural matters, and the conduct of business and matters of Governance practice.

This is a great opportunity for an experienced and forward thinking Clerk / Company Secretary to join NCG at a pivotal time and to help shape the organisation’s future operation.

This is a permanent position which offers an excellent benefits package including competitive salary, career average pension scheme, and generous holiday entitlement. NCG is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults. We expect all staff to share this commitment.

To view the Job Description, Person Specification, NCG Values Pack and to apply please visit <https://www.networxrecruitment.com/Jobs/Advert/566966>

No agency applications will be accepted



# Finance Director

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We are looking for an experienced finance professional with outstanding leadership skills and a drive for strong performance and quality to play a pivotal role in our development and future. With sound knowledge of financial legislation and accounting practices you will have recent proven experience of developing and implementing financial strategy.

For an informal discussion, please contact **Jeremy Kerswell**, the College Principal on **01273 890454**

**For further details** and an application form, please contact: HR at:  
Plumpton College,  
Ditchling Road,  
Plumpton,  
East Sussex,  
BN7 3AE.

**Tel:** 01273 890454      **Email:** [hr@plumpton.ac.uk](mailto:hr@plumpton.ac.uk)

**Closing date for applications:**  
Tuesday 14th February

**Selection centre will be held:**  
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To find out more, or to apply for the post please submit your CV to [prachipatel@skillstraininguk.com](mailto:prachipatel@skillstraininguk.com).



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**Closing date for applications:** 7th February 2017

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You must be keen to inspire our students to improve their maths skills and have a willingness and ability to teach both GCSE and Functional Skills Maths. A relevant degree is essential and you must already have a teaching qualification. We welcome applications from NQT's.

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## FE Week



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## NEWS

## FE Week victory: apprenticeship rules ban 'brokerage'

BILLY GAMDEN  
@BILLYGAMDEN

Public funds cannot be used to pay brokers' fees, the Skills Funding Agency has officially ruled.

In its final rules for apprenticeship funding published this week, the SFA has at last clamped down on the sorts of shady dealings which have seen private bodies and brokers cream off millions of pounds via commission fees.

The decision represents a big win for FE Week, after we exposed the dodgy way brokers have been charging up to five per cent of every deal to match subcontractors with government-funded providers.

The rules now state that "funds in an employer's digital account or government-employer co-investment must not be used for... specific services not related to the delivery and administration of the apprenticeship". Provisions explicitly cover the recruitment and continuing professional development of staff involved in apprenticeships, company inductions,

## Draft

be obtained by practitioners to confirm that the licence holder meets prescribed standards of competence for that sector or industry.

67.11. Specific services not related to the delivery and administration of the apprenticeship; including company induction, bespoke or additional training or assessment not needed to meet the apprenticeship requirements.

67.12. Off-the-job training delivered only by distance learning, although you can include online and blended learning activity as part of that delivery.

managing agents and those providing a brokerage service to an employer".

Our initial investigation back in April found numerous brokers advertising subcontracting opportunities through closed groups on LinkedIn.

In one of those most alarming examples, FE Week found an advert with Essex-based consultants EEVT Ltd, attributed to a company called The Funding Brokers Ltd.

It read "we have been providing this service for over three years, securing in excess of £100 million in the process for our clients" – meaning that at five per cent commission, the brokers could have earned up to £5 million.

The ad continued: "We work on a no-win no-fee basis, whereby we will provide

## Final version

spent by the apprentice's line manager for any of these activities.

82.17. Specific services not related to the delivery and administration of the apprenticeship. This includes the recruitment and continuing professional development of staff involved in apprenticeships, company inductions, managing agents and those providing a brokerage service to an employer.

I can only use funds in the employer's digital account to pay for apprenticeship funding and assessment for apprentices employed by that employer or associated

our support free of charge to the point of contracting."

In response to our investigation, in its first bid to "limit the use of brokers", the SFA said last April that it would "review" funding agreements – but then it fell silent.

It wasn't until FE Week deputy editor Paul Offord's investigation went on to win the prestigious CIPR award for Outstanding Further and Vocational Education Journalism in November, that we heard anything new, after we pressed the SFA to explain what had officially been done to address the issue.

The agency eventually revealed it would be "strengthening" its rules so that government money could no longer be used to pay brokers' fees from May 1 this year. It also warned it would "take action" against any provider found breaking these rules.

The government's apprenticeship

funding agreements originally said: "Funds in an employer's digital account or government-employer co-investment cannot be used for specific services not related to the delivery and administration of the apprenticeship; including company induction, bespoke or additional training or assessment not needed to meet the apprenticeship requirements."

The promise of tougher stance was warmly welcomed by sector leaders in November, shortly after FE Week first learned the change was going ahead.

Mark Dawe, the boss of the AELP, said: "With the levy's arrival and the new subcontracting rules, no one should complain if brokerage fees become a thing of the past."

David Hughes, his counterpart at the AoC, agreed, saying it was "good to see them delivering" on the initial pledge the SFA had made to FE Week 10 months ago.

## Dear Dr Sue

Once a month, Dr Sue, Holesx's director of policy and external relations, answers your questions, backed by the experience of almost a decade as principal of Canterbury College, in addition to time served in senior civil service posts at central government departments covering education and skills.



## Q1: NEW PRINCIPAL

I AM A NEW PRINCIPAL WITH LITTLE EXPERIENCE OF GOVERNANCE. I HAVE READ THE CODE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE FOR ENGLISH COLLEGES AND TALKED TO THE CLERK; WHAT MORE DO I NEED TO DO TO FACILITATE A PRODUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP?

## Answer:

First you need to go into this with the right frame of mind, which you seem to have. Governors will rely on you to be their lead advisor as well as the accountable officer.

Second you need to put time into this side of the job. Good relationships are built on the ability to work openly and cooperatively with your governors from the beginning. Work with them on deciding what's important to them, what type of paperwork is needed and how you can help them make sense of data and college performance information.

It's a governor's role to challenge, so don't be defensive. Proactively pre-empt difficult questions by raising them yourself and assuring governors you have the right mitigating action in place. That way, they will gain confidence and can be supportive

of your actions. Don't spin because it will inevitably unwind, share the bad bits as well as the good.

Don't spin as it will inevitably unwind

And thirdly, go out and shadow other executives at their boards. See how others do it. It doesn't have to be a college – it could be a university, a large health authority or housing association. The main attributes of good board and executive relationships are the same whatever the sector.

## Q2: ALIENATING STAFF

I TOOK ON THE CHAIR'S ROLE OF A FAILING COLLEGE TWO YEARS AGO AND MY FIRST TASK WAS TO APPOINT A NEW PRINCIPAL. THE TRANSFORMATION HAS BEEN FIRST CLASS AND OUR INSPECTION REPORT WAS FULL OF PRAISE. HOWEVER, SENIOR STAFF ARE SHOWING SIGNS OF STRESS. I WOULDN'T SAY THE PRINCIPAL OFFENDS PEOPLE, BUT HE IS NOT MAKING FRIENDS OR ALLOWING STAFF TO EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS. HOW DO I TACKLE THIS?

## Answer:

Leadership and college ethos start with the governors. You brought in someone to turn round the college and they have done that.

It is not unusual when an organisation needs to be turned round quickly for a chief executive to take on an 'I know best' management style.

Having a centrally imposed framework and standards gives staff the clarity they need, especially after a period of uncertainty, but it only works for a short time.

It's now time to modify behaviour and get your principal to move from an instructional leadership to one of shared collaborative ownership where he offers as much praise as criticism and shares the success with others around him. If you don't do that the most able

staff will use this newfound success of the college as a springboard to move on.

Staff will use the success as a springboard to move on

One way for your principal to consider new leadership styles is to attend one of the thought leadership sessions run by the leadership foundations.

## EXPERTS



## LUCY HUNTE

Apprenticeship lead,  
Health Education England

# NHS will spend levy on bespoke training

The NHS will build strong partnerships with colleges and training providers, as long as they are honest about their capacity, says Lucy Hunte

With the imminent introduction of a public sector target which will require all public sector organisations to have 2.3 per cent of their workforce on apprenticeships, the NHS will have an estimated target of 28,000 apprenticeship starts in 2017/18 – a 75 per cent increase on 2016/17.

With such a rapid ramp-up, capacity and quality of delivery from training providers is a key concern.

The annual NHS levy spend will be £27 million across London and £200 million nationally. With this money effectively being taken away from frontline services there is a huge focus across all NHS trusts on planning to maximise levy spend and ensure funds do not expire.

Realistically trusts will not have the vacancies or budget for salaries to spend the levy solely on training new recruits, although this is a key focus, so a large percentage of funds will be used on training and upskilling existing employees.

Many hospitals already deliver elements of their apprenticeship programmes in partnership with chosen training providers, and have applied to the new register of apprenticeship training providers to formalise these arrangements on either the employer-provider route or the supporting route.

This is an attractive option for many trusts as they can be paid for their expertise, and funds that come back into the trusts via these partnerships will be incremental revenue.

Hospitals recognise that their expertise is in the clinical domain, and for non-clinical apprenticeships, most NHS trusts will continue to depend on partnerships with colleges and training providers. The focus will therefore be on building effective partnerships with training providers. Our priority is quality training and added value – we are not interested in a race to the bottom on price.

Due to some negative experiences in the past, the dedicated regional apprenticeship leads have started to share best practice around apprenticeship delivery between trusts. We are rating training providers based on factors such as success rates, FE Choices employer feedback scores, complaints and quality management and learner progress.

This data will be shared centrally with other NHS trusts to ensure quality provision, which means no hiding place for poor providers.

We are planning a pan-London procurement exercise in the coming months, to allocate contracts to a core bank of trusted providers.

Given the demand for a large volume and variety of required standards and frameworks, multiple partnerships will be required. Colleges and training providers will need to be realistic and honest about their capacity in order to avoid over-promising and under-delivering, resulting in being removed from the preferred suppliers list.

While many NHS trusts already deliver part of their apprenticeship programmes such as the Care Certificate, we are recommending that trusts now look to do this on a formal basis and get paid for this delivery.

For those looking at the employer-provider route, they will still be interested in partnerships with training providers who could support the MIS and administration functions as well as compliance and Ofsted requirements.

These partnerships would then enable trusts to deliver the parts of the apprenticeship programmes in which they have the expertise, but without the added pressure of becoming fully-fledged training providers.

## There will be no hiding place for poor quality providers

The beauty of many of the new apprenticeship standards is that they do not have a mandatory qualification. This gives trusts the flexibility to work with a training provider to match their existing training programmes to the standards – for example a trust's existing leadership and development programme might map across to the new L5 management standard.

Large public sector organisations face significant challenges in implementing the new legislation, including delayed government guidance and a lack of clarity around how honorary contracts will affect workforce count. Despite this, the overall picture looks very positive, and there are substantial opportunities for training providers if they can offer high-quality provision and bespoke training packages, and adapt to trusts' needs.



## GARRY PHILLIPS

CEO of Ealing, Hammersmith and  
West London College

# Reversing a deficit budget

Garry Phillips describes how his college pulled itself back from financial difficulty and an Ofsted 'inadequate' rating, following an intervention from the deputy FE commissioner

Ealing Hammersmith and West London's College has appeared in FE Week several times over the last few years – and not always for the best reasons.

The college found itself in financial difficulty in 2013, receiving a notice to improve for financial health, after suffering from a deficit budget for several years, which rose into the millions of pounds.

Moreover, the quality of outcomes for students were not up to standard; a fact that was highlighted by a grade four Ofsted inspection in 2015. That inspection sparked an intervention from the deputy FE commissioner, just when the area reviews also started. Oh, and should I mention the f-word (funding)?

It is safe to say that the college hit some rough seas, in a perfect storm of events that left one route: change had to happen.

The challenge was to make the transformation quickly and sustainably, so the most important stakeholders – the students – received positive outcomes.

It was around this time that I joined the college and, along with the board, I felt the best place to start was with a basic 'why, what and how' approach. The 'why', for any college, could only be about the students; the 'what' examined what we were good at as a college; and the 'how' considered how we could deliver on our overall reason for being – our commitment to students.

Once we had laid out the answers to these questions clearly, we knew what to change.

Firstly, we needed to save £20 million in costs, so we had to stop any financial bleeds. One example was late enrolments. As a college it was custom for us to accept over 750 late enrolments. Not as January starts or part of any NEEET intervention strategy – just for the numbers. I am sure readers will understand the impact of this on the group dynamics, learning and student outcomes, not to mention the issue of delayed funding on our bank balance. So this stopped.

We also rationalised our own internal duplicate provision. This meant removing underperforming provision and that which did not lead to further or higher education or employment – including some apprenticeships, as these additional courses did not correspond to 'why' we did this.

We also introduced a more robust student advice and guidance process to ensure that the right student is on the right course, at the right level, to enable them to achieve.

None of this was easy, and possibly the hardest part was having to reduce staff numbers. However, we refocused on CPD and a cultural change programme that we named the 'West London Way', which enabled staff to tell us what they needed to succeed – and we listened. As a result, we have some state-of-the-art technology, new facilities and the chance for staff to update their own skills.

## We had to stop any financial bleeds

Staff costs previously represented 83 per cent of our income. They are now at a more acceptable 63 per cent and we are predicting another year of financial surplus. Staff sickness has dropped from four per cent to 2.7 per cent and 89 per cent have told us they enjoy the work that they do, which is pretty good when you bear in mind the journey we have been on.

There are also ambitious plans to build new accommodation on one of our sites.

But all this means nothing if we are not having a positive impact on student outcomes. Signs there are more than encouraging. The interim visits from Ofsted have recognised the improvement in this area and the impact of the Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment is at 85 per cent good or better. In November Ofsted concluded that we had made 'significant progress' in the improvement of learner outcomes.

For the first time in several years, student outcomes are above the last known national rate at 85.4 per cent. English and maths achievement for functional skills is 17 per cent above the national average and the college overall attendance rate now stands at 89 per cent.

There is still a lot of work to do in building on the green shoots of our growing success, but we are managing change effectively and feel that we now have a learning organisation that students and staff are truly proud to be a part of.

## EXPERTS

**Compulsory under 19 education alone cannot address the UK's growing skills shortages; we must take the opportunity to work with government to develop a national lifelong learning strategy, says Ruth Spellman**

In an interview last week, skills and apprenticeships minister Robert Halfon reassured us that "lifelong learning is firmly back on the government's agenda".

The Secretary of State for Education had also recently set out in a speech earlier this month how standards can be improved still further by strengthening vocational education and expanding apprenticeships to create a world-class further education system.

But reform of the FE system is only one of the changes that are needed. If we are really to improve social mobility and address barriers to learning, we need a national lifelong-learning strategy that allows us to build pathways and opportunities for all adults, particularly those furthest from the labour market, who are educationally disadvantaged or who are in low-paid or unskilled work.

According to the Learning and Work Institute, the proportion of unemployed adults taking part in learning has decreased since 2014, falling from 41 per cent to the previous level of 35 per cent found in 2013. The AOC has highlighted a 35 per cent drop in adult skills funding between 2009/10 and 2015/16. And furthermore, there has been a



## RUTH SPELLMAN

Chief executive of the Workers' Educational Association

### It's time for a national adult learning strategy

catastrophic decline in adult participation in HE (a 40+ per cent drop since 2010).

Meanwhile the overwhelming focus of government policy and funding continues to be the under 19s.

## The overwhelming focus continues to be the under 19s

The recent Commons debate on adult education called by David Lammy voiced concerns we have been raising for some time

– concerns which were echoed by Sir Vince Cable's 2017 WEA annual lecture last month.

It has been encouraging to hear recent repeated statements from the prime minister and Justine Greening on the need for a shared society and greater social mobility and I believe that we now have a real opportunity to work with government to make this a reality.

To achieve these desired end points – our policies, strategies and delivery need to be aligned as follows:

1. We want the government to act on the five key recommendations of the APPG for adult education report:

- Establish a national strategy for adult education.
- Rebuild and rebalance resources fairly for adults.
- Provide careers information advice and guidance in local communities.
- Ensure that we have a systematic approach

to gathering evidence on the full impact of adult education.

- Encourage employers to provide educational opportunities for employees.
- 2. Deliver funding for those most in need, but who are not ready for a degree course or apprenticeship, and consider introducing an entitlement in English, maths and digital.
- 3. Raise standards in HE and FE and create plural pathways back into learning for all learners irrespective of age or current qualifications.

None of this is beyond our capability. In the academic year 2015/16, the WEA engaged over 60,000 students in England and Scotland – 23 per cent had no academic qualifications when they began their course, 42 per cent were claiming means-tested benefits and 38 per cent were living in a disadvantaged area.

Compulsory under-19 education alone cannot address the UK's growing skills shortages. It cannot anticipate the way in which technological advancements will require new skillsets. It doesn't tackle one of the major forces shaping our society today: an ageing population.

A national lifelong learning strategy could do these things and help future-proof our society and our economy. Over a lifetime, we will need to upskill and reskill. The government's industrial strategy green paper promises 'ambitious new approaches to encouraging lifelong learning' and we intend to contribute to it. We need more than an approach – we urgently need long-term commitment and a plan of action.



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# CAMPUS ROUND-UP *with Sam King*

## London's new basketball course is a slam dunk



Ballers: The college's 2016/17 elite squad

The College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London will become the first college in London to offer a course in basketball. The London-based college will launch its BTEC level three diploma in basketball from September this year, developing it in partnership with the London School of Basketball.

The new course will offer a basketball curriculum aimed at those interested in the sport both practically and theoretically, with topics including sport-specific coaching, physical education theory, sports psychology and physical application.

CONEL already runs a basketball academy

from its sports centre in Enfield with the LSB, and there are plans to integrate aspects of this with the new course.

In order to raise the profile of the academy – which recently appointed former Team GB coach Jay Williams as head coach – the college has launched a tournament for year 10 and 11 pupils at schools across Enfield, hoping to scout new players for the start of the next academic year.

Nhamo Shire, director of the London School of Basketball, said: "The performance of the academy so far this year has been remarkable. All the players have improved dramatically in a very short space of time."



From tiny acorns: The first of the 90th birthday trees planted 1920s style

## College plants a tree a month to mark 90th year

Derwen college is marking its 90th anniversary year by planting trees every month throughout 2017.

The first tree of the year – an *Acer davidii* George Forrest, commonly known as Snakebark Maple due to its patterned trunk – was planted on January 19 by the land-based studies team, who came up with the quirky idea to mark the milestone.

The specialist college, based in Shropshire, was founded in 1927 by Dame Agnes Hunt, so the team dressed in traditional 1920s attire as they planted the tree as a nod to the era.

It is hoped that the trees will eventually form an avenue that future students can

walk down, with a different group of students getting involved with the planting each month.

Peter Evans, programme manager for land based studies at the college said: "The idea is that we will plant a tree that represents that particular month, for example flowers, coloured leaves or bark – and the planting will form an avenue of trees.

"The students thought this would be just one way to continue the legacy of Dame Hunt into the future."

The college will be marking its 90th year with a series of events including a 1920s ball and a week of further celebrations in June – for its official birthday week.



The Cable guy: Sir Vince leads a discussion with students

## Dr Cable tied at student discussion

The former minister for business, innovation and skills, Sir Vince Cable, has paid a visit to Dudley College as part of a national research programme exploring how changes to the education system can impact upon learners.

Headed up by Dr Cable, the programme is being carried out on behalf of the National Union of Students (NUS) – for which Cable is an ambassador – and will look at how the introduction of the post-16 skills plan and other substantial changes to the curriculum affects students.

During his visit to the west Midlands-based college, he met with senior staff about how they're working to meet the needs of employers, and spoke with over 40 students

from across a range of course areas who shared their day-to-day experiences of further education.

Students shared their thoughts on what changes they wanted to see during a discussion with the former minister, proposing the idea of work experience A-level programmes, and more support for learners with mental health problems.

Commenting on Dr Cable's involvement in the project NUS vice-principal Shakira Martin said: "Dr Cable and I come from very different backgrounds and we usually speak to two very different audiences. I'm delighted that through his support for this work we can create one voice speaking about the future of further education."

## Students fight crime with poster campaign

Four students from Blackpool and The Fylde college have produced a poster campaign to help tackle violent crime in the area.

Angel Page, 17, Jonathan Woodhead, 31, Mitchell Gibson, 16 and Daniel Fraser, 31, who are art and design students at the college, have produced the posters in partnership with Blackpool council and Lancashire Constabulary.

The series of posters aim to remind people to stay safe – particularly when drinking – and have been placed in various locations around Blackpool, including licensed premises, the local hospital and around the college itself.

Cllr Gillian Campbell, deputy leader of Blackpool council, said: "Our research highlighted that 16- to 24-year-olds were more

susceptible to being victims or perpetrators of violent crime so we wanted to engage with people in that age group to come up with ideas which would raise awareness of the consequences."

Sue Crosbie, employability team manager at the college, said: "The students drove the project forward and came up with the designs themselves, which had to be hard-hitting to really drive the messages home.

"It was good for them to get the opportunity to get first-hand experience of a professional campaign, with an extremely important message attached to it."

There are plans to roll out more of the posters across Blackpool throughout the year.



Hard-hitting: Posters produced for the campaign

# West Nottinghamshire College flies the flag for diversity

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A Nottinghamshire college has been recognised by equality charity Stonewall as a top employer for promoting lesbian, gay, bi and trans diversity amongst its staff. **Samantha King reports**

This year, West Nottinghamshire college was voted as the 60th best employer on Stonewall's list of 100 LGBT-friendly organisations, rising 33 places from last year, where it placed 93rd.

The college, which is based in Mansfield, has climbed the top 100 list rapidly since it first took part in the charity's voluntary audit in 2015 and came 143rd.

Louise Knott, its vice-principal and chair of its equality and diversity steering group, said:

"As a college, equality and diversity is deeply embedded within our culture and ethos, and over the last three years we have really focussed on LGBT+ equality. Our result this year is a clear indication that the hard work has paid dividends.

"For many of our students, coming to college at the age of 16 serves as a bit of a watershed, where they feel they can start to be themselves. Many choose their transition



[L-R] Louise Knott, Alex Belcher, chair of student LGBT network, and Jane Hawksford, chair of staff LGBT group

Jacob Sabo-Dutton, a trans activist, speaks at the college 2016

to college to come out.

"Therefore providing a safe and welcoming space for them to do this is essential."

Now in its 13th year, Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index celebrates the efforts of employers to create inclusive workplaces, and is compiled through an annual audit of workplace culture.

There is also a confidential staff survey as part of the process, asking employees whether they were comfortable disclosing their sexual orientation at work, if they saw visible LGBT role models in the organisation, felt supported by their managers and were

confident in reporting homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying.

"We have invested a significant amount of time not only in terms of our support for students, but also in creating an environment where our staff feel comfortable being themselves and are role models to our student body," Knott added.

"We have found that our clear focus on LGBT+ equality has moved our organisational culture on significantly, and in fact has helped with many of our other equality and diversity strands. Our work will continue and we hope to move up the Top 100 ranking even further next year."

More than 430 employers from across the public, private and third sectors submitted their entries for consideration; the college was one of only two FE institutions that made it onto the list, with Newham college of Further Education in east London placing 72nd.

Duncan Bradshaw, Stonewall's director of membership programmes, said "West Nottinghamshire college and all those who have made this year's Top 100 Employers list have done a fantastic job, and really do put equality and inclusion at the forefront of their work.

"With continued efforts and hard work, we will continue to work towards a world where all lesbian, gay, bi and trans staff are welcomed and accepted without exception in their workplaces."

Stonewall was founded in 1989 by a group who campaigned against a piece of government legislation – Section 28 – preventing the 'promotion' of homosexuality in schools. It achieved charitable status in 2003 and has since helped in equalising the age of consent and allowing same-sex couples to adopt.

## DO YOU WANT TO BE IN CAMPUS ROUND-UP?

Send your stories with pictures to [campus@feweek.co.uk](mailto:campus@feweek.co.uk) including names, ages and course details of students where applicable

## & MOVERS SHAKERS

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

**Shirley Brookes-Mills** has been appointed the new academic head for two sites with the Newcastle and Stafford College Group.

NSCG is the result of a merger between Newcastle-under-Lyme college and Stafford college, which took place in November 2016. The group is now one of the largest educational providers in Staffordshire.

Ms Brookes-Mills has more than 26 years' experience in the further education sector, and was most recently vice-principal at Brighton Hove and Sussex Sixth Form College, which currently holds an Ofsted rating of outstanding.

She began her career as a trainee chartered accountant in 1986 before taking up her first teaching position in 1989 as a teacher of English and KS4 coordinator at Malet Lambert school in Hull.

Her appointment follows the college's recent announcement that A-levels will be returning to the campus in September 2017, alongside a launch of combined courses, both of which she will be responsible for

overseeing.

She said "This is an incredibly exciting time to come to the organisation and deliver a new vision across both sites. I'm looking forward to the launch of A-level and combined courses along with the new Science and Technology Centre at Stafford College whilst also building on NULC's high pass rates."

**Marie Gilluley** is now principal of

Kirklees college in Huddersfield.

Ms Gilluley brings 30 years of experience to the role, most recently as principal at Bolton college – a position she had held for the past five years.

As chair of the Greater Manchester Colleges Group she helped develop significant collaboration between the 10 FE colleges to improve curriculum quality.

Her first job in FE was as a lecturer in computer-aided engineering at Central Manchester college, something she says got her "hooked on FE and its power to change lives". Prior to this she had a brief stint as a plant engineer in County Durham, where she was responsible for training apprentices.

Ms Gilluley says it was Kirklees college's "responsibility for industrial liaison" that first attracted her to the role, adding:

"Employer engagement and responsiveness has been a theme throughout my career in FE and something I have always believed in."

Speaking of the challenges she will face in the role, she said: "There will be continued change in our sector and I believe I am someone that can quickly get their feet on the ground within the communities I serve. I'm able to work constructively alongside colleagues to build relationships and influence decision-makers."

Truro and Penwith college's sport lecturer, **Matt George** has been appointed goalkeeping coach for the English Schools' Football Association under-18s.

The association is the national governing body of school and college football, with previous ESFA players including Michael Owen, Wayne Rooney, Leon Osman, Ben Amos and Chris Smalling.

Mr George will take up the new role alongside his position at the college, where he teaches on the BTEC level three coaching, development and fitness course.

He hopes the appointment will inspire his students, saying: "Having worked towards and achieved my UEFA B licence and FA goalkeeping B license, to coach goalkeeping and training as a teacher, will mean students have a positive example of where success, commitment and dedication can take them."

Martin Tucker, the director of Penwith College said: "To have an international coach working with our sport students is an asset to their education and development."



SHIRLEY BROOKES-MILLS



MARIE GILLULEY



MATT GEORGE

If you want to let us know of any new faces at the top of your college, training provider or awarding organisation please let us know by emailing [news@feweek.co.uk](mailto:news@feweek.co.uk)

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## FE Week Sudoku challenge

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

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

**Difficulty:**  
**EASY**

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

**Difficulty:**  
**MEDIUM**

**Solutions:**  
Next edition

## Last Week's solutions

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

**Difficulty:**  
**EASY**

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

**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](mailto:news@feweek.co.uk).  
 Last Edition's winner: Cheryl Pountney, City College Coventry