

FE Week

**NOT JUST COLLEGES
ON VERGE OF MERGE**

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REMOVED WENT TO...**

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**SFA WON'T BE
MIDDLEMAN**

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HIDDEN SUBCONTRACTING EXPOSED

BILLY CAMDEN @BILLYCAMDEN

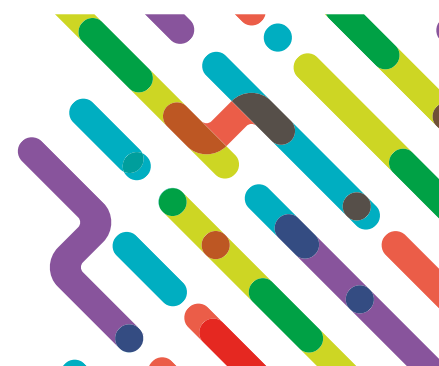
MAJOR INVESTIGATION INTO 'ASSOCIATE PARTNERSHIP' DEALS

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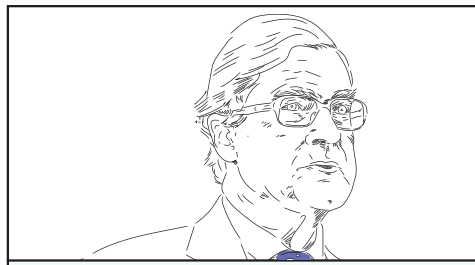


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NEWS

Stratford-upon-Avon College bailed out by SFA

ALIX ROBERTSON
@ALIXROBERTSON4

A Warwickshire college in financial dire straits has been bailed out by the Skills Funding Agency, and is now seeking a merger partner following the abrupt departure of its principal.

Stratford-upon-Avon College was rated 'good' by Ofsted in March 2015, but ran into money problems this year after planned projects which had been expected to bring in new funds hit the skids.

The situation is still fluid, but Lord Digby Jones, the chair of the college's corporation, told FE Week that the college had been forced to turn to the SFA after Lloyds Bank refused to step in with temporary financial support.

The SFA agreed to pay for a bailout but, he said, insisted that as part of the arrangement the principal, Nicola Mannock, must leave her post.

Andrew Cropley, the college's former deputy principal, has now taken up the reins as interim principal and chief executive at the college, and Lord Jones confirmed that his appointment had been approved by the SFA.

"I have found the SFA amazingly helpful," he said.

"They did say they wished Nicola



Lord Digby Jones

Mannock to resign and she has done so. She left our employment yesterday (February 27)."

He confirmed that this had been "a condition" of working with the SFA, but added that Ms Mannock had done "an awful

lot for the college" in her time there.

The college marked the end of a 17-month intervention by the then-FE commissioner, Sir David Collins, in October 15, which was first triggered when the SFA rated its finances as 'inadequate'.

Sir David's recommendations following his first visit in May 2014 suggested that Ms Mannock would "benefit from being mentored by an experience principal".

Her appointment, which took place without a competitive recruitment process, caused a number of governors to resign in protest, and was described at the time by the commissioner as "questionable".

Looking forward, Lord Jones said: "The only project on the horizon now is to put out a request for tenders for merger."

He admitted that while he plans to see the college through to recovery, he also intends to "step off the ship" once it reaches a "safe port".

He said that a merger would be implemented "as quickly as we can", ideally allowing the college to begin the 2017/18 academic year, "as a merged college with another entity".

Lord Jones added that the unions and the SFA would both be involved in the process, and that an agreement had been made with the SFA that "as a condition of any merger proposal, the college in Stratford will not be

harmled in any way".

FE Week approached two local colleges about the situation at Stratford-upon-Avon College and both showed interest in future collaboration.

Stuart Laverick, principal at Heart of Worcestershire College said he was "sorry to hear" about the college's troubles.

"We're already working closely with Stratford-upon-Avon College and have collaborated in a number of areas," he said.

"We will continue to support our partners and should there be an opportunity for closer working in the future of HoW College would look forward to exploring this further."

A spokesperson at Warwickshire College Group said it had proposed a merger with Stratford-upon-Avon College during the Coventry and Warwickshire area review, but the idea had been dismissed at the time.

He said: "WCG has been merging with individual colleges across Warwickshire and Worcestershire since 1996, so we have an established model to embrace other colleges into the group structure.

"WCG would be pleased to work more closely with Stratford College to secure the long term future of FE in the area and to ensure."

The SFA was unable to comment on the record, other than to confirm what Lord Jones told FE Week.

Funding rules over employer incentives to be strengthened

FE WEEK REPORTER
@FEWEEK

Apprenticeship funding rules will be beefed up to prevent inappropriate employer incentives, just two months ahead of the launch of levy-funded apprenticeships.

The Skills Funding Agency said in its weekly update that it was aware of providers offering incentives, such as payments to get employers to refund fees, which is "contrary to the policy intent".

"Following the publication of the apprenticeship funding and performance management rules 2017 to 2018, we have been made aware of some emerging delivery

models that are contrary to the policy intent," it wrote.

"For example, some providers are offering incentives for employers by paying or refunding them for certain aspects. These include:

- Inflating training costs to refund the employer's co-investment
- Funding ineligible costs to employers as subcontractors
- Claiming higher prices to fund non-English apprentices free of charge to the employer

"Providers must not make payments of this kind to employers. We will continue to review these practices and will shortly be strengthening the funding rules to prevent this."

3.

Funding rules – delivery models

Information

Following the publication of the [Apprenticeship funding and performance management rules 2017 to 2018](#), we have been made aware of some emerging delivery models that are contrary to the policy intent.

For example, some providers are offering incentives for employers by paying or refunding them for certain aspects. These include:

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Providers must not make payments of this kind to employers. We will continue to review these

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FE WEEK ASKS

Lord Baker on his school access winning clause

BILLY CAMDEN
@BILLYCAMDEN

Lord Baker hit the headlines last week after he won a major concession in the House of Lords, to force schools to give FE providers access to their pupils. Speaking exclusively with FE Week's Billy Camden, the former education secretary this week sets out his vision

Incredibly, Lord Baker, the architect of the UTC programme, originally only introduced his amendment "thinking it should be just for University Technical Colleges and Studio Schools", he reveals.

"But then I said: 'no, it should also apply to FE and apprenticeship providers'. This way it creates a level playing field."

So how will the Baker Clause, as it has become known, work in practice?

"It is quite complicated legislation but the government is going to require each school to produce a policy themselves as to how they intend to implement this," he tells me.

Schools will need to produce the policy "pretty promptly – certainly by June or July", in the time for when the clause comes into play, which is expected to be by around

September 2017.

The policy will have to include the likes of "timing basis, location and all those sorts of things", he says.

"As your cartoon [in FE Week edition 200] shows, you have a line of cars coming in, so it is only reasonable that schools should be given a chance to decide how it should be done."

He doesn't think visits would come as often as once a week, saying instead: "I think they'll be able to do it once a year during the key times in September, October and November, which is very important.

This yearly session could involve "a careers day with a host of colleges and UTCs and providers coming in at once".

It'll be up to the government to decide, he says, which providers get the chance to visit which

schools. "I can't decide every bit of the policy," he says with a chuckle.

Lord Baker told the House of Lords last week that "every word" of the proposed changes was needed because the amendment was going to be "met with great hostility in every school in the country".

So what does he think would happen if a school turned round and refused visits from FE providers?

"The bill that is going through provides powers to the secretary of state to intervene if any school refuses to let colleges in to talk to pupils," he states, firmly.

"They can direct exactly who should appear and where they

should be. It is very draconian from that point of view because the government is quite determined not to make these refuse this obligation, it is a real obligation for them."

He's seen as an antagonistic figure by many in the sector, through his promotion of UTCs as an alternative to FE colleges, but what does he really think of his critics?

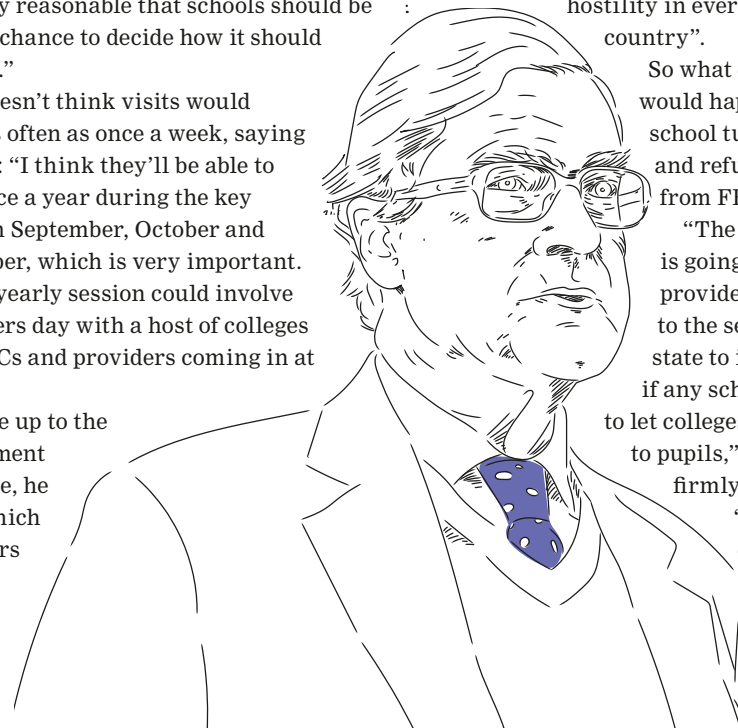
"I have high respect for some FE colleges," he said, though the ones he thinks will be given a chance to promote themselves to schools under his clause will be those "who create proper age-14 level courses".

"I am in favour of 14-level courses, and that is why we established career colleges, which are like UTCs but not doing the same subjects," he told me.

"I think that is part of the way forward for the FE world, frankly, because if they want to get into 14-year-old education they need to recognise that for two years it is at a school – and that is quite demanding.

"Some of the bigger colleges can cope with that, but some of the smaller ones have difficulty.

"Those that do it should be given the chance to put it over at school level."



FE Commissioner on 'big success' area reviews

JUDE BURKE
@JUDEBURKE77

Richard Atkins has had a very busy four months since he was confirmed as the new FE Commissioner. FE Week's Jude Burke caught up with him this week, for an exclusive interview on his progress in the demanding role, at the AoC's Governors Summit

With the area review process and college interventions occupying so much of his time, it's perhaps unsurprising that the FE commissioner's speech at the AoC summit was just his second public address to the sector since taking on the role.

Richard Atkins told the audience of college governors that he expected there to be "50-ish" mergers as a result of the area reviews – a substantially lower figure than the 80 predicted by his predecessor Sir David Collins last summer.

But when I caught up with the former Exeter College principal after

the event, he insisted that the reviews – which are due to finish at the end of March – had still been a "big success".

"I think area reviews have changed the landscape," he told me.

"Before this, local authorities, colleges and local enterprise partnerships were not sitting round the same table and now nearly every area has agreed to a strategic group to do that," he said.

The "deeper understanding" that local authorities and LEPs now have of "the scale of the college sector and the contribution it makes to their communities" is another key benefit to have emerged from the process, he said.

Colleges have also

learnt a "huge amount" about what their neighbours are doing, he said, and are now more willing to collaborate with each other.

"Before the area review what other colleges in your area were doing was all rumour and speculation, and sometimes malicious rumour," he said.

"This has put real numbers on the table, confidentially, and they've all shared them."

Nonetheless, it's hard to ignore the fact that a process that was intended to create "fewer, often larger, more resilient" providers has resulted in a smaller-than-predicted number of mergers.

But he insisted he wasn't disappointed about this lack of change; from his own experience of being a principal, he said appreciated "autonomy".

He did sound a note of caution about those colleges that have opted to remain standalone on the basis of "over-optimistic forecasts", particularly around student numbers.

Some colleges were "too optimistic on 16-to18, some apprenticeships, some HE numbers," he said.

"I don't believe those colleges will achieve those targets, and in some cases I was clear in the steering group and told them that I did not think everybody in the room would achieve those targets," Mr Atkins told me.

Those that don't "will find their finances sorely stressed", he warned.

Consequently there were likely to be further mergers announced in the future "for some years to come", although at a slower pace than currently.

On the subject of his intervention work with failing colleges, and the lack of published reports, Mr Atkins told delegates that there had been 60 interventions so far, with 28 providers currently in intervention and 32 having come out the other side of the process.

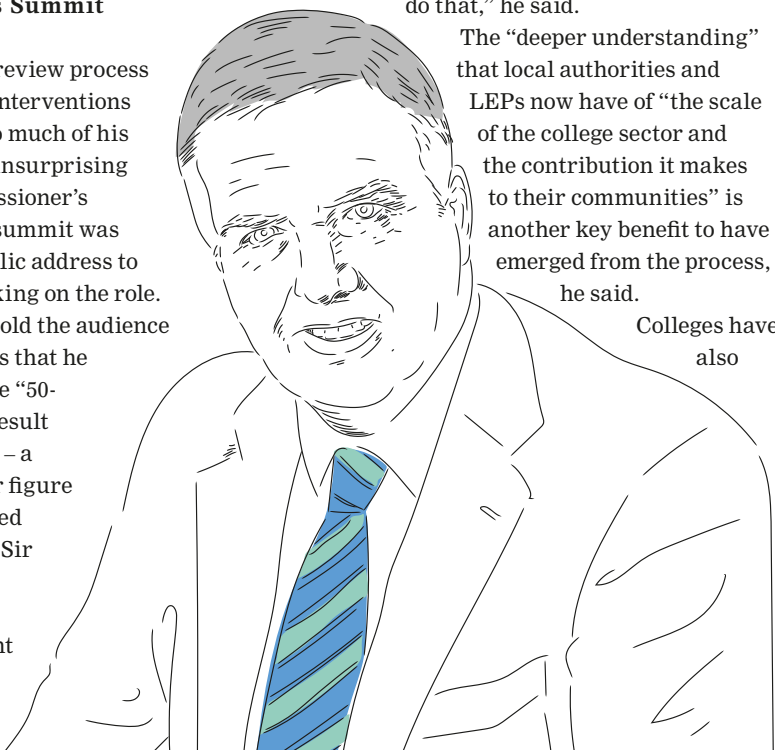
He told me that since he took over the job, there had been "four or five – maybe half a dozen" new interventions.

For all of those, "there will be a report published", he told me.

He also acknowledged that there had been "a gap" in publishing reports for a while, which he suggested had been due to "the change in government department".

The same governmental processes were also responsible for the delay in publishing the 2015/16 FE commissioner's annual report, and also a letter Mr Atkins had written to all colleges in January – neither of which have so far seen the light of day, he said.

"But I think we've put four intervention reports out in the past two weeks, and I think there are two or three more at least in the pipeline quite soon, and we will keep a regular supply," he said, adding: "I want to be held accountable."



NEWS

Hereford SFC wins the race to become academy

JUDE BURKE
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Hereford Sixth Form College will be the first FE provider to convert to academy status.

The college, which was rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted when it was last inspected in 2008, completed the formal process and became a standalone academy on March 1.

It made the switch 16 months after former chancellor George Osborne first announced that SFCs could convert to become academies to avoid paying VAT.

Jonathan Godfrey, Hereford SFC's outgoing principal, said he was "delighted" to win the race to academise.

The college's new status would allow it "to formalise some of the collaborative work we are involved in with our excellent local 11-16 partner schools", he said.

"As the first SFC to take this step, we have been able to help shape the conversion process and we hope this will benefit other SFCs that become academies in the future."

James Kewin, deputy chief executive of the Sixth Form Colleges Association, said Hereford's conversion marked "the beginning of a new chapter in sixth form education in England".

"By becoming an academy, SFCs like

Hereford will be able to forge closer links with local schools and invest more money in the education of their own students," he said.

Mr Kewin added that not all SFCs would want to academise, but said "it is right that they have the option to do so when it is in the best interests of their students".

SFCs were first given the option to convert to academy status in November 2015 as part of the government's spending review.

Mr Osborne said at the time that any SFC that became an academy would no longer have to pay VAT – an average annual bill of £385,000 for each college, according to the SFCA's latest figures.

His announcement came following a campaign led by the SFCA to bring SFCs in line with school sixth forms, which don't pay VAT.

At the moment, SFCs can only convert through the area review process.

Hereford SFC was part of the Hereford and Worcestershire review, in wave two, which came to an end in May.

The review recommended that the SFC should "remain standalone and develop its proposal for academy conversion whilst continuing to provide its core, good quality offer".

The 2,100-learner provider held a consultation on its plans to convert from September to November, with the initial aim



[l-r] Peter Cooper, principal designate; James Kewin, SFCA; and Ken Hopkins, chair

of converting on January 1.

Its consultation document said that conversion would give it "additional funding of between £200- £300k annually".

Ken Hopkins, Hereford's chair of governors, said: "Post-16 funding pressures need to be looked at again by government ministers and we will endeavour to ensure that our VAT refund is used to provide student support and enrichment and maintain our high standards of performance."

An estimated 70 per cent of the country's 93 SFCs are understood to be actively considering academisation.

FE Week reported in January that a fifth of SFCs had started formal negotiations to convert; other SFCs understood to be close to converting include Priestley SFC, New College Pontefract and Rochdale SFC.

FE Week reported in January that Priestley was planning to convert on April 1, while Rochdale's website says that it intends to academise on the same date.

Meanwhile, New College Pontefract is expected to convert in the coming months after its application to become a 16-to-19 academy was approved in principle by the Lancashire and West Yorkshire headteacher board on November 30.

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SPECIAL INVESTIGATION

Banned subcontracting hidden through widespread 'associate partnerships'

BILLY CAMDEN
@BILLYCAMDEN

FROM FRONT

Colleges and training providers are hiding banned subcontracting through the use of so-called 'associate partnerships', FE Week can reveal – potentially allowing millions of pounds-worth of public funds to change hands without proper scrutiny.

A recent Ofsted report has for the first time listed "training provided by an associate partner" as an arrangement not "sanctioned by the Skills Funding Agency".

Now, an FE Week investigation exposes that this practice is in widespread use across the sector.

Under it, a college or training provider with an SFA contract can invoice a partner for the use of their training staff as 'associates', as if they were from a recruitment agency.

Learners, however, are still recruited by this partner as usual, and taught on its premises, just as a subcontractor would do, but it's all done in such a way as to evade government oversight.

These hidden deals are increasingly being used as a way to avoid SFA rules that explicitly ban loans. They can also circumvent strict rules on second-level subcontracting for apprenticeship, adult education budget and ESF funding.

Simply by giving the same old arrangements a new label, they are freed from the government's checks, according to Rob George, a broker in SFA contracts.

He told FE Week that he was aware of several organisations which still effectively subcontracted their advance learner loan delivery, even though the SFA clearly banned the practice by August, just by "calling it an associate's agreement" which, he said, is clearly "breaking the rules".

He admitted that in his job, he "helps people manage their SFA contracts" and that

he sees the SFA's rules as "an opportunity document rather than an audit document".

He said: "I help people find business strategies to remain compliant within the rules".

Associate contracts are used by various colleges and providers, which "pay the training provider as a recruitment agency", which "in theory" means "they are paying the trainers as associates".

However, he said, "the only way you can properly, legally, within the rules do that is if [providers] have a separate arrangement with each individual trainer".

In either case, FE Week understands that staff at prime providers generally never either recruit or meet with learners.

FE Week approached three colleges which we learned had been running associate partnerships, but all three declined to comment.

Tyne and Wear-based Expedient Training received an 'inadequate' rating in an Ofsted report published in January, and was subsequently put on the SFA's list for early contract termination.

Inspectors took the unheard-of step of stating in their report that the "vast majority" of the provider's remaining apprenticeships and advanced learner loans personal training was "provided by an associate partner".

FE Week checked with Ofsted and was told that the associate partner in question was Hampshire-based Personal Track Safety Limited.

PTSL claimed that Expedient Training retained between 20 and 28 per cent in management fees for apprenticeships in health and social care and engineering, and advanced learner loan-funded personal

itself approached by many primes directly and brokers offering various associate contract opportunities for work.

"Sectoral experience shows that a very significant proportion of provision across the sector relies entirely upon subcontract whether it is within apprenticeships, AEB and other provision forms.

"In just the same way, associate working, where relevant, makes equally as valuable a contribution to the sector's need for timely learner and employer responsiveness, specialist competencies and targeted outcomes."



training courses it ran on the lead provider's behalf between September 2014 and October last year.

It also said it was new to the training industry, so did not realise that the associate partnership arrangement for contracts worth over £100,000 was anything out of the ordinary.

work with four subcontractors based in the North East and Yorkshire who provide education and training for a small minority of apprentices. The vast majority of the remaining apprenticeship training is provided by an associate partner. This arrangement has not been sanctioned by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA).

■ The percentage of pupils in the local area gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE or

Ofsted's report said the arrangement between Personal Track Safety Limited and Expedient Training had not been sanctioned by the SFA.

Expedient's managing director Malcolm Atkinson said it would be "inappropriate" for his organisation to make any comment whilst it was "working with the SFA on this matter".

In another case, Edudo Ltd, a Hampshire-based provider, went into voluntary liquidation in January leaving around 100 learners with hefty student loans debt but no qualifications to show for it (see page 7).

The company was allocated £500,500 in advanced learner loans by the SFA as of September, but it passed the delivery of at least some of its training onto at least three other providers – NVQ Nail & Beauty Specialists Academy, JB Training Academy and ABC Training London.

The three providers claimed they were originally asked to be subcontractors by Edudo, which denies any wrongdoing, to deliver level three qualifications in nail services, barbering and hairdressing, as well as childcare and health and social care. When it came to signing the agreements,

each of the providers alleged that associate contracts were used instead.

These were it was claimed for an "uncapped amount" and based on performance and achievement.

Vimmi Virk, the director of ABC Training London, said: "I was sent an initial contract for uncapped amount. The contract was performance, achievement-based over and above the 66 starts payable at a fixed rate of

70 per cent of the funding drawn down by Edudo."

The SFA, which has put an official halt on subcontracting arrangements for advance learner loans from August last year, told FE Week that Edudo was a loans-only provider and as such was not allowed to subcontract any of its provision.

The agency added that as part of the contract termination process of Edudo, it would look carefully at any irregularities.

Following our discovery, Edudo's director Ronan Smith defended the practice of associate partnerships for this type of work, claiming it was common in FE and that "hundreds" of providers were already doing it.

When FE Week presented our findings to the Department for Education, a spokesperson clearly condemned the practice.

"Any agreement terms of an 'associate partnership' would fall under the same strict regulation that is currently in place for subcontractors," they said.

"We are strengthening the regulation of subcontractors and will not hesitate to take firm action in any case where we find our rules are not being complied with."

Here's what Edudo said in full:

The following statement was released to FE Week on behalf of the former board of directors of Edudo.

They said: "Edudo Limited, as per many providers in the industry, regularly and continually entered into associate delivery agreements for the provision of teaching and learning services to be delivered and managed under the Edudo centre and its quality and compliance processes alone, in line with well-established practise within the sector for the commissioning of freelance delivery services.

"Edudo limited was, over the years,

NEWS

Another 100 learners left with loans and no courses

BILLY GAMDEN
@BILLYGAMDEN

EXCLUSIVE

One hundred learners appear to have been left with heavy debt and no qualifications to show for it, after yet another training provider under investigation by the Skills Funding Agency went bust.

FE Week is demanding justice for them and hundreds of others left in the lurch by collapsed providers – through our new #SaveOurAdultEducation campaign, which is calling for all students' advanced learning loan debt to be written off, if they are unable to complete courses after training providers go out of business.

In the latest case, Hampshire-based Edudo Ltd went into voluntary liquidation in January, after the company's "assets and business" were sold to Learning Republic Group Ltd last November under mysterious circumstances.

Edudo's boss Ronan Smith is also the only director listed with Companies House for Learning Republic Group, which was incorporated last July.

The SFA said it was investigating the circumstances surrounding the demise of Edudo, which was launched in 2011 and had been allocated £500,500 in advanced learner loans by the SFA as of September.

A spokesperson told FE Week that



approximately 100 learners are affected, and that it is "working closely" with the Student Loans Company to ensure they complete their learning.

These numbers suggest that the students have been left on average with just over £5,000 loans debt each.

This collapse is the latest in a spate of providers going belly-up in recent weeks. FE Week last month revealed that the SFA was investigating the demise of another, larger provider: John Frank Training.

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

Its collapse meant that hundreds of students who had taken out FE loans to train with it had been left with hefty debts but no way of finishing their courses.

The SFA spokesperson told FE Week it had terminated its loans agreement with Edudo, adding: "Our priority is to support the learners affected to complete their learning with minimal disruption, working closely with the Student Loans Company."

The agency has committed to looking carefully at any irregularities with the case.

A statement was also released to FE Week on behalf of the former board of directors of Edudo.

It said: "In recent years, the trading environment for the company was increasingly difficult given funding changes.

"The board of directors of Edudo, on professional advice and with great sadness, appropriately concluded that the company could no longer continue to trade.

"On November 24, 2016, the company's assets and business were sold to Learning

Republic Group.

"This was considered by the board of directors of the company, on independent corporate advice, to represent the best outcome for creditors and learners.

"Additionally, it secured the jobs of the company's staff who transferred to the new business, providing an opportunity for Learning Republic to offer continuity for and to the benefit of each and every student under its the care of Edudo."

The statement added that "for some months" the board of directors, and its advisors, had been and remain in "proactive engagement" with the SFA.

The agency, however, told FE Week Learning Republic Group is not a provider on the register of training organisations, and does not hold a loans agreement with it.

This means that the Group will be unlikely to be able to complete the training of government-funded former Edudo learners.

A spokesperson for liquidators RSM said it had been formally installed in the role on January 13 and "during the period of its engagement, RSM have received and responded to requests for information from the SFA".

"The liquidators have received the full cooperation of the directors of Edudo Ltd in responding to such requests."

The SLC declined to comment on Edudo's demise.

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NEWS

Hull College CEO finally departs after £10m deficit exposed

PAUL OFFORD
@PAULOFFORD

Hull College Group has announced the departure of its chief executive Gary Warke, weeks after the FE commissioner exposed a £10 million deficit over four years.

In a statement sent to FE Week on March 1, the chair of governors Pat Tomlinson wrote: "On behalf of the college corporation, I can confirm that Gary Warke, group chief executive, has decided to leave the college to explore new career opportunities.

"This coincides with a point where the area based review process is virtually complete and the group embarks on a new strategic plan.

"The corporation would like to thank Gary for his service to the college and commitment to FE and wish him every success. In turn, Gary wishes the college well for the future."

Michelle Swithenbank is to take over and "will lead the college forward to develop and deliver those new plans" as deputy CEO, "together with the leadership team".

FE Week reported on February 14 that the group had repeatedly refused to publicly back Mr Warke, after he was urged to resign following a damning report from the FE commissioner.

Richard Atkins' team was sent in to carry

out an emergency assessment shortly after the Skills Funding Agency issued HCG with a notice of concern last November.

The resulting report, published in early February, warned that the senior leadership team had not succeeded in addressing a steady decline in financial performance, resulting in a "cumulative deficit of around £10 million over the past four years".

Meanwhile, "a further deficit in excess of £1 million is forecast for the current year", the report said.

The news sparked widespread dismay, and the University and College Union led calls for Mr Warke to stand down.

A spokesperson for the union claimed at the time that "at an extraordinary staff meeting held at the college, the chair of governors Pat Tomlinson was vague about CEO Gary Warke's position".

Julie Kelley, a UCU regional official, has now told FE Week that the union believes "the recent report from the further education commissioner made it quite clear that Mr Warke's position was no longer tenable.

She added: "Staff and students need a new management team in post prepared to put the educational needs of local people first. A good college is one that offers a varied curriculum and we hope that Hull College will now reassess its primary function and focus on supporting staff to deliver education

to students."

The report that followed the SFA's November notice of concern explained that it had been issued because the college had been rated 'inadequate' by the SFA for financial health (based on its 2016-to-2018 financial plan) and had also requested exceptional financial support.

It revealed that "the college intends to put in place a different management structure in early 2017", including a newly appointed "turnaround director to help to deliver financial recovery".

It continued: "Although the senior leadership team has a range of skills and experience, it has not succeeded in addressing key issues facing the college, including steady decline in financial performance and loss of market share.

"There is concern at all levels of the organisation that the college lacks strategic vision and strong, resolute leadership and that this is frustrating and demotivating for staff."

Mr Atkins' report made a number of recommendations, including instructions for the corporation to "respond accordingly in relation to leadership and governance".

In May last year FE Week reported that Mr Warke had been accused of trying to bully a local MP, who was a member of the Labour shadow cabinet, for his support of a staff



Gary Warke

strike action.

Karl Turner, who is the MP for Kingston upon Hull, joined "angry and demoralised" Hull College workers on the picket that week in a row over pay and a controversial new lesson observation system.

He subsequently called for an investigation into Mr Warke, after he was allegedly sent a "threatening and derogatory" letter. Mr Warke declined to comment any further on the matter.

Film industry education boss lands 'hand grenade' assessment job

PAUL OFFORD
@PAULOFFORD

The new deputy director of assessment for the Institute for Apprenticeships, whose role has been compared to "a hand grenade with the pin removed", has been unveiled.

The job has gone to the head of education and skills at British Film Institute, Nikki Christie, as revealed by Peter Lauener, the IfA's shadow chief executive.

Mr Lauener announced a number of other appointees to top jobs at the Insitute, which is due to throw its doors open in April.

Jonathan Mitchell, the deputy head academic at Forest School, an independent school in London, is to become the deputy director of apprenticeships standards development, while the former Barclays chief executive Anthony Jenkins, who was announced as the shadow chair in June, is now permanent.

FE Week has also learned that job adverts to fill the vacancies for IfA's permanent chief executive and deputy CEO will be advertised "shortly".

Ms Christie's new role is something of a hot potato; Mark Dawe, the chief executive of AELP, said in an exclusive FE Week webinar in January that he felt sorry for whoever took it on, and warned that it could duplicate the job done by the qualifications regulator Ofqual.

"I imagine anyone taking on this role

will feel like they have been handed a hand grenade with the pin removed," he said.

"But the actual legwork – we don't understand why that isn't given to the government agency that's there with the expertise in assessment, and that's Ofqual."

He said there were still talks to be had on the end-point assessment of apprenticeships, over whether it will be "valid, reliable, manageable across all the standards".

"We've heard maybe more than 50 per cent of standards have an EPA organisation," Mr Dawe said.

"They [the government] could make their lives a lot easier if they just didn't duplicate – and actually commissioned Ofqual to do the work that's needed."

The government launched its long-awaited IfA consultation on January 4, and responses are required by the end of the month.

The consultation document explained that key functions for the new body, which will police apprenticeships, will include quality assurance of apprenticeship assessments.

External quality assurance, it added, is a direct lever that the IfA "can use to exercise its primary function to help ensure the quality of the reformed apprenticeship system. It is up to the IfA to decide what form its EQA takes."

The government strategy on this also wanted the IfA to "consider how best to ensure that effective and high-quality external quality assurance processes are available and are applied to all end-point



Nikki Christie

assessments".

"It will need to satisfy itself that all options will ensure consistent assessment and require a high standard from all apprentices."

FE Week reported in February that the IfA would charge apprenticeship assessment organisations for external

quality-assurance of new standards – even though Ofqual keeps the service free.

Mr Lauener said that it was acceptable for the institute to charge for the service because "the principle of a regulator charging bodies in the industry for regulation is not uncommon at all".

Currently, when employer trailblazer groups submit their assessment plans for new apprenticeship standards, they must choose one external quality-assurance organisation from four options: Ofqual, the Quality Assurance Agency, which generally deals with higher education qualifications, a professional or sector body, which trailblazer group can create themselves if desired, or the IfA itself.

In all, Mr Lauener revealed that eight IfA roles have now been filled, and that only two of its deputy directors (Ms Christie and Mr Mitchell) come from outside the civil service. The other senior management appointments are for:

- Deputy director for approvals – Ana Osbourne,
- Deputy director for funding policy – Jayne McCann
- Deputy director for data science – Alex Wilson
- Strategic adviser – Richard Guy (part-time consultant)
- Deputy director for corporate effectiveness – Helen Knee
- Set-up and finance – Tony Singleton (part-time consultant)

NEWS

SFA and EFA merger: Busiest man in FE about to retire?

PAUL OFFORD
@PAULOFFORD

The Education and Skills Funding Agencies are preparing for an imminent merger that will clear the way for their boss Peter Lauener to retire, FE Week has learned.

Mr Lauener held the role of EFA chief executive before he took on the top job at the SFA in November 2014, and has already overseen major reforms to bring the agencies closer together.

This accelerated after the DfE took over full responsibilities for skills training last July.

To add to his workload, Mr Lauener was additionally appointed as shadow chief executive of the Institute for Apprenticeships last September.

The IfA will play a key role in policing the development of new standards, as well as the quality assurance of apprenticeship assessments, once widespread reforms come into effect from May.

While any streamlining of the agencies might ultimately improve the system, if Mr Lauener's departure came at the same time as the biggest systematic reform to the FE system in a generation, especially in the wake of the April launch of the

new apprenticeship levy, the sector could experience huge shockwaves.

He was asked about a possible merger of the SFA and EFA by FE Week editor Nick Linford in February last year, when he said he was trying to put the question "to one side", although he accepted that "at some point we may come back to question of whether there should be a merged agency".

The number of permanent staff at the SFA fell from 1,241 in April 2014 to 899 by October 2015, though staff numbers increased at the EFA over the same period, from 753 to 837.

During the interview, Mr Lauener suggested that the two agencies could end up sharing service teams covering finance, IT and data as soon as that April, in a move that has yet to come to pass.

Previous comings-together between the agencies have so far come via a joint area review delivery unit and intervention team.

The SFA press office effectively ceased to exist last July, when ownership for older FE learners passed from the former Department for Business Innovation and Skills to the DfE, which already spoke for the EFA.

The centralisation of all skills responsibilities to the DfE has further diminished the case for maintaining separate agencies.

FE Week asked Mr Lauener about the merger and his retirement plans on March 1 at the AoC's Governance Summit in London.

He declined to comment on "speculation", as did the DfE.



Peter Lauener

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- Assessment instruments - everything you want to know but have not thought to ask!
March 22, 2:30-3:20, Hall 11a
- Booking and managing the EPA for your apprentices, how will it all work?
March 23, 3:50-4:40, Hall 11b
- Contracts, what do all these contracts mean and how are we going to manage them?
March 24, 10:40-11:30, Hall 11a



#SAVEOURADULTEUCATION

Huge support for #SaveOurAdultEduca

PAUL OFFORD
@PAULOFFORD

More than 200 passionate supporters of lifelong learning packed out the official launch of FE Week's #SaveOurAdultEducation campaign at the Houses of Parliament last week.

The event saw powerful speeches from influential politicians, including apprenticeships and skills minister Robert Halfon, and sector leaders.

#SaveOurAdultEducation is demanding three things from the government.

The first of these is for advanced learning loan debt to be written off where blameless adult learners have been left unable to complete their courses when their training provider goes bust.

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 of over £8,000, confronted Mr Halfon about this just before the event started this afternoon.

Mr Halfon told him: "I will talk to the SFA about your particular case, I know they are doing everything they can on this."

Mr Shaheen, who later asked the room "how can they not have had a contingency plan in place for this" asked the minister to look into the wider issue for all the affected learners. The minister agreed.

The shadow skills minister Gordon Marsden



Robert Halfon

referenced the issue of students left with unwarranted debts in his own speech, saying: "The numbers are really mounting up. Action must be taken to help them."

Secondly, the campaign is also calling on the government to consult on a proper adult education strategy, one that does not disappear under the political weight of apprenticeships and devolution.

Sue Pember, a former top skills civil servant, said in her speech: "It's really wrong now that we don't as a society understand the benefits of adult education.

"We know as educators that it works. It improves not just productivity, it helps to improve health. If you put people onto adult education classes instead of putting them on anti-depressants, it saves the government money for example.

"We need a proper cross-government adult education strategy that lasts 20 years."

Her words were echoed by Ruth Spellman, the chief executive of the Workers' Educational Association, who said: "Adult education is so important. The government needs to understand it is something that benefits the vast majority of the population."

The third demand of the campaign is for the government 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.

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

"Extending maintenance loans to FE would be of key importance to achieving parity of esteem with higher education," said Mr Marsden.

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", also spoke at the launch.



#SaveOurAdultEducation launch. From left: FE Week publisher Lsect's managing director Shane Mann, former top skills civil servant Susan Pember, FE Week editor Nick Linford, shadow skills minister Gordon Marsden, David Lammy MP, chief executive of the Workers' Educational Association Ruth Spellman, Rob Marris MP, Kate Green MP, Margaret Greenwood MP and Helen Goodman MP

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 in 2007/08, when the figure stood at 3.75 million.

Having also led an adjournment debate in the House of Commons on the future of adult education, Mr Lammy conceded at the campaign launch that "successive government have failed to get adult education where it needs to be".

"Many people across the country in their 30s and 40s can't afford to leave their job and go to university," he said. "They need to retrain through adult education."

He claimed Mr Halfon had previously

played a "trick" by implying spending on adult education was in a healthy state, because that would also entail including apprenticeships funding in the calculations – which often aren't relevant to older people.

Mr Halfon denied this and told guests that the government's industrial strategy, released on January 23, which committed to exploring "ambitious new approaches to encouraging lifelong learning", showed he supported their aims.

FE Week editor Nick Linford spoke of his pride at the "fantastic turnout", saying: "The government has been too quiet for too long on adult education. I really hope our campaign will make a big difference."



A packed room for the #SaveOurAdultEducation campaign in the Houses of Commons



Learner loans victim Asim Shaheen confronts Robert Halfon

tion campaign at parliamentary launch



Ruth Spellman



Gordon Marsden

Wolf backs call for loans justice

JUDE BURKE
@JUDEBURKE77

Professor Alison Wolf, a leading government skills adviser, has added her voice to growing calls for justice for learners saddled with large loans when training providers go under.

The author of the influential 2011 Wolf Report on the future of vocational education spoke out in favour of FE Week's #SaveOurAdultEducation campaign in the House of Lords on February 28.

She made her intervention just an hour after our campaign was officially launched in the Houses of Parliament.

#SaveOurAdultEducation is calling for advanced learning loans debt to be written off in cases where blameless adult learners are left unable to complete their courses when their training provider goes bust, something the government is currently refusing to do.

"It is extremely important to recognise that a large number of people are now taking out loans who are not in FE colleges and who receive very little protection," Professor Wolf, who became a crossbench peer in 2014, said during a committee session on the technical and further education bill.

She urged government to extend the protection that will be offered to learners at FE colleges through the bill "to the many thousands of people who have

loans and are with training providers, and where a continuation of this flux, collapse or reforming movement among these small organisations leaves them in an even worse situation than in the past".

Speaking exclusively to FE Week after the session, Professor Wolf said: "I will definitely return to the issue at report stage".

Professor Wolf referred to FE Week's recent stories on the demise of training two providers – Hampshire-based Edudo Ltd, and London-based John Frank Training – during yesterday's committee session.

"People were left with student loans that were really sizeable – especially in relation to the incomes many of them were earning – but with no recourse and no obvious regime to help them," she said.

Private training providers have "been an extraordinarily ill-monitored part of the training sector" until now, she added.

The introduction of loans – particularly to learners at private training providers which can "get overstretched and many start up then close down as they do or do not get contracts" – has, she said, "dramatically changed the nature of post-18 education and training across the country".

"We need to make sure that government accountability catches up with it," she urged.



Susan Pember



David Lammy



#SaveOurAdultEducation call for loans justice is raised by Alison Wolf in the House of Lords

Climbing the 'ladder of opportunity' for

ALIX ROBERTSON
@ALIXROBERTSON4

The tenth National Apprenticeship Week will be celebrated across the country this year with an adventurous round of activities.

The celebration, of all the wonderful things that apprenticeships have to offer, kicks off on Monday, March 6.

This year's theme is the skills minister Robert Halfon's concept of the "ladder of opportunity", and will focus on the many positive outcomes of taking up an apprenticeship.

Providers, employers and learners alike have been busy putting together innovative ways to celebrate apprenticeships across all industries and levels, to show just how life-changing the experience can be.

The events scheduled for 2017 include everything from job swapping, to learn about different roles and challenge stereotypes, to awards ceremonies which mark big achievements over the past year.

Some of the plans are branching into truly exciting new territory too.

A Guinness World Record attempt will take place on Tuesday, aiming to create the largest ever online apprenticeship and careers event.

And a live TV show about apprenticeships in the digital sector will be broadcast from the Digital Leaders YouTube channel on Friday.

The events described on these pages should give a taste of just some of the gems to look forward to during the week.

FE Week will be dedicating a special supplement to National Apprenticeship Week 2017. So please email

Alix.Robertson@feweek.co.uk all your photos and write-ups of events as they happen so we can report on them.



See our NAW 2017 supplement in next week's edition

In partnership with



<p>6</p> <p>Monday</p>	<p>Primary engineers</p> <p>Location: Washington Business Centre, Sunderland, SR5 3QY</p> <p>Start time: 9.30am</p> <p>Local primary school pupils will spend a day joining in with activities at the new training Academy of Unipres Limited, a manufacturer of car parts.</p>	<p>Breakfast meeting with CEO Michael Day and apprentices/interns</p> <p>Location: Hampton Court Palace, Molesey, East Molesey KT8 9AU</p> <p>Start time: 10am</p> <p>Charity Historic Royal Palaces, which looks after areas such as the Tower of London, is holding an apprenticeship information session on areas from conservation to carpentry.</p>
<p>7</p> <p>Tuesday</p>	<p>Guinness World Record attempt - largest online apprenticeships and careers event</p> <p>Location: http://www.bigassembly.org/</p> <p>Start time: 8:45am</p> <p>'The Big Assembly' live video stream aims to set the record for the largest online careers advice seminar, including schools, parents, careers advisors and employers.</p>	<p>An audience with the Mayor</p> <p>Location: City College Peterborough, Brook St, Peterborough PE1 1TU, UK</p> <p>Start time: 11am</p> <p>Celebrating dedication and support to Apprenticeships, presented by the Mayor.</p>
<p>8</p> <p>Wednesday</p>	<p>ShowBiz 2017 - skills for business growth</p> <p>Location: Quorum Business Park, Benton Lane, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE12 8BW</p> <p>Start time: 9am</p> <p>This event has a focus on business skills, apprenticeships and training. A variety of providers will be present to offer employers support, advice and funding.</p>	<p>Drop-in information, advice and guidance sessions</p> <p>Location: Sheffield College, Granville Road, Sheffield, S2 2RL</p> <p>Start time: 9.30am</p> <p>Sheffield College's internal apprenticeship recruitment team, Job Connect, is hosting an information, advice and guidance drop-in session from members of the public at City Campus.</p>
<p>9</p> <p>Thursday</p>	<p>Launch of chartered manager degree apprenticeship</p> <p>Location: Molineux Stadium, Waterloo Road, Wolverhampton, WV1 4QR</p> <p>Start time: 7.30am</p> <p>Sir Clive Woodward OBE, former England Rugby Union player and coach, will launch a new chartered manager degree apprenticeship at this University of Wolverhampton breakfast event.</p>	<p>So what does the apprentice levy mean for you?</p> <p>Location: Telford, TF3 3BQ</p> <p>Start time: 7.30am</p> <p>This employer's breakfast networking event on the apprenticeship levy and how it works is Shropshire Constructing Excellence's first event of 2017, covering business support for the sector.</p>
<p>10</p> <p>Friday</p>	<p>BSDC connect business breakfast</p> <p>Location: Burton and South Derbyshire College, Burton town centre campus, Lichfield Street, Burton-on-Trent, DE14 3RL</p> <p>Start time: 7am</p> <p>BSDC is hosting a free advice business breakfast, to support employers looking to recruit for the first time or expand their apprenticeship and/or traineeship programmes.</p>	<p>Ladder of Success</p> <p>Location: Audenshaw, Manchester, M34 5JD</p> <p>Start time: 9am</p> <p>Brother UK has over 50 students from three local schools coming onsite for a session about future career choices, including apprenticeships and a mentoring programme.</p>
<p>11</p> <p>Saturday</p>	<p>Apprenticeships familiarisation weekend</p> <p>Location: Aylesbury, HP20 1BD</p> <p>Start time: 9am</p> <p>Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority showcases its apprenticeships for careers within the Fire and Rescue service. Attendees can observe a drill and talk to the crews.</p>	<p>Alton Cars Ltd - automotive apprenticeship scheme open day</p> <p>Location: Alton Cars Ltd, Cross Green Approach, Leeds, LS9 0SG</p> <p>Start time: 10am</p> <p>Alton Cars are holding a free open day for school leavers across Yorkshire, Humberside, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, with 20 guaranteed apprenticeships available.</p>

For National Apprenticeship Week 2017

Job shadowing

Location: Poole, BH15 1HZ

Start time: 12pm

The Royal National Lifeboat Institution will be providing opportunities for its apprentices and directors to job shadow each other throughout National Apprenticeship Week.

National Apprenticeship Week 5-a-side football tournament

Location: Iffley Road, Oxford, OX4 1EQ

Start time: 2pm

Oxfordshire Apprenticeships is holding a football tournament with Ignite Sport and the University of Oxford. The winners will be presented with the converted #NAW2017 trophy.

Michaeljohn Training NAW photoshoot for International Women's Day

Location: 77-83 Oldham Street, Manchester, M4 1LW

Start time: 2pm

Learners will celebrate the week by entering a photoshoot competition and showcasing skills learned so far at an apprenticeship open day.

CAAN employer network event

Location: Eden Project, Bodelva, Par, Cornwall, PL24 2SG

Start time: 9pm

Employers and young people are brought together to explore ways for NEET individuals to gain employment through an apprenticeship or traineeship.

Hospitality apprenticeship bus

Location: Bridgewood Manor Hotel, Walderslade Woods, Chatham, ME5 9AX

Start time: 9am

Hospitality employers will celebrate with a special Routemaster tour across London with apprenticeship provider Umbrella Training, to promote the industry apprenticeship to young people.

Celebrating apprentices at the House of Commons

Location: House of Commons, Westminster, London, SW1A 0AA

Start time: 1pm

Perceptions, a voluntary organisation for the pub and bar sector, will bring together apprentices, employers and MPs to show how apprenticeships can lead to a career in hospitality.

RD&E National Apprenticeship Week event

Location: Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital, Barrack Road, Exeter, EX2 5DW

Start time: 5pm

The trust is holding an event open to staff and the public which provides the chance to find out about apprenticeship opportunities in the NHS.

Degree and higher apprenticeships open evening

Location: MMU, Oxford Road, Manchester, M15 6BH

Start time: 5pm

Manchester Metropolitan University will hold an event on its development and delivery of degree and higher apprenticeships, combining workplace experience and a university academic education.

St Helens College apprenticeship and senior management job swap

Location: St Helens College, Water Street, Saint Helens, WA10 1PP

Start time: 10am

One of St Helens College's senior managers will swap places with an apprentice to try a hands-on trade while the apprentice helps run the college.

Anchor apprenticeship academy information session

Location: Anchor Trust, 2 Godwin Street, Bradford, BD1 2ST

Start time: 12pm

Anchor is holding an open day to promote apprenticeships in health and social care for ages 16-24 years, including care assistants, customer service and catering.

Understanding apprenticeships

Location: Royal Scot Road, Derby, DE24 8A

Start time: 3pm

Social enterprise Learning Unlimited will run a session to help parents, teachers and others involved in advising young people learn more about apprenticeships and careers.

Apprenticeship fine dining dinner

Location: Cambridge Regional College, Kings Hedges Road, Milton, Cambridge, CB4 2QT

Start time: 6pm

Two teams of advanced level apprentice chefs go head-to-head in a 'Hell's Kitchen' style cook-off where the diners pick a winner from two fine-dining menus.

Myerscough College apprenticeships at the National Careers Guidance show

Location: Leeds, LS11 0ES

Start time: 9.30am

Myerscough College will be exhibiting at the National Careers Guidance show at Leeds United Football Club's Centenary Pavillion, on the theme 'Advising an Advanced Generation'.

Apprenticeship bus roadshow

Location: Plymouth Guildhall, Guildhall Square, Plymouth, PL1 2BJ

Start time: 10am

The Apprenticeship bus roadshow from the National Careers Service is for all ages and provides a chance to meet employers, apprentices, careers experts, training providers and colleges.

Apprenticeship Week Challenge 2017 - apprentice activity day

Location: Hartlepool, TS25 4LL

Start time: 10am

Darlington Borough Council's Learning and Skills Service is hosting a competition with five local authorities whose apprentices will try archery, den building, orienteering and team games.

Hair and beauty ladder of opportunities (cake, coffee, career's)

Location: Mirror Mirror, 76 Market Street, Shirebrook, Mansfield, NG20 8AD

Start time: 12pm

Cake, coffee and chat are offered at Mirror Mirror's salon, where visitors can find out about hair and beauty traineeships or apprenticeships from those already training.

Challenging gender stereotypes event

Location: Bury College Millennium Centre, 63 Market Street, Bury, BL9 0DB

Start time: 10am

Bury College is inviting school pupils to attend a workshop where they can experience subjects they may not have tried yet within the apprenticeship sector.

North East Apprenticeship Awards 2017

Location: Durham County Cricket Club, Emirates Riverside, County Durham, DH3 3QR

Start time: 12pm

The Health Education England North East team is holding an event at Emirates Riverside, Durham to celebrate the success of apprentices across the north east.

Digital leaders TV show: Digital Apprentices (YouTube)

Location: <http://bit.ly/2liFD4s>

Start time: 3pm

The Digital Leaders TV show will discuss apprenticeships in the digital sector, across government, private sector and non-profit roles, drawing on the experiences of three businesses.

Made by apprentices - quiz night

Location: Braintree, CM7 9HB

Start time: 7pm

Braintree District Council apprentices have organised a quiz night to raise money and support the chairman's chosen charities.

CONEL jobs and careers fair - Tottenham Centre

Location: London, N15 4RU

Start time: 10am

The College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London will run an open talk and Q&A with successful apprentices and jobs fair with local employers.

Gas, plumbing and electrical apprenticeship open morning

Location: Steve Willis Training Ltd, Unit 7 Murrills Industrial Estate East Street, Portchester, Hampshire, PO16 9RD

Start time: 11am

An open morning with Steve Willis Training at the Portchester Training Centre, for anyone thinking about starting a gas, plumbing or electrical apprenticeship in September 2017.

Penwith College open day - apprenticeship information event

Location: Penwith College, St Clare Street, Penzance, TR18 2SA

Start time: 11am

The college's apprenticeship team will share key facts about apprenticeships and then provide the chance to hear from businesses and their own successful apprentices.

The millennial apprentice

Location: Birmingham, B1 2ND

Start time: 2.30pm

A workshop in quiz format, delivered by the University of Birmingham to explore the new face of manufacturing in the age of millennials and technology.

Government tight-lipped on FE research centre funding

BILLY CAMDEN
@BILLYCAMDEN

The government is refusing to say whether more funding will be given to two “pioneering” FE research centres after their start-up grants end shortly.

The Behavioural Research Centre for Adult Skills and Knowledge was given £2.9 million by the former Department for Business Innovation and Skills back in 2014, to carry out randomised control trials to apply behavioural science to adult learning.

Under the auspices of its director Zhi Soon, the centre has completed four trials at colleges, aiming to improve attendance and attainment in maths and English.

The tests were conducted by “some of the world’s best educational minds”, involving academics from Harvard and Stanford.

The results, it was claimed, increased both attainment and attendance for students, and were described as “pioneering” in the government’s industrial strategy green paper in January.

Meanwhile, the Centre for Vocational Education Research is beginning to publish its own projects after being given a £3 million government grant in May 2015.

Dr Sandra McNally leads the centre, and said that in the two years it has been running, her team has focused



Sandra McNally

on “huge administrative data”, such as individual learner records, the national pupil database and longitudinal education outcomes data, in an attempt to process, code and apply it to their research.

Three completed pieces of research have since been published, with a paper on post-16 choices awakening the most interest, though many more are expected over the coming year.

But the future funding for both centres remains uncertain, and the government has stayed quiet on whether it will make a second round of investment in them.

ASK’s grant comes to an end this month, while CVER’s funding wraps up next May.

FE Week asked the Department for Education whether it was planning on extending the funding for the two centres.

A spokesperson for the DfE would only confirmed that it hadn’t announced any further funding decisions yet for the two centres, adding: “CVER has helped the department better understand the value of apprenticeships, how young people enter FE and the role of leadership in improving the quality of provision.

“ASK is helping us test and disseminate best practice in teaching and learning.”

FE Week spoke with colleges and FE bodies who have used or taken part in the research of the two centres.

Dr Darrell DeSouza, vice-principal at Uxbridge College, said his pupils had benefitted “hugely” from the “innovative and low-

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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH Cabinet Office

Adult educators comes together to celebrate launch of the Behavioural Research Centre for Adult Skills and Knowledge (ASK)

September 22, 2014 BIT Staff



The Behavioural Research Centre for Adult Skills and Knowledge, or ASK for short, was officially opened on 17 September. The research centre is focused on using behavioural science to help tackle adult numeracy and literacy. Adults who lack literacy and numeracy skills tend to be less productive at work, earn lower wages, are more likely to suffer from ill health and experience social exclusion. ASK is a joint initiative between the Department for Business Innovation and Skills and the Cabinet Office.

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The Behavioural Insights research centre for Adult Skills and Knowledge website

cost” approaches that his college was part of during trials by ASK.

“We wanted something that was simple, workable and that we could carry on without researchers once we was shown the way,” he said.

“The text messaging system that ASK taught us gave us an advantage in engaging learners in the very challenging arena of post-16 GCSE English and maths.”

Fiona Morey, deputy principal at Aylesbury College, also took part in trials by ASK.

“Being involved in research of this nature is really important for FE,” she said.

“We get the policies and it

is therefore about looking at different ways of developing and improving things instead of just being passive.”

A spokesperson for the AELP said CVER had done “some useful quantitative analysis on skills provision, including the returns on investment in apprenticeships”.

The Education and Training Foundation, which also produces research about FE, said the existence of “different bodies each with a different research focus can be beneficial”.

Mr Soon said his centre has “provided great value” for its £3 million investment, and claimed that he is “hopeful” of securing extra funding.

Dr McNally said her body is preparing its bid for a further two years on funding.



Zhi Soon

Behavioural science in FE

Since receiving nearly £3 million in grant money in 2014, the Behavioural Research Centre for Adult Skills and Knowledge has completed four trials, using a behavioural science approach to try and increase attendance and attainment outcomes for students in maths and English in colleges.

The first was a text-messaging study involving three colleges.

Half of the students involved were sent texts, which encouraged them to continue with their studies, every Sunday evening during term throughout 2014/15, and more frequently during the holidays.

The experiment, conducted by Professor Michael Luca from Harvard University, increased the number of learners passing all their exams by 12 per cent, while their attendance went up by 21 per cent.

The study also found the dropout rate was 36 per cent higher among learners who did not receive the texts.

ASK then ran a “grit” intervention, conducted with Professor Angela

Duckworth from the University of Pennsylvania, to see if they could build and develop resilience in students.

This trial involved 20 colleges where maths students were given four online modules to complete four times throughout the academic year.

Final attainment results are still being collected but the mid-year attendance results showed a 10 per cent increase for all learners in that intervention.

Next was a “value affirmation” study, conducted with Professor Geoffrey Cohen from Stanford University, which got learners to think about what are the most important values and write about them.

The trial showed to have a “substantial impact” on functional skills learners, whose attendance went up by 20 per cent.

The fourth trial was a “study supporter Intervention” conducted with Professor Todd Rogers from Harvard University which focused on how supportive networks can improve educational attainment.

The result was an 11 per cent increase in attendance.

Vocational research

The Centre for Vocational Education Research has published three pieces of research and has over 20 ongoing projects to show for the £3 million government grant it received in May 2015.

The centre’s paper on post-16 choices gained the most interest after being published in July last year, according to its director Dr Sandra McNally.

Researchers found that the majority of students “do not undertake academic qualifications in the post-compulsory phase of their education”, but that there was no single vocational pathway that is “as well-trodden” as A-levels.

Another paper by CVER was on labour market returns to vocational qualifications, published in October last year.

The base results showed that the estimated returns differ by type of qualification, and by level.

The report said: “Not surprisingly, the estimated returns are higher for higher-level qualifications.

“Within levels, the returns are typically highest for BTEC qualifications, and lowest for NVQ qualifications.”

Its most recent report was published last month and was an analysis of the evolution of the number of learners in FE from 2004 to 2014.

It showed that the sector has lost more than 1.5 million learners over the last 10 years, with most of this decline occurring between 2005 and 2007.

More than 20 other projects are currently in the pipeline at CVER, with a literature review of evaluation studies about post-16 remedial education, and “detailed descriptive analysis” of young people in vocational education “below level two” and their later trajectory in education, waiting in the wings for the coming months.

Dr McNally said it was too early to “expect our academic research centre to have a big impact on policy within the time we have been up and running, but we hope to do so once all reports are published”.

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EDITORIAL

Shocking deception needs to be tackled



It is clear the SFA crackdown on subcontracting is increasingly pushing it underground.

Our findings this week on the rise of this hidden subcontracting have genuinely shocked me.

Some will try to claim 'associate partnerships' aren't subcontracting because it is no different from using a recruitment agency to source a trainer.

This is nonsense, given the partner sources the learner, trainer and training facility.

It's very clearly subcontracting in all but name, to avoid SFA bans for loans-funded provision and second-level subcontracting.

There is in fact a history of hiding subcontracting, if you go back a little over 15 years.

In 1999 the Further Education Funding Council called it 'franchised' provision.

Providers were found trying various partnership deals to claim it was still direct provision, and thus avoid the 1/3 automatic franchise funding discount.

In an important document at the time, FEFC circular 99/37, the funding body emphasised: "Partnership arrangements involving public funds should be transparent and available for scrutiny."

If prompt action isn't again taken, the SFA subcontracting bans and safeguards will be futile.

All 'associate partnership' deals need to be declared and should be classed as subcontracting.

No excuses and no hiding, for the sake of vulnerable learners and safeguarding public funds.

Nick Linford, Editor
news@feweek.co.uk

ADULT EDUCATION CAMPAIGN TWEETS:

Gordon Marsden MP @GordonMarsden

In Cttee Rm14 in Commons to speak as host #saveadulteducation - packed w people.Govt must see this as holistic & launch major initiatives

David Lammy @DavidLammy

Fantastic that #saveouradulteducation is top Twitter trend in London and 5th in the UK - much needed attention on this vital policy area

Melissa Shales @melissashales

As both an FE teacher and a mature student, I know only too well the necessity of adult retraining to keep working #saveouradulteducation

Group Horizon @Grouphorizon

We were pleased to be part of the #saveouradulteducation event at #Westminster yesterday. Great speeches - great cause! Show your support!



Governors turn on SFA's 'ludicrous' new apprenticeships contracts

JUDE BURKE
@JUDEBURKE77

College governors have branded the SFA's new apprenticeship contractual arrangements "ludicrous" during a heated discussion at the AoC's Governance Summit.

There is due to be a shift from contracts between the SFA and colleges to legal agreements between colleges and employers – which will amount to "a commercial relationship" with employers – according to Keith Smith, the SFA's director of funding and programmes.

"You are entering into a commercial relationship with an employer because they are choosing to use you and buy services from you," he told attendees.

Stunned governors were urged "make sure you know what you are selling" and to "understand you have the right terms and conditions to protect yourself" if an employer decides to end the relationship.

The discussion soon became heated, as governors expressed their shock at the new arrangements – which will also see employers drawing up their own separate contracts with the SFA.

One unnamed governor blasted the system as "ludicrous" and a "nightmare".

"I can see people walking away from

contracts and there is no incentive to enforce it," he warned. "The legal fees for doing so could swamp the potential gain."

Mr Smith admitted in response that commercial relationships between colleges and employers did risk becoming "tricky, rocky and volatile".

He continued: "That's why I say to you when you enter into these relationships, what indemnity and safeguards have you put in place?"

But he insisted that employers "can't walk away from paying the levy and can't walk away taking money out of the account and do something else with it".

From his point of view, he said, these contracts mean that the SFA would get the levy cash one way or another, and that his department would "make sure it's spent for the benefit of apprenticeships".

Earlier in the session, he warned governors that the SFA would not step in if colleges have any contract disputes with employers, saying: "I can't get involved in any contractual dispute or commercial disputes when the employer has instructed me to stop paying you."

Nor can the SFA get involved in contract negotiations between employers and providers – "that's for you now," said Mr Smith.

Governors were therefore urged to ensure

that management teams were aware of the upcoming changes.

The "safety nets" created by the involvement of the SFA were due to "change significantly", he said, "and you just need to be aware of the risks of these things".

"As a governing body you need to make sure you are quizzing and questioning your management teams on how on the ball they are," he went on.

"If they say 'don't worry, this is all normal, we do this all the time', then I would probably worry."

Julian Gravatt, AoC's assistant chief executive, said his organisation had been working with colleges to prepare for the reforms "for several years".

"Getting the relationship between employer, apprentice and college right will be vital to make this work," he said.

"Employers will clearly now have the ability to change their mind if colleges get things wrong.

"But it is inevitable that the government will need to intervene in some cases to protect the apprentice and to ensure that training continues in the right areas."

Mark Dawe, chief executive of AELP, said: "Independent training providers welcome this brave new world. They are used to dealing with employers in negotiating agreements."

COMMENTS

SFA already finding ineligible employer incentives and will 'strengthen' funding rules

Bravo. I think we need a very clear policy statement that this will be outlawed and an audit regime that delves into this area. No funds should transfer from the training provider and employer.

I've heard several Colleges offering up these types of deals and it needs to be nipped in the bud.

Bob Smith

Rule change could price assessors out of running apprenticeship exams

So EPA's will set their prices at 20% of the funding band cap, and training providers will be forced to charge the maximum allowed in order stay within the 20% rule.

I'm not sure that Levy paying employers who are desperate to send their levy money before it's clawed back from them will be that bothered.

SME's who only pay 0% or 10% aren't going to be that worried either. So much for market forces!

Blue Boy

Ofsted could re-inspect after QAR loophole crackdown

Blackburn College supports the revision of the QAR methodology. This has resulted in a minimal decrease of 2% in our Apprentice achievement rates from 81.4% in 2014/15 to 79.4% using the new methodology. This represents 10 learners in total from the cohort of 520.

Tracy Stuart

Continued...

FE week, never mind the grade 1 providers, it's those who sneaked a grade 3 on inflated achievements who need to be revisited. If a provider slips from a grade 1 to a grade 2 – meh, so what? But if they were to slip from a grade 3 to a grade 4 owing to revised achievements – well that is more significant.

Matt Garvey

Principal racked up £60k bill on overseas trips

8 trips at £64k accompanied by another person on 2 trips. I make that £6,400 per person per trip.

I've worked in the sector for 15 years, middle management, myself and partner have struggled to scrape together £1200 for a half decent summer holiday.

May I suggest FE week creates a tab for a 'Rogues Gallery' hall of shame...

FE Week reader



Dumfries and Galloway College

Vice Principal

£65,000

Dumfries and Galloway College is a single college in a single region offering a wide range of qualifications and courses at further and higher education levels across a diverse curriculum to approximately 6,500 learners, (approximately 1600 full-time) through its campus locations in Dumfries and Stranraer. As the only general purpose college in the Region potential learners and employers are dependent on it sustaining a breadth of curriculum which meets their needs.

There is a unique collaboration between the College and the Universities of Glasgow and the West of Scotland, Scotland's Rural College and the Open University that brings a broad range of further and higher education to Dumfries. In particular, the Campus provides the opportunity of university learning to a region where previously people had to leave in order to access university study.

At Dumfries and Galloway College, we are moving into an exciting stage of our development, building on the successes of the past and driving forward to achieve our aspiration of becoming 'an outstanding college'. We aim to deliver the highest quality learning for our

students, to make a positive contribution to the local and national economies and to utilise the expertise of our staff to deliver continuous improvements.

We are seeking a Vice Principal to join our team and support the College in delivering these aims. The post holder will be responsible for providing inspirational leadership and driving innovative development for the College's strategic planning, risk management, quality improvement and performance. Leading and developing excellent, professional and proactive student support services and driving further improvement and development of learners' experience and services including transformational/digital activity both inside and outside the classroom will be crucial to this role.

The ideal candidate will have exceptional leadership skills and senior experience with a record of successful delivery in a strategic planning, public body environment. Comprehensive knowledge of legislation and statutory requirements is essential, alongside the ability to motivate and gain commitment to objectives and integrate a multi professional team.

Please visit www.aspenpeople.co.uk/DGC for more information on the role and the College, or for a confidential discussion please call Donogh O'Brien or Liam Kelly on **0141 212 7555**.

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We also offer a wide range of benefits to our employees, including: Childcare vouchers, a multitude of training opportunities, Car Salary Sacrifice, Cycle to Work, a number of local discounts in Milton Keynes, LGPS and TPS pensions, free parking at our main campus sites and discount at our onsite Brasserie restaurant and The Graduate Salon.

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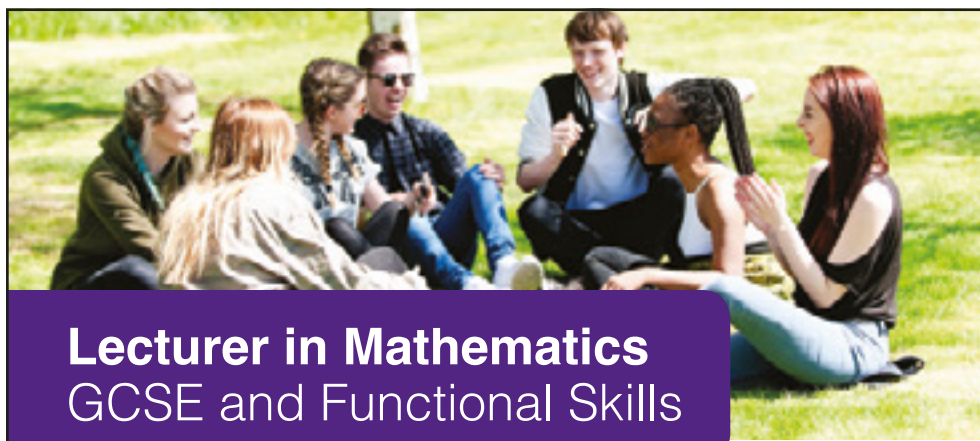
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EXPERTS



CHRISTOPHER JONES

HMI specialist advisor on apprenticeships, Ofsted

What is Ofsted looking for in apprenticeships?

Apprenticeships are not vehicles to validate employees' existing skills – our inspectors want to see that apprentices are learning something new, says Christopher Jones

A sign outside a shop in my local market town reads: 'the only constant in life is change'. I usually ignore such nuggets of wisdom, but this one stuck with me.

As we approach a significant milestone in the funding of apprenticeships, reflect on the new roles for employers, review the list of approved apprenticeship training providers, appraise the detail of apprenticeship standards, and await the official launch of the Institute for Apprenticeships (and Technical Education), it is clear that change is all around us.

In Ofsted's 2016 annual report, her majesty's chief inspector highlighted the increased proportion of apprenticeship programmes found to be 'good' or 'outstanding', but acknowledged that 37 per cent of those inspected were less than good.

Apprenticeships work best when training providers and employers ensure that the structure and delivery of the programme helps apprentices meet exacting standards and contribute to the growth of the business. The best employers provide their apprentices with consistent support and effective training, both on the job and away from work, to ensure their success.

Here at Ofsted, we currently have 32 apprentices. Some are working at level two and others at level three. We offered our apprentices a permanent role from the first day of their programme, making a genuine commitment to their development and future career. As an organisation we are committed to social mobility, so during the recruitment and selection process we focused on the apprentices' skills and potential, rather than their previous academic achievements.

All of our apprentices are proving to be dedicated and valuable members of the team.

We know from our inspection findings that too often employers do not know enough about the requirements of the apprenticeship programme or the quality of the training. And, in some cases, they are concerned that the off-the-job training provided does not enable apprentices to develop the skills they need. We need to

ensure that apprenticeship provision is of the highest quality so apprentices can thrive and businesses can benefit.

Changes to the funding of apprenticeships may encourage more businesses to consider developing their existing employees through an apprenticeship. But remember, apprenticeships are not vehicles to validate employees' existing skills.

It's vital that employers and training providers ensure these apprentices learn new skills and gain the knowledge that will help them to earn a promotion, take on more responsibility, contribute to increased productivity, or get a payrise.

We know apprenticeships are switching from frameworks to standards, and

“ It is business as usual for Ofsted

while recruitment to standards-based apprenticeships has increased significantly, they still account for just three per cent of apprentices who began their training after September 2016.

Currently, around 95 per cent of apprenticeships are at level two and level three, but over a third of the standards that have been developed are at level four and above. The slow development and approval of standards for the majority of apprentice job roles means that providers may have some apprentices on frameworks and some on standards for the foreseeable future.

So what does this mean for inspection? Rather than change, it is business as usual for Ofsted. Regardless of the format of an apprenticeship programme, our inspectors want to see that apprentices know something new, can do something better, are able to work on their own, and can make independent decisions as a result of their training and learning.

We want to see that employers and providers have structured their training programmes to ensure that apprentices can achieve the very best of their potential. So while we might well see change all around us every day, when it comes to inspection, we will simply keep calm and carry on.



STEPHEN EVANS

CEO, Learning and Work Institute

The chancellor must back #SaveOurAdultEducation

Adult education should be a golden thread running through all government strategies – the budget is Philip Hammond's opportunity to embed it, says Stephen Evans

The Learning and Work Institute is pleased to support FE Week's #SaveOurAdultEducation campaign.

Adult education is more important than ever, and we need to turbocharge participation in learning, starting with this week's budget.

For those of us in the sector, the expansion of apprenticeships, including the three million target and the forthcoming levy, has provided a focal point. The skills plan has generated a real debate about reform of technical education, and skills were at the heart of the industrial strategy green paper.

This really does feel like a once-in-a-generation chance to make learning and skills a central part of building our post-Brexit national prosperity and providing engines of social mobility.

However, behind these headlines are a raft of statistics showing how overall participation in learning has fallen.

There are 1.2 million fewer people taking part in learning than in 2010. This includes a 280,000 fall in adults learning literacy and numeracy, and a 120,000 fall in community learning participants. That's pretty dismal given the UK's poor record on the basics, and the power of community learning to engage people and communities.

The Adult Education Budget might be frozen in cash terms, but higher-than-expected inflation means a seven per cent real-terms cut by 2020 planned at the time of the spending review has now become nine per cent.

Finally, the budget for advanced learner loans, vital for intermediate skills, was due to be £498 million per year by now. It's actually £260 million and the latest figures suggest a small fall in the number of adults aged over 24 taking part. And of course FE Week is spot on that learners whose providers go bust should have their loans written off.

All of this matters due to the power of adult education. It helps you get a job and build a career. It boosts health and wellbeing. It supports economic growth and productivity. And it promotes communities and citizenship.

The impact of adult education can be most clearly seen in the stories of adult learners. People like Emily Hicks, who was selected for a Festival of Learning award in 2016, after balancing caring for her family from an early age with learning. After working her way through school and university, she

is now helping others who find themselves in a similar position working with carers' organisations in York and nationally. She is a truly inspiring person.

There are millions of people like Emily, their lives transformed by learning and adult education. But future Emilys risk missing out if we don't reverse the fall in adult learning. We need to create more opportunities, more routes in, if we are to make sure everyone has a fair chance in life.

“ Harness the energy behind apprenticeships to support adult education

This week's Budget provides a great opportunity to start. Better-than-expected growth means borrowing is likely to be (while still high by historic standards) £12 billion lower than planned. We would like to see some of that invested in:

- Increasing funding per student in FE, which is currently stuck at 1990 levels. This would allow more contact hours per week.
- Investing an extra £200 million per year in adult literacy and numeracy, as part of a community engagement strategy.
- Earmarking money for training for small firms and the self-employed, outside apprenticeships and the levy, just as in Scotland.
- Improving the links between community learning and health, wellbeing, employment, and community engagement.
- Developing new personal learning accounts so individuals, employers and the government can invest together.

Beyond greater investment, I hope the government will also recognise that adult education, including but going beyond apprenticeships, should become a golden thread running through its strategies for health, regeneration, growth, and more besides. That's why FE Week's call for an adult education strategy matters – it should be a cross-government approach.

Our future prosperity and fairness depends on unleashing the capacity and capability of our amazing adult education sector. Together we must campaign for change.

EXPERTS

To increase social mobility, government needs to look beyond grammar schools and universities and invest properly in adult education, says Sue Pember

In his autumn statement, the chancellor specifically identified the UK's poor productivity as a matter of national concern.

Part of this productivity gap is down to poor skills, especially adult skills. Adults working today will still make up more than two thirds of the workforce in 2030, but the autumn statement was nevertheless a skills-free zone.

The 2017 budget must be an education and skills budget. The government's industrial strategy must have a strong human component as well as physical capital.

Adult education has a role to play in raising productivity, strengthening community cohesion, increasing social mobility, reducing unemployment and inactivity, enhancing progression into well-paid jobs, extending working lives, tackling health and mental health issues, and attracting inward investment. It is not just one thing, it has many aspects and should be there all through our lives.

The chancellor has hinted that there might be a skills element in the budget – that's good news – but my concern is that the government's idea of skills only means level four and above.

We have to face up to the fact that the nation continues to have a legacy of poor basic skills; 40 per cent of our young people



SUE PEMBER

HOLEX Director of Policy and External Relations

Adult Education: It's high time to invest

still don't achieve level two at 16. One in five adult employees does not have the basic English and maths skills required in the workplace, which means labour productivity is low. Although we know how to support the basic skills learner, it is no longer seen as the priority it should be and little is done by employers. We need to address this now and put the energy back into the programme.

The EU referendum has raised tensions over the place of migrants in our society and local communities, whether they have come to the UK to work or study, have relatives in the UK, or are seeking asylum. It is vital that all people throughout the UK, whatever their status post-Brexit, are given the chance to learn English; not just for themselves and their futures, but for their children's and grandchildren's welfare, and to achieve stronger community cohesion.

Although the government invests in this area, there is no clear policy, with different government departments regularly starting and stopping initiatives.

Research demonstrates that adult education can strengthen community cohesion. However, to be effective it needs central and local government to work together to provide an integrated structure for adult basic skills and family learning, including language training and ESOL.

“ **We will never achieve extensive social mobility through a narrowly defined route** ”

The government says it is committed to increasing social mobility. All too often, however, the challenge is framed in terms of

helping children from poorer backgrounds to access high-quality academic education by attending selective secondary schools, high-performing school sixth forms and into full-time higher education. We will never achieve extensive social mobility through such a narrowly defined route.

Social mobility should be improved by developing alternative pathways. Access to higher- and degree-level apprenticeships is one pathway, but so too is higher-level technical education at 18 and over.

And yet, if we are to encourage more 18-year-olds to study higher-level technical education courses (which are so vital to boosting our productivity performance) on a full-time basis, they need access to maintenance support like traditional full-time HE students.

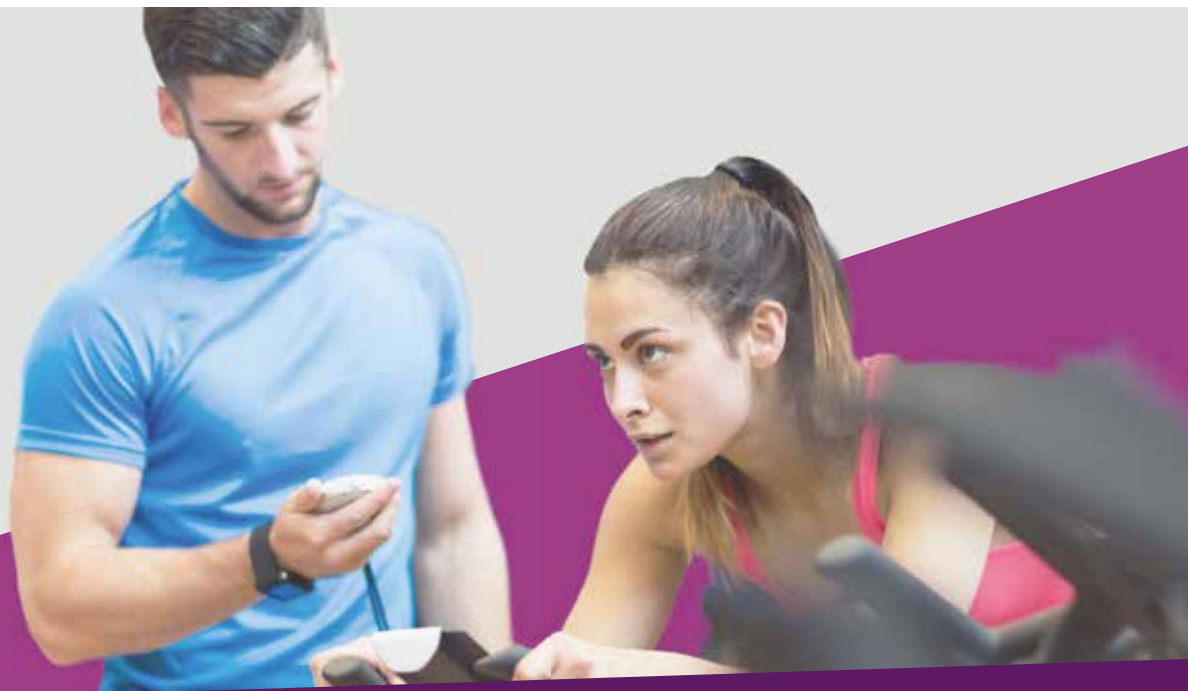
We also need to ensure the provider base is robust and weed out all those who wish to defraud students or undermine the reputation of good providers.

We need a strategy that brings politicians from all parties together and a commitment for at least 10 years. There is shared ground and this should be an area where we can come together to meet the challenges.

It is not that we don't have any framework; we still have the Coalition's 2011 document 'New Challenges and New Chances', which set the direction, and we have the rules in the funding guidance. What we don't have is a strategy that sets the ambition post-Brexit, brings departments together, and establishes an overarching agenda for the devolution of the adult education budget.

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CAMPUS ROUND-UP *with Samantha King*

Orphaned sloth finds a new mum



Flash (a-ah, saviour of the universe)

A Sparsholt College student has been busy balancing her studies with hand-rearing an orphaned sloth named Flash.

For the last six months, Gemma Romanis – who is studying for a diploma in zoo and aquarium animal management at the Hampshire-based college – has been developing skills by helping to raise Flash.

Working full-time as a zookeeper at Drusillas Park, she shares the responsibility of caring for her with head keeper Mark Kenward. Between them, they dispense feeds throughout the night before returning to the park for their day jobs.

Gemma, who claims her course has helped her extend her theoretical knowledge of looking after exotic animals, has excelled in

her first term of studies, passing the course with multiple distinctions.

Gemma said: “I have had a limited social life due to the demands of hand rearing and meeting coursework deadlines.

“Flash is definitely worth it though and I really appreciate the college’s flexibility in enabling me to look after the sloth and do my coursework.”

Sloths are not fully independent until they reach the age of one, so the hand-rearing will continue for another six months.



Gemma with Flash at Drusillas Park



An interactive plasma globe at the event

STEM event for Cornwall educators

Turo and Penwith College recently hosted a STEM networking event for educators across Cornwall.

The event was attended by primary, secondary and FE teachers, local organisations and ambassadors, and followed Theresa May’s emphasis on the need to develop STEM subjects in her industrial strategy announcement.

Alongside networking opportunities and guest speakers – including Kim Conchie from the Cornwall Chamber of Commerce – were a series of interactive sessions led by the British Science Association, Royal Society of

Chemistry and Institute of Physics.

Dr Jon Grey, programme team leader for science at the college, said: “It was great to see so many passionate people from across Cornish STEM education and industry coming together to improve the opportunities for young people in Cornwall.

“We are hopeful that this is the first of a regular programme of meetings that can give all parties engaged with STEM in Cornwall a forum to build partnerships, share best practice, learn new skills and discover possibilities to enhance the future prospects for young people.”



From the heart: Graham Keightley, centre, with head of Stourbridge College Gill Coldicott

£500 Defibrillator donation

A cancer survivor and pub landlord from Worcestershire has donated a defibrillator to his local college to support their first aid services.

Fifty-five-year-old Graham Keightley bought defibrillators for his pub, The Hollybush, after meeting people whose lives had been saved by first aid during his time in hospital.

After learning that the local Stourbridge College didn’t have the equipment, Graham – who has been in remission since August 2015 – donated a £500 defibrillator to the college. Since the donation, eight members of

staff have received training from the West Midlands Fire Service on how to use the equipment.

Graham said: “Recovering from illness and coming across other people whose lives have been saved by first aid made me realise just how useful it is to have this equipment in as many locations as possible. I was more than happy to make the donation. It means more people across the community can be aware of the device and have immediate access to it.”

The defibrillator is now stored in the college’s learning resource centre where it can easily be accessed in an emergency.

Endangered chickens saved from the flu

A team of students spent the day constructing a chicken coop in the Yorkshire Moors to protect local poultry against avian flu.

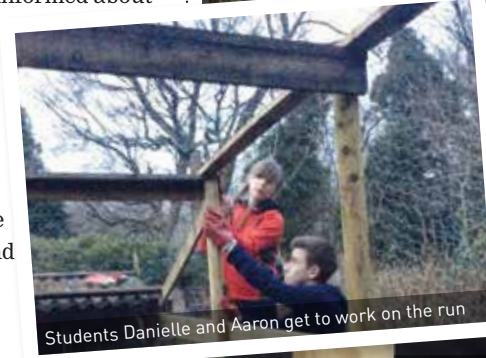
The group of 11 from North Lindsey College spent six hours building the structure in an effort to save the resident chickens, turkeys and ducks at the Youth Hostel Association in Castleton from the devastating illness.

Poultry keepers have been advised to keep their birds inside to protect them from a highly infectious strain of avian flu which can be caught from wild birds. Chicken coops are a way of keeping them safe while still letting them outside.

It was the first time dabbling in construction for many of the students, with the majority studying media and digital subjects at the college.

Michelle Kaye, deputy Manager at YHA Castleton, said: “After being informed about the bird flu outbreak our lovely chickens had to be cooped up for weeks, only having a small run to play around in.

The students very quickly volunteered their skills in the freezing cold and the dark, and completed a perfect structure where our chickens could spread their wings and enjoy the fresh air.”



Students Danielle and Aaron get to work on the run

Lewis absolutely nails it

CAMPUS ROUND-UP *with Samantha King*

Meet the puppet masters of safeguarding

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ROUND-UP

A puppetry show based on the experiences of Myerscough College's foundation learners is to be made into a national safeguarding resource; Samantha King reports

Puppeteer Steve Wright has been a regular visitor to the Lancashire college, delivering the government's Prevent training to learners with additional needs through the medium of puppetry.

The creative artist has previously appeared on BBC show *Dragon's Den* with his educational puppetry business *Routes*, and is now creating a special resource for the Education and Training Foundation based on the experiences of Myerscough's learners.

The new resource will delve into what it's like to be a foundation learner through a specially created puppet, and help others understand how to treat students who have additional needs, and it will soon be made available nationally for all teachers and staff working in FE.



Steve Wright, left, with student Matthew Taylor, 17

Barry Sherriff, head of foundation learning at the college, said: "Steve has recognised the immense potential our students have. He has been collecting soundbites from the students which he's now putting together to create these learning materials for the ETF.

"There'll be no pictures of our students – it will be anonymous – but it's their words, and it's strong because others will relate to it."

In the show – which will appear in video format on the ETF website – the bespoke puppet will be portrayed as having learning needs and a strong work ethic.

Steve delivers educational presentations across the UK on topics such as Prevent,

road safety, drugs, equality, sexual health and relationships and bullying, while also creating his own resources for teachers.

His visits have proven highly successful with the students, and many have even been inspired to bring their own puppets in to help them communicate during the sessions.

"The students trust him and that's why they feel they can be so honest," Mr Sherriff

said. "It allows them to show little nuggets of themselves that you'd never really prise out of them otherwise."

And on how the Prevent sessions have helped student learning, he added: "What does anti-radicalisation mean to somebody with limited understanding? If you break it down and dress the puppets accordingly, it makes more sense.

"Through the medium of puppetry they really do seem to pick up the messages. It's been really powerful."

Steve also took time out to assist one particular foundation learner who wants to become an actor, working with him to create a showreel using the learner's voice and a puppet which will become part of his application to study drama.

Myerscough has now been working with Steve for around 12 months, and Mr Sherriff says he is now a friend of the college.

"His method of communication suits our learners greatly," he added.



The foundation learners



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& MOVERS SHAKERS

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

The Association of Employment and Learning Providers has made two major new appointments to its senior management team.

AELP is a national membership trade body for training providers in the UK with over 800 members across the private and public sectors.

Jane Hickie has been appointed chief operating officer, which is a new role at AELP.

She joins the organisation from her previous position as corporate partnerships consultant at Groundwork, a community charity, which focuses on engaging young people in improving their local environment.

In her new role, Ms Hickie will be responsible for building AELP's membership, which comprises vocational learning and employment providers. She will also run the organisation's head office based in Bristol.



JANE HICKIE

Simon Ashworth is meanwhile AELP's new chief policy officer.

His responsibilities will include leading on overall policy work, including the apprenticeship and justice reforms.

He will take up the position from his previous role at the training provider Babington Group, where he was director of new products and services. There he was responsible for the development of new products and services linked to the apprenticeship reforms.



SIMON ASHWORTH

Mark Dawe, the CEO of AELP, said: "Jane and Simon are already making a big difference to the organisation and we can expect more staff recruitment including new apprentices to the AELP team over the coming months."

Mark Hillman has been appointed the deputy principal of Basingstoke College of Technology.

He takes up the role at the Hampshire-based college following a three-year stint as assistant principal at the North East Surrey College of Technology, where his responsibilities included curriculum leadership, quality improvement and financial management.

He brings to the role more than 20 years of experience in education, beginning his career in FE as a maths lecturer and curriculum manager at Sixth Form College Farnborough, a position he held for six years.

As deputy principal, he hopes to "continue to build a curriculum that is focused on achievement", adding: "BCoT has an amazing



MARK HILLMAN



JON GREY

track record of employer engagement, something many colleges find hard to secure. I want to continue to build a curriculum that provides successful pathways for all students."

Jon Grey has been appointed assistant principal at Cornwall-based Callywith College, which opens in September this year.

The new college is being opened in association with Truro and Penwith college, and will offer 27 A-level courses and 16 progression and diploma options for 16- to 19-year-olds.

Mr Grey, who is currently programme team leader for science at Truro college, will lead on teaching and learning in the new role. He will be working closely with principal Mark Wardle in ensuring a consistent quality of teaching throughout the college.

He says he "can't wait to get started" in September, and is excited to be "part of the team that we are building Callywith College".

Speaking of the importance of the new college, he added "Too many 16- to 19-year-olds in north and east Cornwall are forced to travel unacceptable distances to get an outstanding education. Opening Callywith in the heart of Cornwall will give students in the county a genuine alternative within an acceptable commuting distance."

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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

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

Difficulty:
EASY

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

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Solutions:
Next edition

Last Week's solutions

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

Difficulty:
EASY

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

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: Megan Ainscough, Winstanley college