

# FE Week

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**'WE'VE BEEN LEFT IN THE LURCH'**



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A failed loans-funded training provider left these two learners £16k in debt, alongside hundreds of others. FE Week now calls on the government to bail them out.

## ACHIEVEMENT RATE LOOPHOLE SLAMMED SHUT

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- DfE admits trick let some 'avoid falling below minimum standard'

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# No10 delaying changes to early-years apprenticeships rules

**ALIX ROBERTSON**  
**@ALIXROBERTSON4**

A government U-turn on GCSE requirements for early-years educator apprenticeships has the backing of the secretary of state for women, equalities and early years, but FE Week understands the final decision is being delayed by the Prime Minister's office.

Caroline Dinenege is understood to have pushed schools minister Nick Gibb to accept the case for a change in policy, but the decision, originally expected before Christmas, is still with Number 10.

Sector representatives want the current requirements – for candidates to have at least a C in GCSE maths and English – to be changed to allow functional skills qualifications to count as a valid alternative, as they do in all other apprenticeships.

A government consultation into the literacy and numeracy qualification requirements for level three early-years educators was launched on November 5, 2016.

However, the government has made no announcement on how it intends to react to the consultation, though FE Week now understands a decision is imminent.

In a speech in July, the then-childcare and education minister Sam Gyimah acknowledged widespread concern about the impact of the GCSE requirements on EYE teacher recruitment.

On November 8, 2016, Ms Dinenege

promised she would respond to the consultation as part of a wider workforce strategy, ideally by December, while speaking to delegates at trade magazine Nursery World's Business Summit in London.

According to Nursery World, she said: "It was the biggest issue that providers mentioned to me as I went around the country."

The consultation closing date was November 28, and Ms Dinenege said she was "pushing and pushing to get the workforce strategy out before Christmas".

Stella Ziolkowski, director of quality and workforce development at the National Day Nurseries Association, said: "Our response to the consultation was that the requirements should be broadened to include functional skills, so practitioners and apprentices could demonstrate they had working knowledge and experience in the relevant subjects to support young children in their early development of literacy and numeracy skills.

"At the moment, there is an ever-decreasing pool in which to fish for good quality candidates – the stringent GCSE requirements are reducing this further, with some vocational candidates unable to apply."

FE Week contacted the DfE to ask when the results of the consultation would be published, but a spokesperson could only say that the announcement would be made "in due course".

Enquiries to Ms Dinenege's office received no response.

## Employer contracts

A controversial new legal agreement that employers must sign with the Skills Funding Agency in order to run new apprenticeships has been unveiled this week.

It will allow the SFA to recover any apprenticeship levy money an employer has paid to a training provider from its digital account, if it is found to have failed to comply with funding rules, in a move that has caused much controversy in the sector.

FE expert Smita Jamdar writes about this in an expert piece on page 13.

## Apprenticeship provider register open

The Skills Funding Agency has failed to answer questions on its decision to reopen the register of apprenticeship training providers for new applicants and those previously unsuccessful.

An SFA spokesperson said on February 8 that this would happen "soon after the first planned publication, probably in March".

FE Week asked whether this was a panic measure to get more providers on board before the launch of the levy in May, and if the second tendering results might emerge before then, but received no response.

## Hull College

Hull College Group has repeatedly refused to publicly back its chief executive, after the FE commissioner Richard Atkins exposed its precarious finances.

A report out this week, which followed an inspection triggered by a Skills Funding Agency notice of concern, warned of ongoing financial problems as the college comes to terms with a "cumulative deficit of around £10 million" over four years.

The University and College Union called on chief executive officer Gary Warke to stand down.

# Employers blasted for ignoring apprenticeships they developed

**BILLY CAMDEN** @BILLYCAMDEN  
**PAUL OFFORD** @PAULOFFORD

Employers including the private healthcare giant Bupa have been criticised for not employing anyone on apprenticeships they developed, after FE Week found three dental standards which have had no learners in 18 months.

Analysis of latest government data shows that three apprenticeship standards – dental laboratory assistant, dental practice manager, and dental technician – were approved for delivery in March 2015.

They were designed and developed by 22 employers, including the dental wing of Bupa.

A spokesperson confirmed to FE Week that no apprentice had so far been taken on.

"We haven't taken on any as yet, as we don't have any relevant vacancies," she said.

"However we will certainly look into the opportunity of taking on dental practice manager apprentices in the future."

Asked what Bupa's reasons could have been for designing but not using the standards, she replied: "We took part because we wanted to help shape the programme, and share our expertise."

Dr Susan Pember, the former top skills civil servant and director at community learning services membership body Hoxex, criticised the employers who had developed the standards but hadn't taken a lead with recruitment.

"It is a shame that the employers did not follow through," she told FE Week. "The trailblazers were funded by the public purse and that money would have better spent on supporting students."

She said that the situation demonstrated the need for the Institute for Apprenticeships to have "robust" systems in place to "stop this happening in the future".

Mark Dawe, the boss of AELP, said it was "really good that FE Week are highlighting" the issue and pledged to make more providers aware that the standards exist.

Another provider involved with developing the standards, Integrated Dental Holdings, claimed its business focus had changed over the last 18 months on creating its own dental nurse apprenticeship scheme.

As such, it claimed it had been forced neglect the standards identified by FE Week.

Similarly, Oasis Dental Care said that even though it had contributed to the dental practice manager standard, they hadn't taken on any apprentices because their focus has since been on the delivery of its own

"practice manager academy".

Kings College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust said it was still "committed to providing the best training opportunities for the next generation of dental professionals".

"In November 2016, the trust applied to join the register of apprenticeship training providers as an employer provider, so that we can continue to employ and train apprentices at King's," said a spokesperson.

The Department for Education has changed the rules to require commitment from employers on Trailblazer groups that they will use the standard with their employers.

A spokesperson said: "We now require all groups of employers bidding to develop a standard to commit themselves to using it."

Government guidance also states: "We expect each trailblazer employer to commit individually to taking on a particular number of starts, and once a trailblazer has standards ready for delivery, we will expect you to work with other employers and stakeholders to promote their use."

The DfE would not directly state its views on the lack of trailblazer employer recruitment of apprentices on the standards.

"We continue to work with employers to increase take up of apprenticeships," was all the spokesperson would say.

## NEWS

# Employers in three sectors to grade their own apprentices

JUDE BURKE  
@JUDEBURKE77

EXCLUSIVE

Employers in the retail, hospitality and travel sectors are actively preparing to exploit a loophole that will allow them to grade their own apprentices, FE Week can exclusively reveal.

Our findings have caused serious concerns that the independence of end-point assessments is being seriously compromised.

The rules, which will be upheld by the new Institute for Apprenticeships from April, normally dictate that assessments must be carried out by an independent assessor to ensure impartiality.

But an exception was granted to these three sectors in 2015 by the former skills minister Nick Boles, which FE Week understands happened against the will of civil servants.

The Department for Education told FE Week that despite the exception employers would still need to register with the Skills Funding Agency as apprenticeship assessment organisations.

However organisations are investigating a potential loophole that might save them from even applying to become an AAO.

Innovate Awarding, a registered AAO

in the retail and hospitality sectors, confirmed to FE Week that it was exploring this model, “with customers where we can ensure there is no conflict of interest and the independence of the assessor can be evidenced”.

“Effectively, we would be contracting with the individual, with the employer’s consent, to carry out this work,” it added. “This will only be considered, of course, where the external quality assurer allows this flexibility.”

Speaking during a webinar earlier this month, the IfA’s shadow chief executive Peter Lauener appeared to be unaware of the loophole.

Asked about employers using their own staff to carry out end-point assessments, he said: “I think you can see some circumstances where there’s such niche provision that there were comparatively few experts”, adding: “I don’t think I’ve seen any arrangements like that so far”.

The AELP boss Mark Dawe, an assessment expert and former boss at OCR, urged the IfA to treat all sectors the same.

“The IfA needs to be crystal clear as to what a conflict between the employer, provider, AAO and their respective staff [looks like], and what safeguards are expected. Whatever that approach, it should be applied in the same way to everyone

involved.

“In this case the AAO has the responsibility to demonstrate its independence as well as the employee’s, being free from any undue employer influence”, he said.

According to the DfE, ministerial exception was granted to the three sectors following requests from the industry, and came after careful consideration.

People 1st, the body



Peter Lauener

chosen by employers to manage the external quality assurance confirmed that to date no employers in these sectors have registered as an AAO.

Instead, companies are understood to be looking at arrangements that would see members of an employer’s staff taken on by the AAO on a consultancy basis, as described by Innovate Awarding.

The AAO is then responsible for training that member of staff, ensuring the independence of the end-point assessment and quality assurance, but not the actual delivery.

One major employer understood to be exploring this arrangement is McDonalds, which was involved in the development of the retail standards.

However, a spokesperson for the fast food giant said end-point assessment of its apprentices would be carried out by Innovate Awarding, rather than its own staff.

She said: “Our independent end-point assessors are independent to the training programme we deliver and also external to the business.”

A spokesperson for Ofqual said that those AAOs which it also assures externally must do “everything possible to ensure that no one with a personal interest is assessing an apprentice”.

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## NEWS

# Majority of ESF funding and contracts go to ITPs

**ALIX ROBERTSON**  
@ALIXROBERTSON4

**FROM FRONT**

Learndirect has come out on top in the race to win European Social Fund contracts, securing 26 deals worth almost £49.5 million, FE Week analysis has shown.

Calderdale College was the second biggest winner, with 13 contracts worth just over £35 million, followed by Serco with 15 contracts valued at £31.6 million.

Overall, 85 organisations won 285 ESF contracts with a total value of just over £446 million, according to statistics released this week by the Skills Funding Agency on gov.uk.

Independent training providers scooped a large majority of the contracts, securing 200 out of 285, which made up a total of £305.6 million, or 68 per cent, of the available funding.

This was split between 45 ITPs, who together constituted 53 per cent of all the bodies that won contracts.

After ITPs, FE Week analysis revealed 29 colleges held a quarter (70) of the ESF contracts, valued at just over £127 million.

Local authorities took a significantly smaller amount from the pot, with eight LAs securing just 10 contracts (four per cent of

Provider	Contract value	Contracts
LEARNDIRECT LIMITED	£49,486,158	26
CALDERDALE COLLEGE	£35,068,107	13
SERCO LIMITED	£31,563,933	15
ESG (SKILLS) LIMITED	£24,100,553	16
SEETEC BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY CENTRE LIMITED	£21,871,129	10

Providers			Contract value			Contracts
Independent Training providers	45	53%	£305,567,594	68%	200	70%
Colleges	29	34%	£127,133,770	28%	70	25%
Local authorities	8	9%	£9,138,515	2%	10	4%
Other (incl. HEI & SDI)	3	4%	£4,466,300	1%	5	2%

the total), valued at £9.1 million.

The remaining one per cent of the money, £4.5 million, went to other bodies, including higher education institutions.

Following Learndirect, Calderdale College and Serco in the top five in terms of total contract size were ESG (Skills), with £24.1 million across 16 contracts, and Seetec Business Technology Centre with 10 contracts worth £21.9 million.

The largest single contract went to Economic Solutions Limited in Greater

Manchester, with a contract worth £11.5 million for “active inclusion”.

Next was PriceWaterhouse Coopers with a £10.6 million contract in the Sheffield City Region for “enhancing equal access to lifelong learning, upgrading the skills and competences of the workforce and increasing the labour market relevance of education and training systems”.

Then Calderdale College in the Black Country LEP came in third with a contract valued at just under £10 million for the same

purposes as PwC.

Learndirect, which has previously made FE Week headlines for the size of its subcontracting management fees, secured a £7.5 million contract under the Lancashire LEP, while Advanced Personnel Management Group was granted £6.5 million in the Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire LEP for “sustainable integration of young people not in employment, education or training in the labour market”.

The first areas involved in the initial round of invitations to tender for 2014-to-2020 ESF contracts were announced in December 2015.

The invitations were long awaited, as the previous 2007-to-2013 ESF contracts had closed on July 31, with none going out to tender through the SFA in between.

Then, later that month, the second wave of invitations to tender for ESF cash was published, totalling £16.2 million. The third round of invitations came out in January of this year.

In this round, one contract was been tendered for each of the first five LEPs, while a total of 28 were issued for London, worth around £30.2 million.

The other five LEP area contracts were collectively worth £7.9 million, making the third round of invitations worth more than £38 million in total.

## Colleges stand by subcontractor despite insolvency arrangement

**ALIX ROBERTSON** @ALIXROBERTSON4  
**JUDE BURKE** @JUDEBURKE77

Three colleges have insisted they will stand by a multimillion-pound subcontractor, even though it recently entered insolvency arrangements.

JTJ Workplace Solutions Limited owes more than £500,000 to HM Revenue and Customs, and £246,000 to Pearson, according to the reports published by Companies House last December.

The total amount due to the company's 12 creditors is £938,366, and a corporate voluntary arrangement has shored up its finances for the time being, with structured repayment arrangements in place.

FE Week approached 10 colleges with a total of £6.4 million of subcontracted provision between, as of January this year, to ask if they planned to continue with the arrangements in view of JTJ's financial problems.

The three that confirmed they are still subcontracting with JTJ, told FE Week they had no intention of cancelling the arrangement.

Gateshead College, with a contract worth around £2.5 million, West Nottinghamshire College, with £810,000, and the Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education, with £345,000, have each confirmed they were aware of the situation but would continue with JTJ.

Adam Hayes, one of the company's directors, told FE Week that JTJ was fine to

continue with the provision.

He said that JTJ is still trading with “most of the creditors in the CVA (100 per cent of creditors supported the CVA)”, that it expects “to deliver over 4,000 apprenticeships over the next 12 months” and that it is “enrolling more learners”.

“We've renegotiated commercial terms. That improves the working capital equation which allows us to deliver more apprenticeships for our college partners,” he said.

The Department for Education told FE Week that it was difficult for it to comment on this case, because JTJ worked as a subcontractor for the colleges, not the government.

However, a spokesperson added that the DfE was aware of the situation and monitoring it.

West Nottinghamshire College confirmed it had 368 apprentices with JTJ Workplace Solutions.

Of these learners, 282 are apprentices still currently on-programme.

The remaining 86, who have completed their learning and are awaiting certification, include apprentices, trainees, and classroom based learners.

Lesley Roberts, vice-principal for employer engagement and business development at the college, said: “We are aware that JTJ has entered a CVA, which allows it to continue to legally operate.

“The college is monitoring the situation closely and has put additional, precautionary

measures in place, as any responsible contractor would do.”

A spokesperson for the Grimsby Institute said: “We are aware that JTJ has a CVA in place and we will continue to work closely with them while monitoring the situation.”

Similarly, a Gateshead College spokesperson said the college was aware of the CVA and was monitoring the situation, but had no plans to terminate.

Garry Phillips, chief executive officer of Ealing, Hammersmith and West London's College, added: “We've received no information that would suggest any learner's apprenticeship at our college will be affected”.

A spokesperson for North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College said: “We don't currently have any learners with JTJ Workplace Solutions.”

She added: “We have had no more enrolments so there are no implications for any on learners.

“We have regular reviews of our subcontracting arrangements with third parties and JTJ will be part of this review process.”

A spokesperson for the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London said: “Our last students completed their programmes with them in October 2016.

“There are no plans for further subcontracting to JTJ in the 2016/17 academic year and none of our students are affected by current issues within the provider.”

Barnet and Southgate College, Bromley College, Central College Nottingham and the WKIC Group were unable to comment by the time of going to press.

College	Self-Declared subcontracting value with JTJ Workplace Solutions
BARNET & SOUTHGATE COLLEGE	£500,000.00
BROMLEY COLLEGE OF FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION	£535,913.00
CENTRAL COLLEGE NOTTINGHAM	£300,000.00
COLLEGE OF HARINGEY, ENFIELD AND NORTH-EAST LONDON, THE	£400,000.00
EALING, HAMMERSMITH & WEST LONDON COLLEGE	£593,438.00
GATESHEAD COLLEGE	£2,515,151.00
GRIMSBY INSTITUTE OF FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION	£345,000.00
NORTH WARWICKSHIRE AND SOUTH LEICESTERSHIRE COLLEGE	£250,000.00
WEST NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COLLEGE	£810,107.00
WKIC GROUP	£126,433.00

## NEWS

## Learners plead with government to end loan misery after courses cancelled

PAUL OFFORD @PAULOFFORD  
BILLY CAMDEN @BILLYCAMDEN

FROM FRONT

**D**istressed learners left in the lurch when their training provider mysteriously went bust have pleaded with the government to write off thousands in student loan debts.

FE Week revealed last month that the Skills Funding Agency is investigating the murky demise of John Frank Training.

The provider went into liquidation on November 30, leaving no assets, despite recording a profit of £1.3 million in the first half of 2016.

The collapse meant that hundreds of

students who had taken out FE loans to train with the London-based provider, which has outlets in the north and midlands, were left with debts but no course.

However, the SFA is refusing to let them off the loans.

The story was picked up by BBC Radio 4's 'You and Yours' programme on February 16.

FE Week editor Nick Linford told the programme that he believed the government should write the debts off under the circumstances.

Two former JFT students have now spoken to FE Week about their combined debts of £16,000.

One of these, Asim Shaheen, 49, who works nights as a chef, started on a level three

hospitality and catering course in autumn 2015, funded by a loan for over £8,000.

The Stoke resident had only completed 50 per cent of the training when JFT went under.

Mr Shaheen first complained to the SFA before Christmas, but was referred to the Student Loans Company and then back to agency.

"No-one was taking responsibility and I was passed from pillar to post," he said. "I just want someone to help me and the many other students affected."

He recently got a call from the SFA, saying they could send him to South Cheshire College to complete his training.

But this just isn't a viable option, due to extra travel time and costs, because it is 25 miles from where he lives.

"My loan should be squashed and I would be prepared to go before a judge to challenge it," he told FE Week. "I would like to have it out with a government minister too, if they would let me. I've been left completely in the lurch."

Mussarrat Bashir, 53, meanwhile started on a level three hospitality course with JFT early last year, which was paid for by an £8,000 loan.

She had been studying while holding down a full-time job as a training and employment coach for the YMCA.

"I was very disappointed, very shocked when JFT disappeared," she told FE Week. "I am a single parent and really thought this would be something that could help me better myself."

"They [the SFA] told me there's nothing they could do about my loan, but somebody needs to take responsibility."

The Student Loans Company declined to comment on the matter this week, while the SFA said it had "nothing to add".

JFT 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, up to another £464,000 of SFA funding is thought to be effectively missing, which FE Week understands should have covered another 500 learners' loans, who are yet to complete their training.

FE Week has made repeated attempts to contact company boss John Frank without success.

A South Cheshire College spokesperson confirmed it had been contacted by the SFA, about taking on affected learners, but "there has been no further communication".



Mussarrat Bashir and Asim Shaheen

# SAVE OUR ADULT EDUCATION

**FE Week is keen to ensure the government reverses the decline in adult education and lifelong learning**

Our **#saveouradulthoodeducation** campaign calls on the government to make three commitments

**1.** Introduce FE maintenance grant loans for adult learners (same thing HE already has)

**2.** Write-off advanced learning loan debt where the adult learner is unable to complete their course owing to the training provider going bust

**3.** Consult on an adult education strategy, to avoid it disappearing completely under the political weight of apprenticeships and devolution

We are launching our campaign at an invite-only debate on the February 27 in the Houses of Parliament

**Debate panellists:**

**Robert Halfon MP**  
**David Lammy MP**  
**Nick Linford**  
**Gordon Marsden MP**  
**Sue Pember**  
**Ruth Spellman**

## NEWS

# Red-faced Lincoln College explains why it was on minimum wage list

ALIX ROBERTSON  
@ALIXROBERTSON4

A college group has defended itself after it appeared in the government's largest ever list of national minimum and living wage offenders.

Lincoln College Corporate Support Solutions Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of the larger group, "failed to pay £526.51 to one worker", according to the list unveiled by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on February 15.

In total the list named 360 businesses which had failed to pay staff the national minimum wage, with employers in the hairdressing, hospitality and retail sectors the most prolific offenders.

Lincoln was the only college group identified in the list, through its connections with LCCSS.

But its head of communications James Newall told FE Week that its appearance in the list had been down to "an isolated error that occurred, with one out of a total of around 400 corporate support solutions staff", and explained that the college actually pays the Living Wage Foundation Living Wage, "which at £8.45 per hour, is substantially higher than the National Living Wage currently set at £7.20 per hour".

He said: "The error occurred when the employee left the college and received a salary deduction in relation to a course they had completed.

"The deduction technically took them below the minimum wage for that month. Once identified this was immediately rectified."

Mr Newall added: "The employee was paid the money to ensure our technical compliance and then returned it to us to cover the cost of the course.

"This has never happened before and we are confident will never happen again."

The Living Wage Foundation is a campaigning organisation set up in 2011 to persuade employers to pay the Living Wage – an independently-calculated recommended minimum wage to cover workers' basic needs, that's significantly higher than the government's so-called National Living Wage.

Lincoln College Corporate Support Solutions provides "business support service activities" and was incorporated in July 2011, according to Companies House.

The company's latest full accounts, made up to July 31, 2016, showed Lincoln College Commercial Holding Limited as the "immediate parent company which owns 100 per cent of the issued share capital".

The 360 employers who were identified



underpaid 15,520 workers a total of £995,233, in cases closed since August 2016.

Excuses for underpaying workers including using tips to top-up pay, docking workers' wages to pay for their Christmas party, and making staff pay for their own uniforms out of their salary.

As well as recovering arrears for some of the UK's lowest paid workers, HMRC also issued penalties worth around £800,000.

Business minister Margot James said: "Every worker in the UK is entitled to at least the national minimum or living wage and this government will ensure they get it.

"That is why we have named and shamed more than 350 employers who failed to pay the legal minimum, sending the clear

message to employers that minimum wage abuses will not go unpunished."

Chancellor Philip Hammond announced in November that the national minimum wage for apprentices would rise from £3.40 per hour to £3.50 – a bigger increase than rates for most other groups – following the autumn statement.

It amounted to a 10p increase in the minimum wage for apprentices, and was higher than most other minimum wage rate increases.

For 18- to 20-year-olds, the increase went from £5.55 per hour to £5.60, while for 16- to 17-year-olds it went up from £4.00 per hour to £4.05. For 21- to 24-year-olds, it increased from £6.95 per hour to £7.05.

# SFA close 'loophole' that boosted apprenticeship achievement rates

ALIX ROBERTSON  
@ALIXROBERTSON4

FROM FRONT

The Department for Education has admitted there is a loophole in the way the Skills Funding Agency calculates qualification achievements, which until now "artificially" boosted the rate for around 10 per cent of providers.

In some cases, providers benefited by more than 20 QAR percentage points, according to a DfE report.

The SFA's analysis found that "approximately 10 per cent of apprenticeship providers received "an artificially high QAR rate for apprenticeships" due to "three loopholes in the methodology".

Some gained "a significant advantage of more than 20 per cent in their overall QAR", while other providers "were able to avoid falling below the minimum standard threshold which was 55 per cent at the time".

Figures published on February 16 in the updated January Statistical First Release (SFR) show the 2014/15 achievement rate was

71.1 per cent before closing the loopholes, and that it fell 4.7 percentage points, to 67 per cent, once recalculated.

The fall was most prominent for 25+ level three apprentices, resulting in a 7.6 percentage point fall.

The QAR is an important performance measure, as it is used by Ofsted, while the SFA can prevent providers from delivering courses that fall below its thresholds, called 'minimum standards'.

On page 17 of the SFR document, the DfE describes one of three loopholes it has now

closed as "inappropriate use of the planned-break exclusion rule", and admits that "some providers reported nearly all withdrawals as planned breaks and therefore received a significantly higher QAR".

The loopholes relate to the way the SFA compares learner records in several annual data returns from providers.

Where learners disappear or do not have a completion status, they will now be included in the calculation and count as a 'fail'.

The minimum standard threshold for apprenticeships rose for performance in 2015/16 to 62 per cent, which is now above the higher-level apprenticeship average of 58.6 per cent.

Steve Hewitt, a funding consultant for FE Associates, blamed the loopholes on changing methodologies.

"I think in general it's a good thing," he said, "because if there were organisations that were playing the game to exclude these learners, if there were organisations who were trying to fiddle their data, this is a loophole that has now been closed and that's good because we all want data to be as accurate as it can be."

The overall achievement rate for apprenticeships in 2015/16 now stands at 67 per cent, meaning just two out of three starts counting towards the government's three million target are successfully completing the course.

The DfE document claims the "impact is less pronounced" on non-apprenticeship provision.

## Achievement Rates by Level

Level	Age	With 'loop-holes'	Without 'loop-holes'	% point shift
		2014/15	2014/15	2014/15
Intermediate Level Apprenticeship	Under 19	71.0%	68.5%	-2.5%
	19-24	70.7%	66.6%	-4.1%
	25+	70.8%	65.7%	-5.1%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>70.8%</b>	<b>66.8%</b>	<b>-4.0%</b>
Advanced Level Apprenticeship	Under 19	77.3%	74.1%	-3.2%
	19-24	76.3%	71.2%	-5.1%
	25+	68.9%	61.3%	-7.6%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>73.5%</b>	<b>67.6%</b>	<b>-5.9%</b>
Higher Apprenticeship	Under 19	71.3%	67.5%	-3.8%
	19-24	61.9%	58.3%	-3.6%
	25+	64.7%	58.0%	-6.7%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>64.3%</b>	<b>58.7%</b>	<b>-5.6%</b>
All Apprenticeships	Under 19	72.9%	70.2%	-2.7%
	19-24	72.7%	68.3%	-4.4%
	25+	69.9%	63.8%	-6.1%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>71.7%</b>	<b>67.0%</b>	<b>-4.7%</b>

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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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## PROFILE

Introducing

## EMILY HICKS

*2016 Festival of Learning Patron's Award winner*JUDE BURKE  
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As entries open for this year's Festival of Learning awards, we hear from the winner of the 2016 Patron's Award, Emily Hicks, on how she came to be nominated.

As a primary carer for her bipolar mum since the age of 11, and struggling with confidence-sapping dyslexia, Emily Hicks was not set fair for an easy path through her education.

But while she feels her secondary school essentially saw her as an also-ran, her experience of York College would be totally different.

Since she left school at 16 with just three GCSEs, the 27-year-old has since managed to gain a degree and a job in her dream career.

"Everything's been worthwhile," she says, yet "if you'd asked me when I was 16 about university, I probably would've just laughed. It was never an option."

Emily was in the final year of Hob Moor Primary School in York when her mum Sue's bipolar disorder became so severe that she needed extra help at home.

With her parents separated – although a step-dad, Andy, later came on the scene – and just one younger sister, Beth, it fell to Emily to shoulder much of the responsibility of looking after her mum.

It was a lot for a "frustrated, upset little girl" to take on at such a young age, especially as she didn't understand what bipolar was.

Because of the variable way in which bipolar disorder presents – oscillating between highs and lows – the support Emily needed to give her mum also varied.

During the lows, Emily could find herself giving "emotional support, prompts, reminders of things she needed to do" along with more practical help such as shopping and cooking meals.

At other times, Emily would have to cope with her mum "not sleeping, causing disturbance at night because she was putting music on". Inevitably the stress spilled over into her behaviour at school.

She became disruptive in lessons, "not listening, not being very well-behaved; being very tired" and failing to hand in homework or perform well academically.

On top of this, Emily had been diagnosed with dyslexia at the age of seven, which affected her ability to read and write.

When it came to her GCSEs, her secondary, Lowfield School, put her in for only three subjects – because, she says, the school didn't want her to bring down its overall results.

She says: "Looking back now as an adult, I think it's shocking, but back then they just didn't put me in for it, because they knew I was going to fail."

With her schoolwork taking up only two and a half days a week, she spent the rest of her time on a work placement at a local childcare centre.

The experience led Emily to want a career in childcare,

and after her GCSEs, she moved on to York College to take level one and two qualifications in her chosen subject.

The college was more supportive of her situation than her school, although she still struggled at times. One incident springs to mind, in which stress and lack of sleep led her to overreact to a rude comment from a classmate.

"I flipped," Emily says. "I flung a chair, and really went quite mad. I got into serious trouble for that."

Despite the seriousness of the incident, she was allowed to stay on at the college, on the condition that she attend counselling once a week.

After finishing at college, Emily's next step was a level three childcare apprenticeship, working at a local children's nursery.

But a desire to earn more and to push herself further led her to return to York College in 2010, for an access diploma in social care and guidance.

While studying full-time for the diploma, Emily was still taking care of her mum – yet she also managed to find time to volunteer at York Carers' Centre.

She helped run sessions for young carers at the centre, which she describes as "a glorified youth club" for young people to get together for support and to have fun.

Her decision to volunteer at the carers' centre was the result of a placement during her diploma, although she herself had received support when she was younger.

"They gave a lot to me when I was a child, so I felt like I needed to give something back," she says.

Then in 2011, she was accepted to a degree course in social work at Manchester Metropolitan University – a moment she describes as "one of highlights of my life".

That she was able to go to university was due in no small part to her step-dad Andy, who gave up his job to take care of Sue.

While at university she received one-to-one support for her dyslexia – one hour every week, which helped her make progress in areas she struggled with.

Her support worker "went back to the basics of what really should've happened at school" – such as learning how to use commas and full-stops.

It was also during her time at university that Emily was forced to confront some of the confidence issues relating to her dyslexia that she'd struggled with all her life.

During her work placement, for example, she was asked to send text messages on behalf of the carers' centre.

"I was worried I wasn't going to spell it right and I was really, really nervous – I felt physically sick. But I did it," she says.

So when the replies started to come back and "nothing seemed wrong", it boosted her confidence.

While completing her studies in Manchester, her mum's health took a turn for the worse – which forced her to commute from York in her final year, rather than live near the university.

Her determination, commitment and desire to learn helped her through what she describes as "a nightmare" final year, and in 2014 she achieved her goal of graduating



Emily with her gran Margaret



(L-R) sister Beth, step-dad Andy, mum Sue, gran Margaret and Emily

with a 2.1.

It was around the time Emily started university that she first made contact with NIACE, the Learning and Work Institute's predecessor organisation, after one of her tutors on the diploma course at York College nominated her for a Festival of Learning award.

Although she didn't win on that occasion, it began a relationship with the institute that she says has "built my confidence up so much".

As well as enabling her to speak about her experiences in front of politicians – and even Princess Anne, the LWI's royal patron – she also received valuable career support, such as checking job applications before she sends them.

"A stupid spelling mistake just makes you look lazy, if they don't know you're dyslexic," she says.

It was thanks to this help that, in April 2016, she was able to secure her current job as activities coordinator at the York Carers' Centre.

And in September she was recognised by the Festival of Learning.

The recipient of the Patron's Award – given each year to someone who has made a particularly special commitment to learning – is chosen by Princess Anne from a shortlist of award nominees.

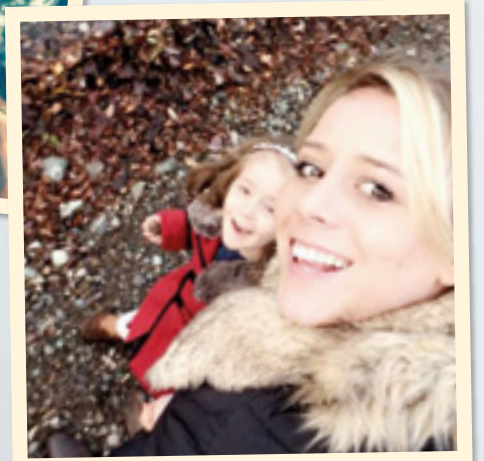
Receiving the award was "the best thing that's ever happened to me", Emily says.

"It shows me that the tears, and the confusion and the upset – everything's been worthwhile. I've proved a point to myself."





Emily [R] with her mum Sue



Emily with her niece Olivia Grace



One of the last pictures of Emily with her step dad Andy before he passed away last October

## It's a personal thing

### What music do you like to listen to?

Music would definitely be Coldplay. I absolutely love them. My favourite song is Yellow, but I love them all. I went to see Coldplay last year, at Wembley stadium, and it was fantastic.

### Who do you most admire, living or dead, and why?

I think it's probably my mum. Even though she's gone through a lot, she still gets up and smiles. She's not really had the best life, but she still gets on with it. The main reason I'm so passionate about everything is because of my mum.

### Who do you turn to in times of crisis?

My sister, or my best friend Danielle. She gives me advice on absolutely everything – although I probably use both of them just as much. It could be minimal things from, I

don't know what to wear tonight or should I dye my hair? Or it could be massive things like, I'm really feeling quite stressed at work and I'm upset and what should I do about it. And if I'm upset about mum, just having a chat about that.

### What are your three most treasured possessions and why?

My car – not that it's a decent one, it just gets me from A to B and it gives me independence. My hair straighteners. And a photo of my granddad and my step dad Andy, as they've both passed away.

### Is life a comedy or tragedy?

Comedy. Because if you think it's a tragedy then...I think you have to laugh at even the most awful things. I think with my life it would be hard if I did think it was a tragedy, I would just be seriously down. You've just got to make light of a bad situation.

## What are the Festival of Learning Awards?

The Festival of Learning Awards, run by the Learning and Work Institute, are designed to showcase the wide-ranging impact that learning has on individuals, families, communities and employers.

They form a central part of the Festival of Learning, formerly known as Adult Learners' Week, which aims to celebrate and engage more adults in learning.

Nominations can be in one of four categories: individual, tutor, employer, and project/provision.

The judges are looking for individuals who've transformed their lives through learning, tutors whose dedication and passion has helped their adult learners change their lives for the better, employers that have used learning to develop the skills of their workforce, and projects that have had a positive impact on communities.

Award winners are chosen from across the nominated categories and include Young Adult Learner, Learning for Work, Social Impact, Outstanding Individual, Patron's and President's awards.

The deadline for submitting nominations to the 2017 awards is March 31, with the winners presented with their awards at a ceremony in London in September.

## EDITORIAL

## Debt on the bottom rung



Learner need not be left to pay for a ladder they could not climb.

The government needs to take responsibility for the fact that hundreds of adults, through no fault of their own, are being left with debts for cancelled courses.

The honourable thing for ministers would be to acknowledge and fix the financial assurance failings on the part of the Skills Funding Agency, and to write off the debt.

There is a precedent here, given advanced learning loans are written off for Access to HE learners that go on to graduate from university.

Clearly if the SFA can help the learner find an alternative provider then that may be a suitable solution.

But learners we've spoken to say the help has been patchy, and there are clearly circumstances when an alternative provider is impractical.

That's why as part of our #SaveOurAdultEducation campaign we will call on the government to end this type of learner debt.

So if Robert Halfon is serious about his 'ladder of opportunity' he must make sure people are not stranded at the bottom paying for it.

**Nick Linford, editor**  
news@feweek.co.uk

## NEW CONTRACTS BETWEEN SFA AND EMPLOYERS TWEETS:

**GrahamNOCN @GrahamNOCN1**

This starts to put controls in but it appears weak to control EPA and achieve completion rates

**Iain Mackinnon @IainAMackinnon**

Employers are losing the safeguard they have now of working through a provider which understands Govt funding

**Dan Shelley @shellster\_dan**

Maybe all part of the tax to save (on skills budget) plan? Can see lawyers making top £ on advice to both employers & providers

**Marches SPN @marches\_skills**

Likely to cause more confusion and employer back off?

**AlderTraining @AlderTraining**

It all seems a bit 'seat of the pants' type stuff. New revelations coming to light weeks before launch. Not great.



## Government wants £140k-a-year director to oversee area reviews

**BILLY CAMDEN**  
@BILLYCAMDEN

The government is on the hunt for a permanent director to run its transaction unit following the area reviews process – a job which comes with a £140,000 salary comparable to that earned by FE's busiest civil servant, Peter Lauener.

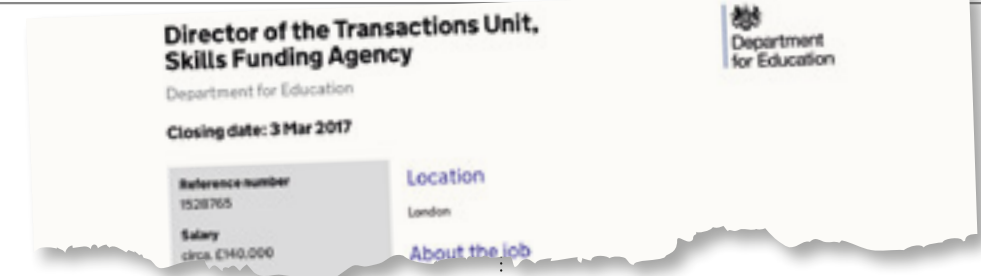
An advert for the role was recently posted by the Department for Education, with a closing date of March 3, and interviews scheduled for later that month.

The director will be responsible for "developing investment proposals to restructure" the FE sector, following the area reviews process.

This would be using the government's £720 million restructuring facility to form "more financially resilient institutions and maximise the return of investment to the taxpayer".

The role's advertised salary means the successful applicant would be paid around the same amount that Mr Lauener receives as head of the Skills and Education Funding Agencies, and as shadow chief executive of the Institute for Apprenticeships, according to the DfE's latest consolidated annual report and accounts published last April.

The current head of the transaction unit is Matthew Atkinson, who is on secondment from the audit firm PricewaterhouseCoopers,



which provides financial services to 26 colleges, according to 2014/15 accounts published by the SFA.

But concern has been raised that there could a conflict-of-interest issue if Mr Atkinson is appointed on a permanent basis and leaves his role at PwC, as his old firm would then be able to pick up work through the transition grants process.

The SFA declined to comment on whether PwC might be officially prevented from taking on work under the grants to avoid such a situation.

However, a spokesperson did say that "a permanent commercial specialist in this role will provide the high level of skills needed by the SFA both now and in the future".

They continued: "The salary is comparable with similar posts in the sector and will ensure that the department can continue to deliver the best value for money."

The DfE's quest for a permanent director will come as a surprise to many in the sector, given that the transaction unit is only due to run for a limited time while colleges put

in place any recommendations from their particular review.

The last of these is expected to be wrapped up next month, with full restructuring to be completed by April 2019.

The job listing says applicants must have the ability to work well with various businesses, as they will have to secure support for area review proposals from "institutions, local partners, banks, an external advisory panel, DfE ministers and Treasury".

It added that candidates must also have a "big picture" strategic insight, with the ability to "move from government policy to the local perspective drawn from area reviews and appraising the financial viability of proposals".

The transaction unit's key responsibility is to administer £12 million in transition grants, which colleges can use specifically to bring in the consultants they need to put in place any changes, alongside the restructuring facility.

These government grants are worth either £50,000 or £100,000 and will be used for mergers and academy conversion, for example.

## COMMENTS

### Online apprenticeship service registration opens

This is a mess waiting to happen. It will not increase 'real' apprenticeship opportunities for our young people as companies will just train existing staff to grab back their levy. We need to hope someone wakens up in government and kicks this levy into touch

Jack

### Minister backs early years educator u-turn as sector made to wait by PM's office

Yet another example of government ignoring the warnings they were given when the policy was first introduced. They always think they know best; invariably, they don't.

LRoding

Why does a qualifying nursery nurse need GCSE's but someone doing a teaching assistant qualification not? Functional skills are more than adequate. Training providers and nursery employers are struggling to find the best apprentices due to this requirement and it is having a serious impact on recruitment, success rates but more importantly the young people working full time, whilst studying, whilst re-sitting a yearly GCSE! It is heart breaking to see these young people "fail" due to the governments ignorance towards what QUALITIES a good early years practitioner really needs. Completely ridiculous. Come into a college and see what these young people are up against before making your idiotic requirements!

Kirsty Gregory

### Gove admits the UTCs experiment has failed

I suggest there are a few more policies that will come a cropper.....because have been pushed through for either political reasons or to meet austerity measures.

Jon Thompson

Those of us who had worked in FE for decades told Gove and Baker that this was an accident waiting to happen. Of course they knew better. Well done for wasting the time, money and effort which could and should have been focused elsewhere. Experts eh?

LRoding



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For further information about the role including job description and application please visit the vacancies section of our website [www.plumpton.ac.uk](http://www.plumpton.ac.uk). Alternatively contact the **HR department** 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: Monday 6th March 2017

Selection centre will be held: Thursday 23rd and Friday 24th March 2017

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Further information about this post including roles and responsibilities and a person specification can be requested by emailing: [frc@farrier-reg.gov.uk](mailto:frc@farrier-reg.gov.uk)

Closing date for enquiries: 10th March 2017

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**Closing date:** 9.00 am on Monday 6 March 2017  
**Interviews:** Monday 20 March 2017 at Robins Wood House, Robins Wood Road, Aspley, Nottingham, NG8 3NH



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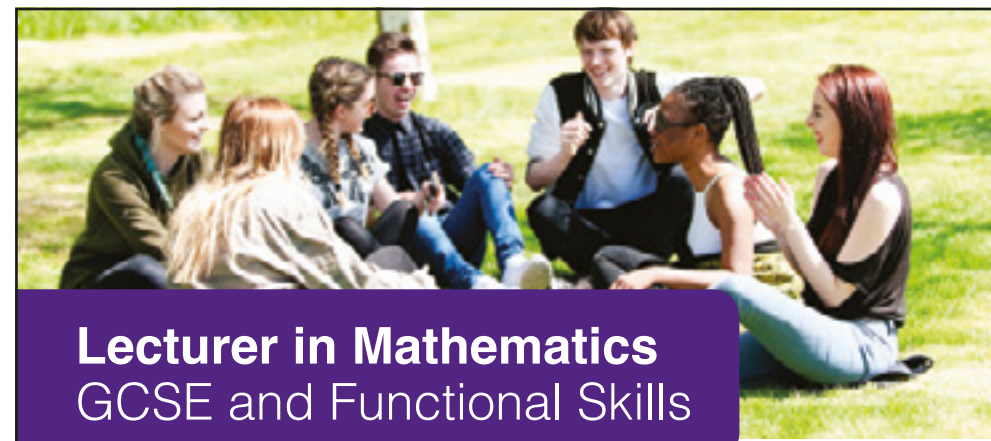
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**For more information, visit <https://workingatnescot.irecruittotal.com/Cac/home.aspx>**



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The successful post holder will have a degree or equivalent in a related subject area with a Cert Ed/PGCE teaching qualification. Level 2 English /Mathematics /ICT qualifications are essential as is a commitment to attainment of student success. The College is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. All appointments will be subject to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check and satisfactory references.

The College is committed to equality of opportunity. We welcome applicants from all sections of the community, particularly from members of ethnic minority groups.

**The closing date** for applications is 2nd March 2017.

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Nationally there is a challenge to improve young people's numeracy and literacy skills. Considering recent changes to the funding methodology, this is also a challenge for the Further Education colleges. All students who have not received a grade A to C in maths and English when leaving school now have to continue to study alongside their vocational qualification.

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The purpose of this rewarding role is to make a significant contribution to the effective delivery of the curriculum, in line with the College's Quality Improvement Strategy and to ensure a high quality and relevant learning experience for all students on the courses.

The main responsibilities of the role will be to teach English and maths related subjects at any of the College centres and to develop programmes of study to meet the particular needs of client groups served by the College. The successful candidate will also be required to assess students in accordance with the requirements of the programme and to contribute to systems of quality and advice and assist in the effective organisation of the department by the proper establishment of such syllabuses, schemes of work and records as may be necessary from time to time.

Ideally the successful candidate will already have an English or maths qualification at Level 3 or above. The candidate will also need to have a teaching qualification at Level 5 or above.

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*Kirklees College is committed to Equality & Diversity and welcomes applications from all sections of the community*





SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE (INCORPORATING ANDOVER COLLEGE)

## Sessional Lecturer – GCSE English/Functional Skills

**£20,950 - £32,241 pro rata (dependent upon qualifications)**

The post holder will have recent experience and a proven track record of successful delivery of GCSE English and Functional Skills to learners. It is desirable that the post holder has a specialist qualification at level 4 or above in English and has experience teaching Functional Skills. It is essential to have a recognised teaching qualification, or willingness to attain.

We are looking to increase our bank of Lecturers to work at our Sparsholt and/or Andover campuses.

### College Benefits

- Eligibility to join the Teachers' Pension Scheme (a defined benefit pension scheme)
- Death benefit grant of 3 X salary if in the pension scheme
- Free on-site parking
- Car Share Scheme
- Occupational Sick Pay Scheme
- Occupational Maternity Pay Scheme
- Flexible Working Policy
- Holiday entitlement of 42 days plus bank holidays (pro-rated for part-time staff)
- Child Care Vouchers
- Access to an Employee Assistance Scheme
- On-site gym at the Sparsholt campus (membership £100 per year)
- Free gym classes
- You Make the Difference Staff nomination scheme
- Facility to purchase Sparsholt produce including: plants, flowers, fruit & vegetables, fish, venison and turkey
- Access to discounted hair and beauty treatments at the Andover campus
- Discounted admission to Marwell Zoo
- Ability to access a range of CPD events and support with undertaking professional qualifications.
- Dog Kennelling facility on Sparsholt Campus (subject to availability)
- Various food outlets and eateries offering good value food and drink at competitive prices

There is a nursery on the Sparsholt campus operated by a commercial provider

**Closing Date:** 27 February 2017

**Application packs are available from:**  
24 hour recruitment line: **01962 797438**  
[www.sparsholt.ac.uk](http://www.sparsholt.ac.uk)  
[HR@sparsholt.ac.uk](mailto:HR@sparsholt.ac.uk)



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[HR@sparsholt.ac.uk](mailto:HR@sparsholt.ac.uk)



# Careers



## English & Maths Lecturers Required

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Please send CVs to [human.resources@cityofbristol.ac.uk](mailto:human.resources@cityofbristol.ac.uk)



For further details visit <http://www.cityofbristol.ac.uk/jobs/vacancies/>



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Ruskin College Oxford wishes to appoint a Programme Co-ordinator/Tutor for Mathematics to teach on its highly popular and successful FE programme from March 2017.

You will hold a good honours degree and a professional qualification relating to the relevant subject area. You will have extensive teaching experience, good communication (oral and written) and interpersonal skills with an ability to work effectively as part of a team. Details of the programme can be found on the website [www.ruskin.ac.uk](http://www.ruskin.ac.uk)

Please contact Laura Cozier for an application form and job details [lcozier@ruskin.ac.uk](mailto:lcozier@ruskin.ac.uk)  
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## EXPERTS



## THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

Graham Taylor is principal and chief executive at New College Swindon. He has more than 25 years' experience in further and higher education across six colleges and writes exclusively for FE Week once a month.

## How will Ofsted recognise quality work experience?

The post-16 skills plan heralds a major change to work experience in the current system. The government wants college-based technical education programmes to include an entitlement to a one- to three-month "quality work placement" with an employer in an industry relevant to the learner's study.

Yet as revealed by the Department for Education's recent consultation, commissioned by the Learning and Work Institute, we still don't know "what effective practice in work placements looks like", or "how current work experience may be increased in scale".

Neither does Ofsted, it would seem, as it is yet to publish any objective measures for judging the quality of work placements, despite its stated aim to focus on them more.

This presents some considerable challenges for colleges. Take our most recent inspection.

All 16- to 19-year-old students are funded for an individual study programme, which, according to government guidance, should contain "high-quality work experience or work preparation" and can include volunteering or community activities organised by or on behalf of the institution.

In our case, 85 per cent of our students already have part-time paid jobs. Ofsted was dismissive, however, saying learners should be gaining work experience relevant to their core aim. But what is the core aim for a student taking three different A-levels or a range of subjects, sometimes at different levels? Surely transferable skills count in a modern economy?

There is an important question here: why do the government and Ofsted assume that unpaid work experience is more valuable and/or relevant than paid part-time work?

Before the study programme began, I posed a question to a DfE representative at a DfE/EFA roadshow to launch the study programme, in front of an audience of college representatives, asking: "Does unpaid work experience trump paid part-time work?"

The dismissive response revealed a stereotype that assumed young people were likely to be "stacking shelves in Tesco" – suggesting the DfE doesn't value employment per se as a learning experience.

A paid job focuses the mind and helps youngsters gain employability: a work ethic, punctuality, customer service, team working and essential English and maths. The fact that work may not be "in context" to study doesn't really matter; they are gaining skills for a range of career options, in a changing world.

Of course, if a young chef wants to be a chef and nothing else, we'll help them find a relevant job. In some areas, such as early years, part of the programme will be working in a nursery setting.

But the vast majority of learners aren't sure what they want to do and many would rather be earning money to buy that new smartphone or save for university than 'volunteering' for a work placement. Incidentally, this is the main reason for the low take-up of traineeships: they're unpaid.

FE Week's Nick Linford recently asked Paul Joyce, Ofsted's deputy director for FE and skills, about how inspectors would track work experience in 2017.

Joyce said: "Work experience as part of study programmes is something that inspectors do clearly look at. It's a very difficult thing to give categorical answers to."

### Most learners aren't sure what they want to do

When asked how Ofsted will highlight 'inadequate' work experience, he continued: "Inspectors will certainly look at work experience and work-related learning and in some cases that is having a detrimental impact where that is not being done as well as it could be to contribute to a learner's overall programme." This is not clear at all.

The truth is that Ofsted simply doesn't know how to measure the impact of work experience, and nor can we. Colleges' spend on planning and assessing work placements varies enormously and, bluntly, we can't currently tell if the money improves learner experience, outcomes or job prospects.

Ofsted needs to review how it assesses the impact and effectiveness of work experience and the EFA must work out the funded hours that can be ascribed to planning it.

In short, the government's view that work should be directly related to study between the ages of 16 and 18 is odd. Job skills change over a working life. We need to train young learners with this in mind, not send them down limited pathways that might hamper their career options.



## NICK CREW

Executive principal, UTC Sheffield

## Don't judge UTCs by school standards

UTCs perform a valuable function – don't write off the whole enterprise based on misleading statistical comparisons with schools, says Nick Crew.

The success of University Technical Colleges has been called into question lately, with several closing down, and even Michael Gove, who introduced them, weighing in to label them a failure. Yet UTCs perform a vital function in providing high quality technical education for 14- to 19-year-olds, backed by employers, to meet regional skills shortages.

Our experience in Sheffield – the only city outside of London currently to have two UTCs – demonstrates they are capable of making a valuable contribution to the educational landscape. UTC Sheffield City Centre, which has a 'good' grade from Ofsted, specialises in advanced engineering and manufacturing, and creative and digital pathways. UTC Sheffield Olympic Legacy Park campus opened in 2016, specialising in computing, health sciences and sport science.

Recruiting students at the age of 14 is challenging and compounded by resistance from some parts of the education system to providing parents and young people with impartial careers guidance. As of this month, however, local authorities are legally required to write to the parents of every 13-year-old informing them that their choices can include a UTC.

This is a positive move. UTCs attract a diverse range of students of all abilities who love to learn by doing. And contrary to what Mr Gove seemed to suggest in his recent piece for the Times, it is not a necessary feature of UTCs that students underperform academically.

Our own results show that students at UTCs can outperform those at schools. In August, 79 per cent of our Year 11 students gained GCSE grades A\*-C in maths; in English it was 66 per cent, and 73 per cent in the two sciences. In technical subjects, Year 11 students achieved a 97 per cent pass rate in their creative and digital and engineering qualifications.

With any new and innovative project, some casualties will occur as it matures. But to discard the entire UTC project before successful institutions have the chance to prove themselves would be a colossal waste of the resources already invested in them.

All UTC Sheffield leavers in 2016 progressed to a positive destination, with 45 per cent going to university, including Russell Group institutions, when the national average for schools is 38 per cent, and 28 per cent going on to apprenticeships, compared with a seven per cent national average for schools.

And in November, our engineering students ranked joint fifth in the medal table

in WorldSkills UK after competing against colleges, employers and universities.

UTCs are complex educational settings and the most successful ones are embraced by regional stakeholders, have an employer- and university-embedded curriculum, and leaders who understand how to build good schools.

They need a regional focus at the planning stage, supported by employers, councils, universities, FE colleges and partnerships such as teaching school alliances.

The strong relationships we have with our sponsors the Sheffield College, Sheffield Hallam University and Sheffield Chamber of Commerce, as well as Sheffield City Council, underpin our success. Around 50 employers also back us.

We know students' progress accelerates once they join us

UTCs have a different remit to traditional schools, yet the government's new performance measures compare the two. Some of the technical and creative subjects that UTCs have developed with complex employer-embedded projects don't even receive scores in the Progress 8 measure.

Compounding this is the fact that UTCs have far less time to influence students' progress scores, which are measured over five years starting at the end of primary school.

Young people can only join a UTC at the age of 14 yet their education for the three years prior to joining us counts in their final score.

We know that students' progress accelerates once they join us. Progress 8 therefore isn't an effective measure of the performance of a 14-19 technically focused school. UTCs are working with the Department for Education to take action here.

The country needs high quality skill-focused technical learning pipelines – UTCs along with further education colleges and universities can provide this, when working together with employers. The payback to the treasury and employers will come from the reduction in the costs of training to employers, when students leave UTCs, and the increased salaries paid to contribute to the UK tax system.

For too long, the education system has focused on academic qualifications at the expense of the essential skills desired by employers.

## EXPERTS

The new apprenticeship programme was designed to put employers in the driving seat, but the contract the SFA will make them sign places them in a risky situation, says Smita Jamdar.

As the Jedi master Yoda once observed, “always two there are, no more and no less: a master and an apprentice”.

If only life were that simple.

The new apprenticeship arrangements have spawned a series of contracts: SFA/provider, provider/employer, employer/apprentice (contract of employment), employer/provider/apprentice (commitment statement), provider/subcontractor, and provider/apprenticeship assessment organisation.

The latest to be revealed, a little over two months before the apprenticeship programme starts, is the contract between the SFA and the employer.

It's therefore a good moment to reflect on where employers now find themselves. The programme is the conclusion of several years of policy initiative designed to put employers in the driving seat on skills.

This has resulted in government taking money from them through a levy, returning it to them with complicated strings attached, and then threatening to claw it back if they happen to get tangled up in the rules.

As someone on Twitter archly but accurately noted, employers may be in the driving seat but if they get it wrong, they are going to pay for the car twice.

The new contract contains a range of



## SMITA JAMDAR

Partner and head of education,  
SGH Martineau LLP

## New SFA contracts are risky business

provisions in which such suspension or clawback of funds might occur. Some, such as fraud, financial irregularity or insolvency, are obvious and unarguable. Others are likely to be more challenging for employers.

For example, funds may be withheld or suspended if an employee or agent has acted dishonestly or negligently or has taken action that the SFA reasonably concludes brings its name or reputation into disrepute. These are broad provisions, and create potentially onerous obligations for employers to access what they may see as their own money.

Similarly, breach of the apprenticeship funding guidance constitutes grounds to recover, from the employer, funding paid to a training provider in breach of those rules.

The funding rules are complex and thus the potential for breaching them, especially within the contractual matrix set out above, is not insignificant.

The SFA contract seeks to reassure employers that it will act “reasonably and proportionately” in seeking to recover the

sums, but there is scope for disagreement as to when those thresholds are crossed.

A number of the complaints we have made to the SFA on behalf of colleges, for example, have been based on what we considered to be unreasonable or disproportionate conduct on the part of the SFA.

How far removed we've become from master Yoda's simple vision

Some of the provisions of the contract may be difficult for employers to navigate confidently without legal advice. For example, the state aid provision refers

to complicated de minimis provisions, supposedly clarified in the funding rules. The funding rules however simply refer to the state aid regulations.

State aid lawyers are amongst the cleverest and most detail-focused in the profession for a good reason: it's a dauntingly complex area, and therefore not one that many employers will have much experience of.

Similarly, the contract brings employers within the scope of the SFA's freedom of information obligations, meaning employers could see their confidential information made publicly accessible.

The contract also contains provisions from the “bloomin' cheek” school of contract drafting. That employers, who are after all being forced to offer apprenticeships or lose their levy contributions, should be forced to guarantee that they have all necessary resources and expertise to deliver them is at best irksome and at worst onerous, as is the broad warranty that the employer has complied with “all relevant legislation and all applicable codes of practice” and will notify the SFA of any departures.

Material breaches are grounds for termination of the agreement and the end of funding.

The SFA/employer contract creates risks not just for employers, though, but for all of those other contracting parties, whose own rights to payment or employment could be jeopardised if an employer gets it wrong. How far removed we have become from master Yoda's simple vision of only the two: master and apprentice.

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# CAMPUS ROUND-UP *with Sam King*

## Real-life Katniss aims for Team GB



Ready, aim, fire: 17-year old Megan

A college student who took up archery as a hobby after reading the Hunger Games is now preparing to try out for the Great Britain archery team.

17-year-old Megan Tinker, a student at Barnsley Sixth Form, took up the sport in 2013 after being inspired by protagonist of the books, Katniss Everdeen, who wields a bow and arrow as her weapon of choice.

After her parents bought her an archery experience day as a birthday present, Megan discovered she had a natural flair for the sport and is now preparing for selection trials for the GB Archery team.

Through the college's Barnsley Sports

Academy, she has been able to access an elite sports performance bursary which will help fund aspects of the competition, such as travel and equipment.

If successful, she will be able to compete at the World Archery Youth Championships, which take place in Argentina in October this year.

Megan, a PE, film studies and English AS-level student, said: "The support I have received from the Sports Academy has helped me pursue my goals in archery.

"My main focus is on the selection shoots ahead of the World Archery Youth Championships to give me the best possible chance of making the squad."



A laughing matter: Tom (back row, second left) with aspiring media students

## Comedy star returns to college

Radio presenter and comedian Tom Deacon paid a visit to his old sixth form college in Hampshire to impart some wisdom to the next generation.

With a national comedy tour in the pipeline and previous employers including BBC Radio 1 and Capital FM, the former Barton Peveril student spoke about his career journey so far, and provided insight into how to break into the media industry.

The former student has spent the last nine years as a stand-up comedian and radio presenter, and studied sociology, modern history and performing arts A-levels at the

college before pursuing a degree in drama at the University of Exeter.

Offering advice to students, Deacon said "Get up, show up and take every opportunity you are given. Network with people, be nice and absorb yourself in stuff you wouldn't necessarily choose."

17-year-old A-level student Rhys Blanchard, who aspires to work in broadcast journalism, attended the event. He said: "Speaking to someone who's made it within the media industry is amazing. It's even more motivating to know that students from Barton Peveril go on and do great things."



Happy bunny: Nero with animal management student, Rebecca Mullen



Nero and Edith

## Lonely rabbit finds love again at college's animal care centre

A lonely rabbit taken in by North Lindsey college following the death of his long-term partner, has found love again with a little help from staff and students.

Nero, a giant French lop rabbit, was donated to the North Lincolnshire college's Animal Management Centre following the death of his life-long companion, with Nero's owner concerned he would suffer if kept alone due to his social nature.

Animal management students quickly introduced Nero to a Dutch rabbit named Edith, who had also recently lost her partner, and supported them through a bonding process – with successful results.

Despite concerns about the pair's size

difference, the two got along and within two weeks were living together, and even feeding out of the same bowl.

The centre which is run by students and staff at the college takes in unwanted animals, and is now full to capacity. There are currently over 48 different animal species at the centre, including hamsters, rabbits, stick insects, bearded dragons, terrapins, guinea pigs and snakes.

Rebecca Mullen, taking a level three diploma in animal management, said: "It's great that the college has taken on so many animals and that they are cared for correctly. If they went to the wrong owners, they could end up being badly treated."

## Farm-in-a-box hits Hull

More than 30 students from Hull college have helped create mini farms inside shipping containers as part of a project helping those in deprived areas access farming and agriculture facilities.

The 'Rooted in Hull' initiative recruited the help of level one and two learners from the college's joinery, electrical, and painting and decorating courses to fit out the disused shipping containers with electricity, as well as adding finishing touches such as hanging doors.

The aim of the community project is to

create an agriculture scene in the heart of Hull, which can be used to help local people escape food poverty by growing their own fruit and vegetables.

The first of the shipping containers will be placed by Hull's riverside, with two more on their way to the college ready to be renovated.

Graham Towse, principal of Hull College said: "Projects like these really help to instil a sense of pride in our students and they can all be immensely proud of their contribution to the community, and their help in raising aspirations and building communities."



Boxing clever: Students pose with a planter

# 3D-printed map helps blind student to navigate

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ROUND-UP

Two Gloucestershire students who learned to use a 3D printer during college workshops have utilised the technology to help their blind friend Elliott become more independent. Samantha King reports.

Two college students, Kristian Harrison, 18, and Steve Martin, 23, have come up with a unique way to help their visually impaired friend gain more independence during a series of 3D printing workshops with their IT tutor.

Twenty-year-old Elliott Roberts – who is also a student at National Star specialist college – needs a chaperone wherever he goes due to the severity of his condition. Through the printing workshops, his friends decided they could help him by producing a 3D map of his college residence, enabling him to find his way around unattended.

With Elliott unable to read braille, the map they produced created a brand new, touchable language.

Their IT tutor Simon Barnett, who has been working closely with the trio, said: “The three lads started in my 3D printing workshop group and had never met each other before.

“When Elliott joined our group we discussed how



[L-R] Kristian Harrison, Elliott Roberts and Steve Martin testing out the map

we could get him more involved, and we came up with the idea of creating the 3D map so he could better understand his environment.”

To make the map, the students scanned in original floor plans of Elliott's residence, and adapted elements and shapes to symbolise different rooms before showing it to him for feedback.

“We wanted this map to be a size that could be carried around. The students had to think how a corridor

might feel to Elliott, or how a bedroom would feel. When there's a new element that needs to be added or adapted it takes quite a lot of thought,” said Mr Barnett.

“Each week Elliott will pick up the next map and give feedback. The students then take it away, go back to the drawing board, make the changes and bring it back the next week. His recent feedback was that he doesn't need the map to have walls, as he'll know if he walks into one.”

Kristian, who uses a communicator he controls with his eyes and learned to use the printer using software adapted for his condition, said “We made a lot of mistakes at first, but we have fixed them along the way.

I'm really excited about the project and how it can help others.”

As well as aiding with mobility and independence, the premise of the map could also prove useful in Elliott's sporting life, as he is a keen Boccia player – a precision ball sport similar to bowls.

Barnett said “He doesn't know how hard he's supposed to throw the ball and most of the time it ends up on the other side of the sports hall. We're going to create him a little peg board and show him where he is in relation to the court so he can gauge how to shoot.”

Word of Elliott's pioneering map has spread beyond the walls of the college, with the students invited to the Bett show, a leading education technology event, to show off their creation.

The map received international acclaim at the convention, with teachers from a specialist blind school in the Netherlands keen to do some work with the students.

“The feedback was fantastic, and it's nice to think I taught them how to do this” Barnett said. “It's all about expanding Elliott's universe”.



Elliott Roberts

## 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

**Lizzan Lawson** has been appointed assistant principal for further education at City of Bristol College.

She joins from her previous role as head of young people at Hull College Group, where she led the further education curriculum for 14 to 19-year-olds.

She brings a total of 13 years' experience in FE to the role and speaking of her appointment, said: “I am pleased to have

joined the college at such an exciting time and look forward to supporting my team to ensure student progress and progression remains a key priority.

“I am excited about working with colleagues and getting to know the teachers and employers who support our students to achieve their aspirations.”

**Paul Graham** has been appointed director of business and curriculum at

Northern Skills Group, the apprenticeship and training arm of Middlesbrough College.

Northern Skills Group work with over 1,000 businesses across the North East and Yorkshire, delivering training programmes and assisting with apprentice recruitment.

Formerly the director of business and education at the Yorkshire-based college, Mr Graham's new role will involve building

relationships with businesses across the north of England, and consulting about opportunities available through the apprenticeship levy.

Speaking of the levy, he said: “There are so many permutations of apprenticeships, including disciplines and how they're structured. We want businesses to know the options available to them. It's my job to listen to their needs and establish solutions that will ultimately help them grow.”

There have been two new appointments to the top-level management team at the Shropshire-based Telford college of Arts and Technology (TCAT).

**Ian Clinton** has been appointed interim principal at the college.

Mr Clinton, who has an OBE for services to further education, previously served as an interim principal at colleges in Stockport

and Stafford. He will guide TCAT towards its merger with the neighbouring New College Telford.

In the role he says he has plans to regain the college's reputation as “a good, strong and people-centred organisation, dedicated to meeting the needs of individuals and our employer partners”.

“We have a forward-looking and dynamic new board, our campus is modern and well equipped, and I have colleagues in both lecturing and support roles who are committed to ensuring that every student, employer and partner organisation receives the very best we can offer,” he said.

**Paul Hinkins** has been appointed chairman of the TCAT board.

He first joined the board in 2013, and will take up the role alongside his current position as chairman of the Marches Growth

Hub's Telford business board, which offers hot-desk facilities, meeting rooms for hire and space for business advisors to hold face-to-face meetings.

Mr Hinkins says he is “delighted to have taken over the college chairmanship at such an exciting time”, adding “We have the opportunity to make sure that our offer exceeds the needs of our students, parents and businesses.”



LIZZAN LAWSON



PAUL GRAHAM



IAN CLINTON



PAUL HINKINS

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

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

**Difficulty:**  
**EASY**

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

**Difficulty:**  
**MEDIUM**

**Solutions:**  
Next edition

### Last Week's solutions

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

**Difficulty:**  
**EASY**

6	7	9	5	8	1	4	3	2
8	5	3	2	4	7	1	9	6
4	1	2	6	3	9	8	5	7
9	3	8	7	5	4	2	6	1
5	2	7	8	1	6	9	4	3
1	6	4	9	2	3	7	8	5
3	4	5	1	7	8	6	2	9
7	8	6	3	9	2	5	1	4
2	9	1	4	6	5	3	7	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](mailto:news@feweek.co.uk).  
Last Edition's winner: Russ Appleby, Hull College