

FE Week

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NEWS

Ofsted could re-inspect after QAR loophole crackdown

ALIX ROBERTSON
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Ofsted could re-inspect providers for questionable achievement rates that have come to light following a recent Skills Funding Agency crackdown.

Last week the Department for Education admitted to a loophole in the SFA's qualification achievement rates calculation, which it said "artificially" boosted the scores for around a tenth of all providers, with some benefiting by more than 20 percentage points.

In the updated January Statistical First Release published on February 16, the DfE outlined three loopholes it has now closed.

One of these was described as an

"inappropriate use of the planned break exclusion rule", which allowed providers to report most learner withdrawals as planned breaks, and therefore gave those that exploited it "a significantly higher QAR".

As a result, the SFA has recalculated all QAR data from 2014/15 onwards; before this date, QARs were calculated using different methodologies for each of the different strands of FE provision.

Mark Dawe, chief executive of the AELP, tackled the developments in a newsletter to members this week, telling them that Ofsted had confirmed that "where providers have been recently inspected and data makes inspection judgments questionable, they won't be re-inspecting".

But FE Week checked this with Ofsted, and

received a contradictory answer.

A spokesperson said the watchdog was "aware of issues about the latest QAR data" and would take this into account during FE inspections, but "for those providers whom we have recently inspected, we will consider each case on its merits".

FE Week approached 14 large providers, each of which has over 500 apprentices, an 'outstanding' rating from Ofsted, and QAR data for 2014/15 of over 80 per cent, to ask their views on the changes and how their rates had been affected.

Despite repeated enquires, three of these 14 said they did not wish to comment and seven were unable to respond by the time of going to print.

Rachel Randall, chief executive and

managing director of HTP Apprenticeship College said: "We are looking at our own data, but ours hasn't dropped significantly.

"We may have had a few that have been over-stayers, but other than that we are not going to challenge it."

A spokesperson for Skills Group Limited, meanwhile admitted

that the new methodology had caused a minor fall in its data for 2014/15, while data for 2015/16 remained unchanged.

"In our case, the 2014/15 reduction is the result of breaks in learning for three learners out of 1,150. All three re-engaged in 2015/16, with two of them going on to achieve. It would appear that we've been penalised unfairly for two of the three learners," she said.

"While this does point to unfair treatment of positive outcomes after re-engagement, we will not be disputing with the SFA. We will, however, be changing how we deal with breaks in learning going forward."

A spokesperson for Uxbridge College said: "The changes have had no effect on the college's QAR.

"The College is pleased to find that the SFA has now updated the methodology."

An RAF spokesperson said the changes would not affect its QAR.

According to last week's DfE report, the SFA's analysis found that approximately 10 per cent of apprenticeship providers had 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".

All grade one providers with more than 500 apprentices and original 2014/15 achievement rate above 80%

	Apprentices	Original 2014/15 achievement rate %	Comment on revised but unpublished 2014/15 achievement rate
LEAGUE FOOTBALL EDUCATION	610	95.4	Declined to comment
ROYAL AIR FORCE	1010	94.3	No impact
SKILLS TO GROUP LIMITED	1150	90.7	Small decrease (90.67% to 90.44%)
BARNESLEY COLLEGE	830	87.9	Unavailable
QA LIMITED	1050	86.2	Unavailable
EXETER COLLEGE	670	85.8	Declined to comment
HEART OF ENGLAND TRAINING LIMITED	520	85.2	Unavailable
HOUSE OF CLIVE (HAIR AND BEAUTY) LIMITED	510	84.1	Unavailable
HOSPITALITY TRAINING PARTNERSHIP (IOW) LIMITED	560	82.9	Small decrease (82.9% to 81.4%)
ASPIRE ACHIEVE ADVANCE LIMITED	540	82.0	Declined to comment
WALSALL COLLEGE	750	81.8	Unavailable
CHICHESTER COLLEGE	1040	81.7	Unavailable
BLACKBURN COLLEGE	520	81.4	Unavailable
UXBRIDGE COLLEGE	540	81.3	No impact

Helping Colleges to improve their Learning Support Services

Established in 2002, Randstad Student Support is the UK's only national specialist provider of support to students with additional learning needs, disabilities and mental health conditions. In 2016, we supported **34,000** students across **250** colleges and universities.

With recent and impending legislation changes, we recognise that some of the challenges colleges are currently facing include an increasing demand for ALS, mental health services and reasonable adjustments - usually against a backdrop of a reducing budget.

At Randstad, we partner with colleges to build joint services that have improved capacity to better meet the needs of students and the fluctuating demands of learning support. As well as ensuring learning support teams are fully staffed with multi-skilled support workers, we meet the college's requirements for specialist support workers too.

We work with college teams that have both permanent and sessional staff in their learning support services and our partnerships drive innovation while decreasing costs to the college. We do this by managing and delivering learning support while maintaining a high level of support for your students.

At a time when colleges are looking for partners to help them innovate their approach and deliver results that produce a positive change, our administration cost-savings have so far delivered **£52,000** to **£254,000** in the first year of implementation. Each service we work with has been able to increase the amount of students they support and improve overall engagement, usually by at least **25%** in the first year.

Our partnership with Tyne Metropolitan College

Tyne Metropolitan College has been working in partnership with Randstad Student Support since September 2015. Our aim was to drive innovation and efficiency across the college and to identify a more efficient way of managing and delivering learning support without compromising on quality and impact of delivery.

“Randstad has integrated themselves within the college in order to understand our requirements not only on a daily basis but for fluctuations across the academic year, ensuring they can respond to student demand within a responsive timescale. By doing this they have managed to provide high quality support assistants that meet the specific need of each student, for both high needs learners and learners across the remainder of the college.

We now have a live record of each support session, detailed funding and grading of effectiveness of support attributed to each student that we can utilise for any OFSTED inspection. This has resulted in enabling us to increase support and save money at the same time. ”

Ann-Marie Crozier

Deputy Principal (Finance and Corporate Development)

Tyne Metropolitan College continue to work in partnership with Randstad Student Support who continually look to provide new ways we can improve the overall student experience.

Tyne Met have access to a large pool of flexible support workers that includes general learning support assistants, one-to-one mentors, communication support workers, and British Sign Language specialists.



Impact of working with Randstad in the first year of partnership

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- **74,000** hours of support recorded online – data feed to internal systems

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FE Week launches campaign to #SaveOurAdultEducation

PAUL OFFORD
@PAULOFFORD

FE Week is calling on the government to make three key policy changes to #SaveOurAdultEducation as part of a massive new campaign.

First of all, we want to introduce FE maintenance grant loans for adult learners, which would make retraining possible for many more older people, by helping cover their living costs while studying, something that is already available to mature students in higher education.

The government has currently left the sector in limbo on the issue.

FE Week revealed before Christmas that the Department for Education had indefinitely delayed a decision on whether to extend maintenance loans to FE.

Shadow skills minister Gordon Marsden, who will be speaking at the campaign's parliamentary launch on

February 27, alongside the minister himself Robert Halfon, said that extending maintenance loans would be a major step "towards achieving parity of esteem and treatment for adult FE learners".

The campaign also wants the government to consult on a proper adult education strategy,

one that does not disappear under the political weight of apprenticeships and devolution.

Another speaker at Monday's launch, Sue Pember, who is a former top skills civil servant and now leads local authority community learning membership body HOLEX, said: "This is a very timely campaign that should be supported by all who care about adult education. We need a lifelong adult education strategy."

The third and final demand is to write off advanced learning loans debt, which leaves blameless adult learners unable to complete their course if their training provider goes bust.

This problem is particularly timely, after FE Week last month revealed that the Skills Funding Agency was investigating the 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 were left with hefty debts but no course.

One of these, Asim Shaheen, 49, who was unable to complete a level three hospitality and catering course which he had funded with a loan for over £8,000, told FE Week: "It's all wrong. My loan should be squashed, if I haven't got any qualifications to show for it. I've been left completely in the lurch."

David Lammy, an MP who was minister for skills in 2007 and 2008, and who has recently called for a return to widespread "night schools", has thrown his weight behind #SaveOurAdultEducation.

According to government figures, there are around 1.5 million fewer adults aged 19 or over participating in FE, than there were during Mr Lammy's stint as minister, when the figure stood at 3.75 million.

"It's more important than ever that this

issue of adult training is grasped," he told FE Week. Reflecting on the loans issue, he added: "We have got to find a way to give adults the funds to train and retrain throughout their working lives – to a large extent at night schools – both through subsidies and loans where needed."

Mr Halfon has committed to boosting retraining opportunities for people already in work, in a written response to a letter signed by 60 MPs that backed growing calls to widen the focus of FE policy away from apprenticeships and younger learners.

The letter, sent in mid-January, whose signatories included shadow education secretary Angela Rayner and Mr Lammy, warned that a rethink on retraining for older people was needed to bridge a "gaping skills gap".

Mr Halfon said in response: "I fully recognise the points your letter makes about the need to address those skills shortages, creating new opportunities in

particular for those people who are already in the workforce.

"That is a key theme of our developing industrial strategy."

The industrial strategy released on January 23 acknowledged a "growing challenge" with training for older people, and committed to exploring "ambitious new approaches to encouraging lifelong learning".

SAVE OUR ADULT EDUCATION



As FE Week launches

#saveourapprenticeships, our editor Nick Linford explains why he passionately believes loans should be written-off for undeserving victims where training providers go bust

FE loans are a relatively new way to fund courses, but through no fault of their own adults are already being left with large government debts for cancelled courses.

The short-term solution, to write the debt off, is both simple and obvious. But it is important to also learn from why and how the loans were introduced.

Before August 2013, people aged 24 or over who started a vocational course at level three or above would have typically shared the cost with the government.

For example, someone looking to change career and get qualified as a personal fitness instructor might pay £1,500, and the Skills Funding Agency on behalf of the government would pay the other £1,500.

The college or training provider would then have £3,000 to deliver a level three qualification in personal fitness instruction.

This co-investment funding model as it's known, where the costs are shared between the learner and the government, had been working well for many years.

However, the government obsession with cutting departmental budgets by up to 40 percent changed all that, when they



NICK
LINFORD

Editor, FE Week

Time to protect learners from the FE loan scandal

converted both the £1,500 learner and £1,500 government contribution into a loan.

An advanced learning loan, as these were named, isn't classed as government expenditure, so as far as the Treasury is concerned a budget cut had been achieved.

In the example above, the full £3,000 is paid to the college or training provider by the Student Loans Company.

The learner pays nothing until after the course finishes. And, like a loan to study at university, they only have to start repaying once they are earning over £21,000, with a

relatively low interest rate.

So assuming the learner is still willing to take out a £3,000 income contingent loan, the provider still receives their funding and the provision continues.

So far so sensible, but now comes the insanity.

The SFA gave people running companies, with no history of receiving public funding, access to millions in loans cash from the Student Loans Company.

These people would fill out online forms with the SLC to receive the funding, and often

pay other companies to deliver the training via subcontractors.

The sadly predictable outcome of giving a few individuals access to millions in public funding is a growing list of liquidated companies, and thousands of learners with debts for courses they are unable to finish, as increasingly reported in the pages of FE Week.

The SFA has slowly begun to address the problem, by tightening up the way it sets and increases access to loan funding, as well as gradually banning the use of subcontracting.

But it also needs to acknowledge the early failings, by changing policy towards learners left with debts for courses they cannot complete.

Cancelling the loans for these learners would not only end an injustice, it should also be a simple policy to implement, given this is already what happens for others.

Learners using loans for level three Access to Higher Education qualifications don't have to pay them back, if they go on to pass a degree. This is a policy the then skills minister, John Hayes, implemented.

The current skills minister, Robert Halfon, should now ensure learners let down by a negligent SFA should also have their loan written off.

It really should be an easy policy change to end an obvious injustice.

Over to you Mr Halfon.

Article first published at www.ncfe.org.uk/blog/

NEWS

Ethnic minority target for apprenticeship diversity group

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The government launched the Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network this week. One of its key aims will be to increase the proportion of apprentices from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities by 20 per cent. FE Week's Alix Robertson went along to the opening event to find out more.

A new employers' network designed to promote diversity in apprenticeships was launched this week, and it's put good practice and dispelling myths at the top of its list of priorities.

The Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network is chaired by Nus Ghani, MP for Wealden, and is made up of 23 employers, including Rolls Royce, the BBC and BAE Systems, alongside other small- and medium-sized employers.

One major focus for the new group will be to help the government achieve its commitment to "increase the proportion of apprenticeship starts by people from BAME backgrounds by 20 per cent by 2020", which was first spelled out in a document called 'English Apprenticeships: Our 2020 Vision', published last December.

FE Week asked the Department for Education to put this target into context ahead of the launch event, at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in London.

A spokesperson said that the aim would be to increase the proportion of BAME starts from just under 10 per cent at present to 11.9 per cent (which amounts to a 20 per cent increase). The DfE would not confirm where the original 10 per cent figure was taken from.

According to our analysis of the latest available statistics, the problem of BAME underrepresentation in apprenticeships appears to lie more in recruitment than in



attracting candidates.

For example, while 38 per cent of the applications for apprenticeships in 2015/16 were from individuals not classed as 'white British', they made up just 17.2 per cent of the apprentices taken on for the same year.

We put this to the apprenticeships and skills minister Robert Halfon at the launch, to find out what he and the network were going to do to drive change.

"The 'Get in Go Far' apprenticeships promotion campaign is hugely important because it is being shown on social media, on TV, on radio, and in cinemas and it is not just about encouraging people to do apprenticeships, but encouraging employers in terms of recruitment," he said.

"The diversity network is something very serious because when you have someone like Nus as the ambassador, and you see companies like Balfour Beatty or Rolls Royce successfully employing significant numbers of BAME individuals, then the culture will change."

He also claimed that schools had to share some of the blame for underrepresentation

from BAME groups, saying: "We'll only achieve this if schools do a lot more to encourage apprenticeships and skills and at the moment they do not."

Ms Ghani told FE Week that the effort was "also about convincing the parents".

She added: "We have to make parents understand that this is a solid step to their child not only learning but earning and opening up their opportunities and their career going forward."

This particular problem was picked out by Mr Halfon during his speech at the launch.

"Sometimes I meet families from different black and minority ethnic backgrounds and they say to me that they just want their kids to go to university, because that is seen as the prestigious route."

Cultural preconceptions were also raised in speeches made by apprentices at the event.

One of them, Chris Achiampong, a degree-level apprentice with IBM, told his story of



Chris Achiampong, degree level apprentice with IBM

growing up on a council estate and being signed by Arsenal football team – but having to give up his dream after a bad injury.

He has subsequently become one of the faces of 'Get In Go Far'.

"I'm from a Ghanaian household," he said. "My mum came to the UK for a better life and lived in what you would call deprived circumstances. She was a single parent and she believed in the power of education and academic achievement."

Chris explained that after leaving football he had won a place at Loughborough University to study economics, but declined it in favour of an apprenticeship.

"When I first said to my mum that I wasn't going to university ... her heart nearly exploded, she was going crazy," he said.

However, he added: "I took her into the offices and she saw everyone else in their suits and she said 'ok, I can see my boy here'. Now she's telling all her friends."

People with disabilities and women also key

The work of the new Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network is not only focused on improving BAME representation – it will also aim to boost the number of female apprentices and those with disabilities.

Mr Halfon spoke passionately to FE Week about how he hopes the network will widen access to apprenticeships for people with disabilities, by tackling simple day-to-day challenges as well as addressing the bigger picture.

Mr Halfon himself was born with mild cerebral palsy and developed osteoarthritis partly due to undergoing many operations to treat it.

He gave an example of meeting with the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association.

"One of the problems they have is with apprentices not being able to get there because the bus is so troublesome," he said.

"People think of macro government initiatives, but something as simple as

talking buses can help people who have eyesight difficulties to cope with the logistics."

He also highlighted the importance of sharing positive examples, saying: "I very much want 'Get In Go Far' to feature a disabled person, and that doesn't just mean the stereotype of a disabled person in a wheelchair, I want people with autism to have access to apprenticeship too and others."

The network will also look at the lack of women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

"Jaguar Land Rover is working with Warwick College, and setting a great example with I think around 20 per cent of its apprentices being women. If they can do it, why can't everybody else?" asked Mr Halfon.

"Again, unfortunately this goes right back – not just to secondary school, but primary school. A huge cultural shift is required."



Robert Halfon, apprenticeship and skills minister, and Nusrat Ghani, chair of the Apprenticeship Diversity Network

INVESTIGATES

New apprenticeship subcontracting rules

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Colleges are using the new subcontracting rules to regain some of the ground lost to independent training providers accused of nicking their lunch, FE Week can reveal.

Just a third of apprenticeship funding is currently allocated to colleges – and a significant proportion of that is actually delivered by independent training providers acting as subcontractors.

The problem has become so severe that the former skills minister Nick Boles warned colleges in 2015 that they should not let ITPs “nick your lunch” over apprenticeships.

But new rules coming into force in May mean that lead providers will soon need to “directly deliver” at least some of the training or assessment of each apprenticeship programme – and the government stresses that this must “not be a token amount”.

The change is being seen as “an enormous opportunity to expand apprenticeship provision”, according to Andrew

Contracting and subcontracting

Main providers directly delivering training or on-programme assessment

- P120. You can only be funded for apprenticeship delivery to employers who do not pay the apprenticeship levy if you have a contract for service – apprenticeships, with us.
- P121. Funding for all elements of each apprenticeship will be routed through a single provider that the employer has chosen. This includes English and maths.
- P122. At the outset of each apprenticeship, a main provider and employer will agree a plan for its delivery. You must directly deliver some of the apprenticeship training and/or on-programme assessment associated with each employer’s apprenticeship programme. By apprenticeship programme we mean the apprentices that are being trained for the employer that has chosen you. The volume of training and/or on-programme assessment that you directly deliver for each employer must have some substance and must not be a token amount to satisfy this rule. It must not be limited to a brief input at the start of each employer’s programme or involve delivery to just a few of a large number of apprentices.

Limiting the use of subcontractors with employers

Martin, the deputy principal of West Nottinghamshire College, which has the largest apprenticeship allocation from the Skills Funding Agency of any college.

The college subcontracted 82.4 per cent of its apprenticeship provision in 2015/16, which earned it £3.2 million in topslicing fees from provision worth £15.5 million.

However, he added that “new delivery models are already emerging” which “will

still require a subcontracting relationship”.

The rules state that “the volume of training and/or on-programme assessment that you directly deliver for each employer must have some substance and must not be a token amount to satisfy this rule.”

All subcontracting arrangements must now be agreed with the employer before the start of an apprenticeship programme.

As previously reported by FE Week, the



Apprenticeship funding and performance-management rules for training providers

May 2017 to March 2018

Version 1

This document sets out the funding rules which will apply to all training providers delivering the apprenticeship programme following the introduction of the apprenticeship levy. It also sets out the performance-management rules which will apply to all training providers delivering apprenticeships to non-levy-paying employers.

proportion of all apprenticeship funding allocated to colleges

dropped from 37 per cent in 2015/16 to 32 per cent in 2016/17 – despite Mr

Boles’ challenge for colleges to double their

share of apprenticeships.

Speaking at the Association of Colleges annual conference in November 2015, he urged colleges to move from delivering one third of all apprenticeships to two thirds.

“As your friend, I have to ask you this, why on earth are you letting these guys [ITPs] nick your lunch?” he asked.

A Freedom of Information request

West Nottinghamshire College: New delivery models

The impact of the new subcontracting rule is likely to be felt most keenly at West Nottinghamshire College.

It has the largest apprenticeship allocation from the SFA of any college – but the majority of its provision is delivered by subcontractors.

According to figures published on its website, the college subcontracted provision worth more than £15 million in 2015/16 – representing 82.4 per cent of its apprenticeship provision.

These deals earned the college £3.2 million in management fees.

Andrew Martin, its deputy principal, acknowledged that the new rules would “reduce the value of subcontracted provision over the course of the 2017/18 year and beyond, as many high-quality

training providers who previously subcontracted choose to work directly with employers”.

He pointed out that “new delivery models are already emerging”, and that these would “still require a subcontracting relationship” with “training providers and colleges working in partnership to best meet employers needs for quality apprenticeship delivery”.

He added: “We see the reforms as an enormous opportunity to expand apprenticeship provision through West Nottinghamshire College to improve workforce skills, whether this is through traditional direct delivery or by working together with our outstanding range of training-provider partners.”

West Nottinghamshire College in 2015/16

Apprenticeship funded subcontractors	56
Total funding	£15,147,456
of which total paid to subcontractors	£11,914,498
of which kept as a management fee	£3,232,959
of which average management fee	21%

Eastleigh College: Welcoming the opportunity

Eastleigh College has the second largest adult apprenticeship allocation of any college – but also subcontracts the majority of this provision.

It has an adult apprenticeships allocation of £11.5 million and a 16-to-18 apprenticeships and traineeships allocation of £1.8 million for 2016/17.

Eastleigh’s published subcontracting fees for 2015/16 show that it subcontracted provision worth £15 million, retaining management fees of £3.4 million – although it’s not clear how much of this was for apprenticeships.

A spokesperson told FE Week that 80 per cent of its apprenticeship provision for that year was delivered by subcontractors.

Its principal Jan Edrich said the college “welcomes the opportunity to deliver some provision directly to apprentices within its subcontracting arrangements”.

She indicated that the college still saw subcontracting as part of its apprenticeships programme.

“The college has had a strong partnership relationship with its subcontractors for many, many years and sees the new requirement as a further way of enhancing the way it works with them,” she said.

“The apprenticeship programmes being developed to meet the new requirement bring together the strengths of each partner for the benefit of the learner.”

Eastleigh College in 2015/16

SFA funded subcontractors	29
Total funding	£15,051,909
of which total paid to subcontractors	£11,640,243
of which kept as a management fee	£3,411,666
of which average management fee	23%

welcomed to bring courses back in house

published by the AELP in June 2016 revealed the scale of apprenticeship subcontracting by colleges.

The FOI, based on SFA data, showed that 40 per cent (62,240 out of 157,290) of all apprenticeship starts contracted through FE colleges in 2014/15 were actually delivered by ITPs as subcontractors.

All lead providers are required to publish a list of subcontractors, the value of any subcontract, and the management fees retained they have retained.

A top-slice fee of around 15 to 20 per cent of the contract value is typical for many lead providers – income that is now at risk due to the new rules.

But Teresa Frith, senior skills policy manager at the AoC, said the new rule would not stop colleges from subcontracting.

“What it will do is stop those main and subcontractors who see apprenticeships as an income stream, with little serious thought given to providing quality education and training,” she said.

“The needs of the apprentice and the employer must be the priority for both the provider and the subcontractor.”

Eastleigh College principal Jan Edrich said she “welcomes the opportunity to deliver some provision directly to apprentices”.

The college subcontracted 80 per cent of its apprenticeship provision in 2015/16.

A spokesperson for Hull College, another major subcontractor, said it was also looking to continue to farm out part of its provision.

The college is “working closely with partners to ensure any future delivery within a partnership model meets the criteria clearly set out by the SFA”, according to its spokesperson.

And a representative for Central College Nottingham said it had “developed a five-year plan going forward to reduce our subcontracting activity and work with partners in other ways”.

FE Week has repeatedly reported on the issue of subcontracting – and the large management fees charged by lead providers – since our first edition in 2011.

One of the worst offenders is Sheffield-based provider Learndirect, which retained almost £20 million in management fees from its 64 subcontractors in 2015/16 – amounting to 36 per cent of its £55.3 million SFA funding.

A Learndirect spokesperson said: “We expect our engagement with subcontractors to reduce as our primary approach is to directly deliver apprenticeship services to these employers.”

Learndirect:

Engagement with subcontractors to fall

Learndirect – which keeps hitting FE Week headlines due to its soaring top-slicing fees – has said it will deliver more apprenticeships itself.

Latest figures published in November showed it retained almost £20 million (around 36 per cent) in subcontracting management fees from total funding worth £55 million.

The provider has now said it expects “our engagement with subcontractors to reduce as our primary approach is to directly deliver apprenticeship services to these employers, but recognise that should the partnership require it we will explore other delivery options, which could include an element of subcontracting”.

Learndirect in 2015/16

Apprenticeship funded subcontractors	25
Total funding	£10,727,778
of which total paid to subcontractors	£8,977,600
of which kept as a management fee	£1,750,179
of which average management fee	16%

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NEWS

Principal racked up £60k bill on overseas trips

BILLY CAMDEN
@BILLYCAMDEN

A former principal spent more than £60,000 on worldwide recruitment trips but it's unclear if he managed to persuade a single overseas student to join his London college, it has been revealed.

Kensington and Chelsea College spent tens of thousands of pounds on jetting Mark Brickley, who unexpectedly resigned last November, on eight overseas trips between September 2014 and October 2016.

The information emerged from a Freedom of Information request lodged by the Grenfell Action Group, a local campaign group, requesting information on the college's overseas spending.

The enquiry also revealed that on two of these visits, Mr Brickley had been accompanied by an unnamed college member of staff at a cost of £2,957.

The trips, which cost a total of £64,403, were to allow him to "attend conferences, student recruitment fairs and exhibitions, to meet with recruitment agencies and agents, and to promote and market the college in overseas markets", according to the college's FOI response.

And in return for the hefty bill, just nine international students have applied to join

the college "either online, via staff or by word of mouth".

Edward Daffran, from Grenfell Action Group, told FE Week: "Nearly £70,000 is an outrageous amount of money for the college to waste on trips that have provided such little in return."

Ruth Levin, national officer for FE at public services union Unison, added she was "concerned" to learn that Mr Brickley spent such a high amount on overseas visits "which didn't seem to reap any significant benefit for the college".

"It is, as ever, vital that money is invested where it is most needed to improve the college for staff and students," she said.

The FOI response from Kensington and Chelsea College also said that "in line with many FE colleges", the corporation agreed an overseas strategy to recruit international students "as a way of enhancing turnover with student funding having dropped significantly due to changes in government funding for both adults and young people".

FE Week approached the college and asked if this was considered a good return on its travel costs.

We also asked whether any overseas students had yet officially joined the college.

All it would say in response was: "There has been an FOI request into the previous principal's overseas business activities.

The clerk to the corporation has provided a response to the questions without breaching either the Data Protection Act or commercial confidentiality. We are therefore not going to comment further."

FE Week was unable to contact Mr Brickley despite repeated attempts.

Mr Brickley, who joined Kensington and Chelsea College as principal in September 2013, resigned with immediate effect last year.

His shock departure was for "personal reasons", a college spokesperson said at the time.

The college has around 3,350 learners and received a 'requires improvement' rating, including a grade three for effectiveness of leadership and management, following

its most recent Ofsted inspection in June 2015, having received the same grade at two previous inspections in 2013 and 2012.

The issue of whether colleges should concentrate more on international opportunities as their funding from the Skills Funding Agency diminishes has raged on for years.



Mark Brickley

The former Ofsted chief inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw warned of the dangers of foreign recruitment in FE way back in 2012.

His remarks came in an introductory speech to Association of Colleges delegates at a London conference, where he said the focus should be on "Deptford not Delhi".

Rule change could price assessors out of running exams

JUDE BURKE
@JUDEBURKE77

It might not be financially viable for awarding bodies to run end-point assessment exams, after it emerged that they will be forced to base their costs on deals negotiated with employers without their say-so.

New rules coming into force in May will set the cost of final apprenticeship exams at a fifth of the overall training costs agreed between an employer and a training provider – moving away from previous guidelines which set the charge at no more than 20 per cent of the funding-band maximum for that standard.

Assessors fear that this means they will lose money if employers drive hard bargains on deals with providers.

A draft copy of the handbook for apprentice assessment organisations, seen by FE Week, makes it clear that the change is designed to drive down overall costs.

It says: "The published rules confirm that the 20 per cent is of the total agreed price, not 20 per cent of the funding-band maximum.

"We agreed this because if the agreed price is less than the funding-band maximum, it ensures that the assessment costs are proportionately lower as well."

Stephen Wright, the chief executive of the Federation of Awarding Bodies, issued a stark warning about the impact of the new rule.

"Like every other organisation, awarding organisations can only provide their services for a fair price," he said.

"If the percentage of the price between the trainer and the employer is too low to deliver a valid assessment, then awarding organisations will simply not offer end-point assessments, which will undermine the whole system."

Graham Hasting-Evans, the managing director of NOCN, a major awarding body, said that awarding organisations need control of the exam charges, to make sure they cover their costs and are able to make some profit.

He stressed that apprenticeship exam

costs "are driven by the employer group's specification for testing as set out in the assessment plan, and have nothing at all to do with the training costs".

Details of what should be included in an apprentice's final exam are set out by the employer groups developing a standard, and are outlined in the assessment plan.

Some of these can be highly detailed, and therefore have high costs attached to them.

For example, the gas network team leader assessment plan estimates the final exam to cost £3,808.

But the

standard has a funding-band maximum of £9,000 and the agreed price may be lower than that.

As the assessment costs are not related to the cost of training, the cost of delivering these exams to the specification set out in the assessment plan is unlikely to change regardless of the negotiated price for the apprenticeship.

Mr Hasting-Evans said that one way the government could reduce the cost of apprenticeship exams was to "review all the specifications with a view to improving efficiency and reducing costs".

FE Week understands that a number of assessment organisations are reporting difficulties in recruiting assessors at payment rates that would allow them to break even.

The government has already started struggling to persuade organisations to sign up to deliver apprenticeship final exams.

By the end of January just over half – 81 out of 159 – standards approved for delivery had at least one assessment organisation in place.

But the proportion of learners on standards without an approved assessment organisation has been dropping rapidly, from 42 per cent in July to 18 per cent in October.

The Department for Education declined to comment either on the rule change or on the concerns raised by Mr Hasting-Evans and Mr Wright.





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NEWS

Manchester merger scrapped by FE Commissioner

MERGER on the grapevine

JUDE BURKE
@JUDEBURKE77

One of just two mergers recommended in the troubled Manchester area review has been scrapped following intervention by the FE commissioner, FE Week understands.

Plans to merge Tameside, Oldham and Stockport colleges have been called off after the FE commissioner Richard Atkins visited at least one of them – forcing them back to the drawing board.

The proposal was made at the end of a nine-month process riven by deep tensions between the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and the colleges involved.

Both Oldham and Tameside colleges have told FE Week that the merger is “not going ahead”.

“All three colleges are now considering alternative options”, a spokesperson for Oldham College added.

Oldham received a financial notice of concern from the Skills Funding Agency in

November, triggering intervention from Mr Atkins and his team.

FE Week understands that the commissioner made a number of recommendations, including changes to its merger plans, although these have not yet been published.

Meanwhile, Stockport College has already found an alternative merger partner, and is in talks with nearby Trafford College.

Trafford was due to have joined the LTE Group alongside Manchester College, but this plan has now also fallen off the table.

In an email dated February 3 and seen by FE Week, Trafford’s principal Lesley Davies told staff that the merger is expected to go through at the end of December and that she will lead the merged college.

Trafford’s chair Graham Luccock confirmed that the college was in “early discussions” with Stockport over a possible merger.

He said the college had reviewed “possible options in detail” with the LTE Group but had “decided that a formal structure would not achieve our longer-term aims”.

But he added: “We fully support the aims for the Manchester area-based review”.

The new merger plan comes after Stockport was rated ‘inadequate’ in an Ofsted report published in November.

It’s not known whether the report

triggered a visit from Mr Atkins’ team, as the college had previously been subject to intervention from the FE commissioner.

The college was placed in administered status in December 2013 following a visit from Mr Atkins’ predecessor Sir David Collins, and it’s unclear if this was ever lifted. FE Week asked Stockport College for a response, but was told that the only person who could comment was its principal Simon Andrews, who was out of the country.

The college’s deputy principal was not fully briefed on matters relating to the college’s merger plans, and the college chair was unavailable, a spokesperson said.

As previously reported by FE Week, the Greater Manchester area review has been one of the most problematic of the reviews of post-16 education and training.

It began in September 2015 but didn’t come to an end until June 2016 – making it the longest of the reviews so far – and caused serious ructions between the colleges and the GMCA, which chaired the process. Despite 10 general FE colleges and 11 sixth form colleges

taking part, it ended with just two proposed mergers involving five colleges.

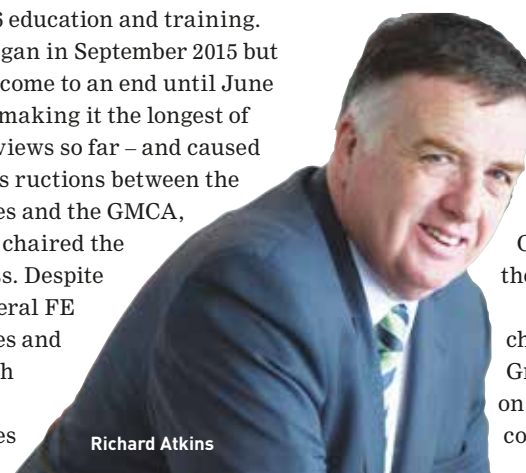
In a statement seen by FE Week in June, the GMCA said it “remains to be convinced” that the proposed outcomes would meet the skills need for Manchester.

The final report into the Greater Manchester review, published in November, said that the three-way Stockport, Oldham and Tameside merger would create a “new post-16 institution which focuses on progression to high quality technical education and training”.

But it acknowledged that “Stockport College is financially weak, and all three colleges were graded ‘requires improvement’ in their most recent Ofsted inspection”.

A spokesperson for the Department for Education would not be drawn on whether Mr Atkins recommended that the colleges change their merger plans, saying: “The FE commissioner is working with Oldham College and stakeholders in the area.”

Theresa Grant, Trafford Council’s chief executive, who chaired the Greater Manchester area review on behalf on the GMCA, declined to comment.



Richard Atkins

Early years educators shaken by sudden trailblazer shutdown

ALIX ROBERTSON
@ALIXROBERTSON4

The government has shut down the trailblazer group for early years educator apprenticeships, in a move described by sector insiders as “very disappointing”.

The employer-led Early Years Apprenticeship trailblazer group was disbanded by the Department for Education last week, due to what a spokesperson described as “slow progress” in developing its apprenticeship standard. FE Week understands it is the first of its kind to be shut down by the DfE.

“Given the very slow progress of this

particular trailblazer, the decision has been taken to terminate its work on this apprenticeship standard,” they said.

“We remain committed to employers developing apprenticeship standards for use in the early years sector.”

The early years sector has been stuck in limbo for a while now, as it waits for the government to respond to a consultation on the literacy and numeracy qualification requirements to enter level three courses, which was launched at the start of November.

Sector representatives want the current requirements – at least a C in both GCSE maths and English – to be extended to allow functional skills qualifications to count as a valid alternative, as they are in all other

apprenticeships.

Caroline Dinenege, the secretary of state for women, equalities and early years, is understood to have pushed the schools minister Nick Gibb to accept the case for a change in policy, but the decision, which was originally expected before Christmas, has been delayed by Number 10.

Julie Hyde, associate director of CACHE, a sector specialist in health, care and education, said: “It is extremely disappointing that the Early Years Apprenticeship trailblazer group has been asked to stand down, especially at this point in time.”

However, she pointed to “the strength of support from the sector”, and said that a decision from the government to add

functional skills as an alternative was still “anticipated” and would “enable the current proposed apprenticeship standard to be accepted”.

She continued: “The group has worked hard to develop the apprenticeship standard employers require and that reflects the needs of the early years workforce.”

Stella Ziolkowski, director of quality and workforce development at the National Day Nurseries Association, concurred, saying that it was “very disappointing” to lose the “knowledge and expertise” of the trailblazer group, which was one of the first to be set up in March 2014.

“We feel very let down,” she confirmed, adding that the early years sector has relied on apprentices because of its struggles with high turnover resulting from low pay.

She said: “Early years employers have clearly told us that GCSE requirements should not be the only standard used to progress to level three. This simply is not working.”

“It’s clear the GCSE policy has had a massively negative impact on recruitment and retention within nurseries.”

FE Week has repeatedly asked the DfE when a response to the consultation would finally be published.

“Our public consultation on the GCSE requirement for level three early years educator roles received over 4,000 responses,” a spokesperson said.

“We will respond to this, and publish our workforce strategy, shortly.”





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EDITORIAL

Baker's big breakthrough



Lord Baker deserves a big pat on the back for his victory in the House of Lords this week.

The Baker Clause, as it will inevitably come to be known, will force the hand of many in schools that are clearly biased against post-16 skills training.

They haven't done enough to steer students more suited to vocational study away from A-levels

Now colleges and independent training providers will hopefully be given a fair chance to sell the valuable alternative they offer to young people who will benefit.

I will certainly be interested to see what impact this has on post-14 UTC learner recruitment, which has failed to take off so far.

It's also worth noting that the resident minister in the House, Lord Nash, backed the amendment.

It hopefully shows that the government has finally accepted the era of obsessing over academic routes is over. FE's time has come!

Paul Offord, Deputy editor
news@feweek.co.uk

UTC TWEETS:

Anthony Painter @anthonypainter

All the serious flaws in the UTC experiment were obvious from the very early stages. But it was expanded regardless.

Dean Langton @thedeanlangton

Problem with UTCs is the 14-18 age range - how many parents want their child to switch schools - clearly, not so many

Cllr Sam Webster @cllrsamwebster

Govt banned Councils from building new schools, yet hundreds of millions wasted on UTCs. The true cost of Tory dogma

Gordon Ollivere @GordonOllivere

Well done Lord Baker for rebutting Michael Gove's negativity about UTCs. They prepare kids for modern industry

Uncertainty Nic @WDYReallyKnow

UTCs are a disaster. The DfE wants to drop them as quietly as possible.



'Baker clause' will force hostile schools to open doors to FE

BILLY CAMDEN @BILLYCAMDEN
FREDDIE WHITTAKER @FGDWHITTAKER

Lord Baker has won a major concession in the House of Lords which will force all schools to give FE providers access to their pupils, a move which he concedes will likely be universally hated by them.

The move to amend the government's Technical and Further Education Bill, put forward by Lord Baker and his fellow former education secretary Baroness Morris, was voted through on Wednesday night.

The peer, who served under Margaret Thatcher and was a key architect of the ailing University Technical Colleges programme, accused schools of "resisting" those who tried to promote more vocational courses to their pupils.

He insisted that "every word" of his proposed clause was needed because it would be "met with great hostility in every school in the country".

It means schools will now have to ensure that a "range of education and training providers" can access pupils aged between 13 and 18, to promote technical education qualifications or apprenticeships.

The decision by the parliamentary undersecretary of state for the school system, Lord Nash, not to challenge the amendment, has been met with surprise as it is considered unusual for the government to accept an amendment in this manner.

In fact, he spoke glowingly about the positive impact it would have.

"The amendment would require schools to give education and training providers the opportunity to talk directly to pupils about the approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships that they offer," he said.

"I agree that it would strengthen the bill by promoting technical education and apprenticeship opportunities more effectively, so that young people can make more informed and confident choices at important transition points."

The move was welcomed by the FE sector, which has been highly critical of the slow progress over schools' careers advice on skills training.

Mark Dawe, the boss of AELP, told FE Week: "Training providers have the links with all of the local apprenticeship employers and their current apprentices, so why wouldn't you want to use them to turn the apprenticeship reforms into a game-changer for young people?"

"This is why the Baker clause, as it will hopefully become known, is so important."

He added that the implementation of the new requirement needs to be "properly managed" so that head teachers don't get bombarded with approaches.

He confirmed that his organisation is "keen to work with" the Skills Funding Agency, the Careers and Enterprise Company and the local enterprise partnerships "to make this work".

David Hughes, chief executive of the AoC, said the amendment would be "significant for colleges".

"Careers advice and guidance has been failing young people for too long, with many being encouraged to stay in the school sixth form without realising that there are other options available with colleges and other training providers," he said.

"It is vital that all young people are aware of the exciting range of options that are available to them at the age of 16, whether academic, vocational or technical."

The 13-to-18 age range included in the new amendment means that UTCs - which have faced huge problems with recruitment at 14 - will also benefit, according to Lord Baker, who admitted that a transition at 14 "presents marketing difficulties".

Baroness Morris, an education secretary under Tony Blair, who supported the amendment alongside Labour's Lord Adonis and the Lib Dem education spokesperson Lord Storey, said the problems with schools were caused by "incentives the government have put into the system".

She said UTCs were "a force for good" but their "very existence" was threatened because of the "wrong incentives".

The legislation will also apply to special schools, pupil referral units and alternative provision academies, and will require schools to prepare a policy statement setting out the circumstances in which providers of technical education will be given access.

COMMENTS

Employers blasted for ignoring apprenticeships they developed

This highlights again how difficult it is to get representative SME employer engagement and input. The development of inappropriate and unwanted standards will be the inevitable consequence in many sectors. When will those in their ivory towers finally grasp the crucial contribution made by training providers in driving the whole system they want implemented. Give the training providers the respect and support they deserve and let them get this job done for you!

Blue Boy

SFA close achievement rate 'loophole' that boosted some provider rates by more than 20 percent

Is it a good idea to apply this retrospectively though? It invalidates all historical data undermining the good work that providers may have done for example in addressing achievement gaps. It will expose providers to criticism from Ofsted if previously 'ok data' now looks like groups experienced disadvantage. How can a provider improve their 2014-15 data in 2017? They can't. I can understand applying this methodology in 2015-16 but I'm at a loss as to the justification for back-dating it.

Matt Garvey

Employers in three sectors to grade their own apprentices

Strange, odd, poorly thought out, badly implemented, not really needed - poor quality and bad press due mainly to a mania for numbers which opened the floodgates for opportunists (loopholes to be exploited). That's what I think about the reforms, not sure you should have asked.

Paul O'Neill

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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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- Evaluating farrier training provision to ensure that specific standards in teaching, learning, quality assurance and student welfare are achieved and maintained
- Analysing and making sound judgements on the basis of evidence gathered; reporting objectively on standards and effectiveness
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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

Closing date for enquiries: 10th March 2017

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If you have a passion for education, would like to inspire the next generation and work with a dedicated management team as we launch our exciting new Technology and Logistics Centre, this is the perfect opportunity for you.

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Details on our website www.strode-college.ac.uk
or contact the Personnel Office on 01458 844450.

Closing date: 2pm Friday 10th March 2017



Lecturer, English and Mathematics



Salary: £23,903 - £32,157 per annum (pro rata for part time)

Hours: Part time or full time, 52 weeks per year

Locations: Hadlow

An opportunity has arisen for a new member of staff within the English and mathematics department at Hadlow College. You will be fundamental in inspiring our post 16 learners to continually develop and improve their mathematics and or English skills. You will deliver a range of qualifications, including GCSE and Functional skills.

Ideally you will need a teaching qualification, or the willingness to work towards one, as well as excellent communication skills and the ability to work as part of an expanding team. Flexibility is required as a willingness to work at our Canterbury, Nottingham and Greenwich sites is a necessity although you will primarily be based at our Hadlow site.

Ideally, you will be an experienced teacher with practical knowledge of delivery and assessment of a range of mathematics and or English qualifications, committed to the holistic development of students within an inclusive environment. Alternatively you will have a passion for English and or mathematics and be qualified to a minimum of Level 3, possess the drive to make a career in teaching and dedicated to ensuring students are successful in improving their mathematics and English skills.

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Request an application pack by emailing jobs@hadlow.ac.uk

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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.

Please visit www.kirkleescollege.ac.uk/jobs and search under our latest vacancies page for more information and how to apply for this role.

If you have any queries, you can contact the HR department by telephone on 01484 437009 or by email at jobs@kirkleescollege.ac.uk.

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- Hold GCSE English & maths (A*-C)

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Closing date: 3rd March 2017



Lecturer in English

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Applications will be considered upon receipt, however the closing date for all received applications is 6th March 2017.

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Application packs can be downloaded from our website:
www.chelmsford.ac.uk/our-college/vacancies.asp
or alternatively please contact **Human Resources** on **01245 293093**



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If this describes you then you will be interested to know that we are looking for qualified people just like you to join us. Of course you will be dynamic, you will have experience of working with young people to improve their mathematical skills particularly at Functional Skills and GCSE level and you will put students at the heart of everything you do.

We have part time and sessional roles so please tell us what hours you are interested in doing on your application

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Lecturer in English

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A fantastic opportunity has arisen in the English Curriculum area here at Macclesfield College. The successful post holder will be an enthusiastic team player and keen to contribute to the development of the faculty provision.

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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.

To apply please visit www.macclesfield.ac.uk/vacancies and follow the instructions to complete the application form.

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EXPERTS



FE INSIDER

Shane Chown is head of policy and public affairs at the Learning and Work Institute

Apprenticeship outcomes: Who knows what they are?

Reporting on outcomes will not be mandatory, which risks undermining the status and quality of apprenticeships, says Shane Chown

Back in November, when I first wrote about the Technical and Further Education Bill, it had only just begun its journey through the Houses of Parliament. By the time this goes to press, the bill will have moved one step closer to becoming law after completing its committee stage in the House of Lords. This is the point at which peers have the opportunity to table amendments to the bill.

One such amendment of particular interest to me and the Learning and Work Institute, the first one to be discussed in fact, would have required the new Institute for Apprenticeships to report annually on a number of apprenticeship outcomes: job outcomes, earnings growth, progression to further learning and satisfaction rates of employers and apprentices.

Rarely do amendments tabled by members of the opposition to government legislation go anywhere either in the Commons or the Lords, which makes it relatively unsurprising that on this occasion the amendment was withdrawn, following some assurances from the minister.

I want to explain why, even though reporting on apprenticeship outcomes won't be a statutory requirement through this bill, it is still something the minister must take seriously in his mission to improve the status and quality of apprenticeships.

For apprenticeships to sit in their rightful place as an attractive, mainstream pathway, we need to improve the information available about what apprenticeships give people. Furthermore, while everyone agrees that a start is not an outcome, we are less clear about what is, and how we know if an apprenticeship is actually working.

What assurances will be offered to taxpayers and employers that apprenticeships are delivering the outcomes they are supposed to? After all, reporting on outcomes is becoming an increasingly important feature elsewhere in education and across most other public services.

These problems have at least been acknowledged in part by DfE ministers. Speaking in the Lords on reporting outcomes, Lord Nash said "it is of course critical that reporting measures are in place to enable us to assess how well the programme is achieving

quality outcomes".

The minister went on to quote the Institute's proposed operational plan, which is to "make more use of learner, employer and wider economy outcome data when reviewing the success of standards."

However, he later said that the type of outcome information outlined in the amendment was "well beyond what is in scope of [the IfA's] remit". It sounds to me like some decisions need to be made within the DfE about the extent to which outcomes inform definitions of apprenticeship quality, as a matter of policy, rather than process. If an apprenticeship isn't delivering positive outcomes for learners, but the development of the standard and assessment plan ticked all the right boxes, then what exactly is the Institute's role?

“What exactly is the Institute's role?”

This was just the first of three committee stage sessions in the Lords; the other two are still to take place. In this session, amendments concerning redefining technical qualifications, autonomy of tech-ed providers, and producing a careers strategy were also tabled and withdrawn.

Impressively, Lord Baker did marshal cross-party support for one amendment which was accepted. This new addition would require all schools to allow a range of education and training providers access to their pupils, and require schools to issue a policy statement detailing how such providers could access the school to provide information. The government is to be congratulated for recognising that tough new legislation is sadly necessary here.

Peers have another 54 amendments to debate over two days this week. The bill then goes back to the whole House of Lords before passing back to the House of Commons before it receives royal assent.

Now that a conversation about apprenticeship outcomes has started, the sector needs to lead a challenge back to government that broadens what we mean by high-quality apprenticeships beyond 'lasting 12 months' and 'look, employers designed the standard'.



SALLY ALEXANDER

Executive Director of Offender Learning at Milton Keynes College

We can all help keep young offenders out of custody

Recent policy changes to keep more young offenders out of custody will affect those working at FE colleges, says Sally Alexander

The prisons and courts bill published last Thursday promises to "enshrine into law that a key purpose of prison is to reform and rehabilitate offenders, as well as punish them for the crimes they have committed".

Having worked in offender learning for 25 years, and currently at an FE college that supports some of the most challenged young learners in Milton Keynes, it has been interesting to observe a similar trend in recent times across the system at large, including youth justice. For example, the numbers of young people in custody have shrunk from 3,000 in 2008 to 900 in 2015, reflecting a change in policy to remove police targets for bringing minor offences to justice.

This drive to keep young offenders out of custody is likely to affect all those working in further education, so it is important for colleges to understand the context.

One of the recent reports that may prove influential is Charlie Taylor's 'Review of the Youth Justice System', which was published in December 2016.

In line with recent policy changes, the review recommends that children need to be offered support in the community for all but the most serious crimes, as contact with the formal youth justice system is likely to reinforce offending behaviour.

Mr Taylor's review expresses a real determination to use the skills that colleges and schools can bring to the table to help keep young offenders out of the custodial system. He suggests that power be devolved to local authorities, bringing together all relevant parties – parents, health, social care, housing and of course, education – to create a comprehensive plan to meet the child's individual need.

As an FE college, we experience the value of cross-partner working to achieve solutions for our most challenging young learners. This has not always been smooth, and we have not always been involved in the process. Interestingly, however, since the publication of this review, our local authority is starting to involve our college formally as a part of these young learners' plans.

At the same time, these learners are presenting far more challenging behaviours, suggesting there is a push to keep these young people out of custody wherever possible. This poses issues for a college, but

we manage and assess the risks with the partners involved in the plan. If we genuinely work together, we can have an impact on keeping these children out of custody and changing their lives around.

However, there will still be around 900 children who must enter custody and who, as a consequence, will be the most challenging to rehabilitate.

The report's recommendation that we create secure schools for those placed in custody is one I fully support. As Mr Taylor says, "education needs to be central to our response to youth offending".

Under this plan, these children would be placed in establishments where education is the main driver. Instead of trying to squeeze education into a strict and often unforgiving prison regime, we would create secure schools of 60-70 children, where all of the staff, be they education, health or support workers, would be trained to manage and deal with challenging behaviours. All children would have individualised learning programmes with a focus on quality educational provision including maths, English, and programmes leading to real employment or further learning opportunities pre- and on release.

“We can have an impact on changing their lives around”

And here is the interesting parallel with the new prisons and courts bill, which highlights a need to address prisoners' maths and English skills and to help secure them employment on release. Whether for children or adults, the effective approach to supporting prisoner rehabilitation is placing education and learning at the heart of what we do.

However, to return to the young offenders, it is essential to remember they are children, often as young as 12 or 13. If we keep them out of custody they are far less likely to reoffend, and more likely to have a positive result through joined-up locally-led interventions, in particular involving local colleges and schools. This will both keep the public safe and give these children a chance in life.

EXPERTS

The assessment community is calling for Ofqual's role in apprenticeships to be extended – which shows something is badly wrong, says Gemma Gathercole

When I first started working for OCR way back in 2005, there was a single body responsible for both the content of qualifications and their regulation: the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.

It is a difficult task, designing the rules governing content, and then writing the rules that regulate it in the form of qualifications and regulating the organisations that offer them. And because it is a difficult task, it led inevitably to questions about conflicts of interest. For those with long memories in this sector, and I don't yet count myself as one, there are probably many more examples of this sort of conflict.

However, we are on the verge of recreating exactly that sort of conflict in a new organisation: the Institute for Apprenticeships, but the picture is now even more complex.

For apprenticeship standards, there is no single approach to external quality-assurance. Depending on the version of documentation you read, there are three, four or five. The official government guidance says there are three options: an employer-designed solution within specified parameters set by the guidance, professional bodies taking on the role, or Ofqual regulation.

The fourth, isn't described as an option as it's a route of default rather than choice: the



GEMMA GATHERCOLE

Head of funding and assessment,
Lsect

Why not give Ofqual more power?

Quality Assurance Agency, which retains its remit for regulating degrees, and therefore degree apprenticeships.

And in FAQs or presentations given before the IfA launched, there has also been a fifth option: to ask the IfA itself to take on the role.

It's this final option that provides the same conflicts of interest that afflicted QCA. And what happened to QCA? Well, it was disbanded and from it two organisations were created: the now-defunct Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency and Ofqual, as an independent regulator. The legislation that established Ofqual gave it five objectives: qualifications standards, assessments standards, public confidence, awareness and efficiency. It's hard to understand what might put this at odds with apprenticeships.

And yet, in this round of apprenticeship reform, while we are not replacing Ofqual (at least not directly), we are adding further complexity into a system that almost everyone already thinks is too confusing.

“
Now is the time to act

It would be difficult to imagine a similar approach to qualifications like GCSEs and A-Levels, where, say, an academy trust or local authority could set the bar for school-leaving qualifications. So why is it acceptable

for apprenticeships?

At the heart of these reforms is a drive to put those with the right experience at the centre of the design. It's an obvious, important step, but while it's easy to understand, it is baffling that the same message – about putting those with experience in the driving seat – does not extend to quality assurance and regulation. In an era where budgets are getting tighter, and government expenditure does not reach as far as it once did, spending money on duplicating the functions of an existing non-ministerial department seems frivolous.

Regulators are often disliked – it's the nature of their role – but the function they fulfil is an important check to ensure quality. At some point, probably in the not-too-distant future, questions are likely to be raised about disparate approaches to quality assurance within apprenticeships. And to where should those concerns be directed?

Indeed, the fact that the assessment community is actually calling for Ofqual's role in apprenticeships to be extended should indicate that something is wrong.

It is not common for the regulated to be calling for their regulator to have more power. Correcting this misstep would mean some changes to standards that have already been approved for delivery, but that is much easier to do right now, while the numbers of starts is low. It would certainly be easier to do before the Institute begins to develop a regulatory function, and given it doesn't yet formally exist, now is the time to act.

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CAMPUS ROUND-UP *with Samantha King*

Students discuss future of nursing on BBC Radio 5



(L-R) Hussain, Olivia, Eunice, Godwin

Health and social care students from Salford City College recently appeared on BBC Radio 5 Live to debate whether nurses should train for free.

The four students, all on studying at level three, Olivia, Godwin, Hussain and Eunice, visited the BBC's Quay House at MediaCityUK for the broadcast, and were joined by Janet Davies, the chief executive of the Royal College of Nursing.

BBC presenters Sam Walker and Jason Mohammad asked the students why they wanted to pursue a nursing career, and whether the abolishment of bursaries would affect their decision.

While the students were somewhat unsure how the changes would affect them, fellow

guest Steve West from Universities UK assured them there was still support funding available for nursing degrees, telling them "don't lose that passion and let your dreams fly away because you think you can't afford it."

The debate followed reports appearing across the national press that there had been a 23 per cent drop in applications to university nursing courses.

Olivia said: "It was amazing to have the opportunity to go on national radio and have our say about things that affect us.

"I was really nervous about the show being live but afterwards I felt really confident and it's good to do things that push you outside your comfort zone."



Chesterfield college Travel and Tourism students with Carolyn Paisley, Travel Manager at Explore

Students help the show go on

Travel and tourism students at a Derbyshire college travel agency are helping an international opera star tour the globe.

Chesterfield College's on-site travel agency Explore first helped local opera singer Carly Paoli make arrangements for a tour three years ago, and have been approached again to help the now-global star tour with her band of musicians.

The mezzo-soprano singer from Mansfield has performed with the likes of Italian megastar Andrea Bocelli, and even shared a stage with Aerosmith's Steven Tyler.

Travel and tourism students have been working alongside managers at the agency to organise the travel plans, gaining

experience in dealing with tailor-made travel arrangements.

Carly's mum, Tina Hopkinson, who is an ex-travel agent herself, said: "My requests aren't always straightforward and finding a travel agency that understands the demands is really important. It feels good to know we are helping the next generation of travel experts get some experience, too."

Carolyn Paisley, travel manager at Explore, said: "Working with clients who have more unusual and complicated travel requirements gives students a chance to test different skills.

"It's also really exciting to know that we are playing a part in helping Carly take her amazing talent to a global audience."

Putting on the pastry at the Ritz

A patisserie student has been offered a full-time post at The Ritz hotel in London after impressing chefs during a week's work experience.

William Kerry is currently completing his level three patisserie course at Suffolk New College, and was offered the role when his course comes to an end this summer.

The 22-year-old impressed during a week-long work placement at the prestigious hotel in London's Piccadilly, with guests such as Tom Jones and Rod Stewart checking in during his time there.

William, who hopes one day to open his

own patisserie, said: "There was a lot of pressure to ensure the food was presented perfectly and sent out on time. The standards are high, and if they're not met, the food doesn't go out.

"I am planning to take up the position in September. It's such a prestigious place to work, and to have it on my CV means I will be able to go on to work anywhere in the world."

The Ritz was opened by Swiss hotelier César Ritz in 1906 and has hosted numerous high-profile guests throughout its history, including politicians, socialites, writers and actors.



Chloe with her tutor Gary

Sandhurst beckons for aspiring officer

Darlington College student has become the first in its history to secure a place at Sandhurst, the prestigious Royal Military Academy.

Seventeen-year-old Chloe Dent, who studies level three uniformed public services at the County Durham-based college, secured an unconditional offer at the world-famous academy after she completes her studies.

Chloe, who wants to be an officer in the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps, will begin her 42-week officer training in March next year and upon completion, will graduate as a second lieutenant.

She said: "I have really enjoyed the course

at Darlington College; the tutors are so supportive. They helped me realise that I could get into Sandhurst and I'm thrilled to have made it."

The future officer was also recently recognised for her efforts on her course at the college's annual awards ceremony, where she received the 'student of the year' accolade.

Her tutor Gary Paxton added: "She thoroughly deserves her success as she is a brilliant student, with a positive attitude and high degree of enthusiasm.

"I look forward to her completing her training when I will be very happy to salute her on her achievement."



Student William Kerry did a cracking job

CAMPUS ROUND-UP *with Samantha King***Building history at the Ideal Home Show**FEATURED
CAMPUS
ROUND-UP

For the first time in its history, the Ideal Home Show will have students designing the interiors of its display homes. Samantha King reports

The Ideal Home Show is a key date in the calendar for homeowners looking to spice up their living space, or find out about the latest trends and innovations in the interior design world.

Attracting around 280,000 people every year, the show has hosted many of the UK's best designers, but this year, the display homes – the focal points of the show – will be designed by students from Chichester college.

A team of art and design students from the West Sussex college will become interior designers, planning how to decorate the two fully-built houses and the three-storey apartment building that will feature in this year's showcase. The same job has previously been done by the likes of architect George Clarke and the established interior designer Linda Barker.

The apartment building will house three separate flats, which the students will design to reflect the stories of their residents – from a young family to an older couple who are downsizing in retirement.

Julie Kapsalis, vice-principal at Chichester College, said: "This is



Judges look over student designs

Students await feedback on their designs

a fantastic opportunity for our students to showcase their tremendous talents on a huge stage, where hundreds of thousands of people will see what they can do.

"It is a huge challenge – like nothing we've done before – but I know we will all be blown away by what our students will be presenting when the show opens in March."

This year's show already has a confirmed

line-up of celebrity guests, including inspirational speaker Katie Piper, interior designer Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen and financial journalist Martin Lewis.

The show was originally founded by the Daily Mail in 1908 as a publicity tool for the newspaper, before being taken over in 2008 by events and publishing company Media 10, which publishes a range of home design titles, including Grand Designs and Good Homes magazine.

Isobel McKenzie-Price, the former editor of Ideal Home Magazine who is now the creative content editor at Media 10, said: "The Ideal Home Show has always showcased the latest ideas and trends in homes, so we're thrilled to be working with the next generation of British interior design talent.

"The Chichester students have approached this project from a contemporary design perspective, bringing in fresh ideas and innovative ways to use space creatively that challenge traditional thinking.

"They'll get to bring their ideas to life in real spaces for the Ideal Home visitors to experience for themselves.

The students have begun designing their concepts for the homes, which were presented to the organisers of the show – Barclays and Media 10 – in January, with the final designs due to be selected this month.

The show opens on Friday 24 March and will run until Sunday 9 April at Olympia, London.



Judges peruse the student's wallpaper choices

**Do you want to be in Campus Round-up?**

If you have a story you'd like to see featured in campus round-up, get in touch by emailing samantha.king@feweek.co.uk

**& MOVERS SHAKERS**

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

Michelle Swithenbank has been appointed deputy chief executive of Hull College Group.

Based in Yorkshire, the college has an enrolment of around 28,000 students, making it one of the largest colleges of its kind.

She will take up the role from her previous position as interim vice principal at the Grimsby Institute Group, where she oversaw multiple faculties.

Beginning her career as a full-time nurse in the NHS and private sector, she moved into further education following an opportunity to work in curriculum development of overseas nursing programmes.

Her first FE role was as a lecturer at Hereford college of technology (now Herefordshire and Ludlow college), before going on to hold roles as head of school at City of Wolverhampton college in 2014 and interim associate principal at the Grimsby Institute.

Ms Swithenbank said of her new role: "I am very excited to join Hull College Group

at a time when the city of Hull is undergoing such amazing cultural transformation. Hull College Group's campuses are well placed in the heart of each area and house an incredibly diverse range of talented staff and students."

Niko Phillips has been appointed group director of international at Activate

Learning, an education and training group based in Oxford, which runs schools, FE colleges and work-based training. It also delivers international study programmes.

Activate Learning currently comprises three UK FE colleges, four schools, two apprenticeship and training providers and four colleges in Saudi Arabia.

Mr Phillips will take up the role from his current position as group operations director for the BSC Group of schools, where he oversaw areas such as safeguarding and developing the use of technology in schools.

He brings a total of 16 years' experience working internationally as a teacher, trainer, academic director and school leader to the role, which will see him develop Activate Learning's international presence.

Speaking of his new role, he said: "I am very excited to be taking up this role. Activate Learning's growing reputation means that we have an unrivalled opportunity to transform lives through learning in an international arena."

The former head of policy at OCR, **Gemma Gathercole**, has joined Lsect – the publisher of FE Week – as our head of funding and assessment.

Lsect was established in 2010 and publishes two weekly newspapers, FE Week and Schools Week, alongside putting on regular training events for those working in the further education sector.

Ms Gathercole had worked at the awarding body for more than 11 years, holding various roles including funding strategist, development manager, and her most recent position as head of policy for FE and funding.

In her new role she will be responsible for the consultancy and training side of the business, working closely with founder and FE Week editor, Nick Linford. She'll also write opinion pieces for both newspapers, alongside providing editorial advice.

Speaking of her decision to join the Lsect team, she said: "It was really important to me to do something in this sector because I absolutely love working in FE.

"I'll do my bit to make sure that, although there's massive change, we can have a sector that's prepared and supporting apprentices in making their next steps in their careers."



MICHELLE SWITHENBANK



NIKO PHILLIPS



GEMMA GATHERCOLE



One voice,
working together,
for our members.
For their future.



We proudly represent over 800 training providers and believe that together, through a collective voice, we can turn our sector's challenges into opportunities.

✉ membership@aelp.org.uk ☎ 0117 947 2090 🌐 aelp.org.uk 🐦 @AELPUK 📺 AELP

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

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

Difficulty:
EASY

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

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Solutions:
Next edition

Last Week's solutions

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

Difficulty:
EASY

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

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Spot the difference
To WIN an FE Week mug



Spot five differences. **First correct entry wins an FE Week mug.**
Email your name and picture of your completed spot the difference to: news@feweek.co.uk.
Last Edition's winner: Maria Murray, Policy Connect