

# FE Week

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BUILDING A COUNTRY THAT WORKS FOR EVERYONE



Photo: Nick Lin ord

# 'FLABBERGASTED'

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- > Minister wants 'flexibility' – not 'the dead hand of the state'
- > 'Just enough time' not to lose employers' enthusiasm



Exclusive **FREDDIE WHITTAKER** @FGDWHITTAKER

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# FE Week

## Meet the news team

[feweek.co.uk](http://feweek.co.uk)



**Nick Linford**  
**EDITOR**  
@NICKLINFORD  
NICK.LINFORD@LSECT.COM



**Paul Offord**  
**DEPUTY EDITOR**  
@PAULOFFORD  
PAUL.OFFORD@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Please inform the FE Week editor of any errors or issues of concern regarding this publication.



**Cath Murray**  
**FEATURES EDITOR**  
@CATHMURRAY\_NEWS  
CATH.MURRAY@FEWEEK.CO.UK



**Tom Mendelsohn**  
**SUB EDITOR**  
@TOM\_MENDELSON  
TOM.MENDELSON@LSECT.COM



**Billy Camden**  
**SENIOR REPORTER**  
@BILLYCAMDEN  
BILLY.CAMDEN@FEWEEK.CO.UK



**Jude Burke**  
**SENIOR REPORTER**  
@JUDEBURKE77  
JUDE.BURKE@FEWEEK.CO.UK



**Pippa Allen-Kinross**  
**REPORTER**  
@PIPPA\_AK  
PIPPA.ALLENKINROSS@FEWEEK.CO.UK



**Sam King**  
**JUNIOR REPORTER**  
@KINGSAMANTHA\_  
SAMANTHA.KING@FEWEEK.CO.UK

**The team**

**Head designer:** Nicky Phillips  
**Designer:** Matthew Willson  
**Photographer:** Ellis O'Brien  
**Financials:** Helen Neilly  
**Sales Team Leader:** Bridget Stockdale  
**Administration:** Frances Ogefere Dell  
**PA to managing director:** Victoria Boyle



**Shane Mann**  
**MANAGING DIRECTOR**  
@SHANERMANN  
SHANE.MANN@LSECT.COM

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Learning & Skills Events, Consultancy and Training Ltd  
161-165 Greenwich High Road  
London SE10 8JA  
T: 020 8123 4778  
E: [news@feweek.co.uk](mailto:news@feweek.co.uk)

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## NEWS

# Suffolk provider successfully contests 'inadequate'

BILLY CAMDEN  
@BILLYCAMDEN

A private training provider has successfully overturned an 'inadequate' Ofsted judgement after a nine-month battle which even saw inspectors forced to go back and reconsider the grade.

WS Training Ltd, a provider based in Suffolk with nearly 1,000 learners, was rated at grade two from in 2013 but was reinspected in January this year.

FE Week understands the provider had been due to receive an overall grade four in a report which singled out safeguarding concerns.

WS Training feared it would go out of business as an 'inadequate' rating typically means the government will terminate funding contracts.

Directors engaged lawyers to challenge the outcome and after an initial investigation, the watchdog deemed the original inspection "incomplete", and sent inspectors back in to gather more evidence seven months later.

After this mini reinspection, which took place over two days in August, WS Training was given a grade three across the board in a report published on September 28 – nearly 250

days after the first inspection.

The wait was eight times longer than the average 30 days between an inspection and a published report.

"While we aim to get our inspection reports out as quickly as possible, it is important that the reports are an accurate reflection of the provision," an Ofsted spokesperson told FE Week.

"We don't often have to gather additional evidence after an inspection, but will do so where we feel it is necessary to secure our judgement. Sometimes this leads to an unavoidable delay."

In the last two academic years, five inspections of FE providers, including that of WS Training, have been deemed incomplete as a result of Ofsted's quality-assurance process.

In all cases the inspectorate had to return to the provider to gather more evidence "in order to ensure that the inspection judgements were secure".

FE Week understands the nature of the complaint from WS Training centred on alleged incompetence of inspectors. However, Ofsted told FE Week it had "no concerns about the conduct of any of our inspectors on this inspection".

The decision comes at an embarrassing time for the watchdog given its recent judicial



review with Learndirect.

Like WS Training, the nation's largest FE provider accused the inspectorate of not doing its job thoroughly enough to make an adequate judgment.

During a court hearing in July, Learndirect claimed that inspectors had a "predetermined" negative view of its apprenticeship provision, and that the inspection was inadequately detailed considering its size.

But these allegations were thrown out by the judge and Ofsted was vindicated.

Jane Wood, WS Training's chief executive, told FE Week it would be "inappropriate" for her to comment on her firm's case against the inspectorate.

WS Training's combined government contracts are worth more than £2.5 million, according to the ESFA's latest funding allocations.

Ofsted's final report on the provider said "too few" tutors plan teaching, learning and assessment "well enough to help learners to make good progress from their starting points".

Tutors "do not always have high enough expectations" of what learners can achieve, and "too few challenge them beyond the minimum requirements of their qualifications".

Inspectors added that leaders do not take "sufficient account" of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in self-assessment or improvement planning, while not all employers are "routinely involved in planning apprentices' learning".

Leaders do however work "effectively" with partners to "meet the needs of learners", particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with complex high needs.

Advertorial

## Why colleges should be embracing blended learning

To remain competitive in an ever-changing FE landscape, colleges must provide an exceptional learning experience – which means investing in learning technology.

We know there are huge differences among teaching staff in the use of digital technologies to support learning. Some hardly use technology at all, others create a few resources for the virtual learning environment (VLE), while innovators integrate educational technology (edtech) as part of a richer approach that we call blended learning. We've produced a new toolkit on the subject to help colleges embed edtech into courses. To find it, go to our website and search "blended learning".

Under this approach, traditional face-to-face methods are combined with online, often interactive, activities and content for study, feedback and assessment. It can be a powerful tool as colleges strive to implement the recommendations of the FELTAG report and become learner-led organisations.

Blended learning enables learners to access a wealth of resources, take more control of how, when and where they study and develop the digital capabilities that they will need in the workplace. Integrating edtech in the curriculum also helps clear obstacles to education for people who have previously found themselves excluded, including those with disabilities or caring responsibilities.

Used imaginatively, blended learning can also develop skills in collaborative working and team-working. In turn, it can improve both engagement and attainment – and so boost the reputation of any college.

### What do students want from learning technology?

First, colleges must understand where to invest. Does your college know how students use technology to study, what they feel about using it and what they expect from it? One of the best ways to secure answers to these questions is to involve students in the discussion.

Some colleges took part in our pilot student digital experience tracker project, and you can sign up now for the 2018 tracker survey.

Latest (2017) tracker survey results reveal that, when technology is used on their courses, more than 70% of students feel it enables them to be more independent in their learning and that study fits more easily into their lives.

Students expect to be able to access study tools and resources remotely from their personal devices as well as using technology in the classroom or the library, and for feedback and assessment.

### What sort of education technology is available?

Enriching learning content with images, audio and video that have been labelled for reuse can add variety and impact.

Teachers who need help understanding edtech can benefit from free online courses, such as the blended learning essentials MOOC on FutureLearn, delivered by the University of Leeds. Or choose another free course from FutureLearn or Coursera. We can also advise on finding copyright-free resources.

Don't forget, through Jisc, your college has



Image credit: Jisc and Matt Lincoln

access to free and heavily discounted digital resources via Jisc Collections.

### Developing digital capability

College staff need to be proficient and confident in the use of technology so they can make the most of resources, present an enhanced learning experience and realise a good return on digital investment.

We can provide guidance, to, training and resources to help equip staff in a variety of roles with digital skills. We can share a host of case studies illustrating best practice.

We have the experience and expertise to support

colleges transform digitally – a process that can be particularly valuable for newly merged – or merging – colleges, which often have to cope with complex issues around integrating different learning management systems across multiple sites.

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# Further education takes centre stage

## Theresa May bigs up FE in keynote speech

JUDE BURKE  
@JUDEBURKE77

FROM FRONT

Theresa May spelled out plans to create “a first-class technical education system for the first time in our nation’s history”, in a difficult speech on the final day of the Conservative Party conference.

The prime minister, who had a cold and often struggled to make herself heard, spoke about her high hopes for the government’s FE reform agenda.

She stressed the need to invest the same level of energy and commitment to skills training as usually goes into schools, for example through the new “gold standard” T-level technical qualifications and institutes of technology.

This is about “preparing our young people for the world of the future, setting them up to succeed, taking skills seriously with new T-levels for post-16 education, and a new generation of technology institutes in every major city in England – providing the skills local employers need, and more technical training for 16- to 19-year-olds”.

“As we roll out our modern industrial strategy, we will attract and invest in new high-paid, high-skilled jobs,” she continued.

“We will continue to reform education and



skills training so that people growing up in Britain today are ready and able to seize the opportunities ahead.”

But while Ms May was reinforcing her commitment to FE, the sign on the wall behind her was doing anything but.

By the end of her speech the motif, which had originally read “building a country that works for everyone”, had lost an F and an E – prompting an amused reaction on Twitter, as photos of the disintegrating sign, taken by FE Week’s editor Nick Linford, went viral.

“Is this a subtle way of telling us FE has been dropped?” quipped one Twitter user.

Meanwhile, details of the 27 “degree apprenticeship projects” announced by Justine Greening on the opening day of the conference have been published – although not by the Department for Education.

The education secretary praised the success of the degree apprenticeships programme – which allows people to study for a degree while also working – during her speech.



“So today I am announcing the next wave of 27 degree apprenticeship projects, that will help meet the growing demand for these opportunities from the next generation,” she said.

The projects were not initially named, nor was the DfE able to say when they would be.

According to information published in the wake of Ms Greening’s speech, the projects “will be spread across the country and are part of a £10 million fund launched in 2016”.

The bulk of this cash is being administered by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, through its degree apprenticeships development fund.

Details of all 27 of the new projects, funded through phase two of the DADF, were finally published on the HEFCE website on Thursday morning (October 5).

## Minister ‘flabbergasted’ over reform ignorance

FREDDIE WHITTAKER  
@FCDWHITTAKER

FROM FRONT

EXCLUSIVE

The skills minister acknowledged the sector’s concerns about the government’s apprenticeships reforms for the first time this week – prompting the AELP to wonder out loud what her officials have been telling her for the past four months.

Speaking during an Apprenticeships Forum fringe event at the Conservative party conference, Anne Milton at last recognised there were criticisms about the new system.

She admitted the conference had been an opportunity to identify concerns, including about the apprenticeship levy, that she had not been aware of before.

“I’ve been quite flabbergasted actually,” she said. “Local business, big business paying the levy, certainly the managing director didn’t know anything about it.”

In response, the Association of Employment and Learning Providers tweeted its concerns about the quality of her briefings, since she

started in the post in June.

In its tweet, the AELP said it was “greatly encouraged” by Ms Milton’s “comments and deep understanding of the apprenticeships reforms”.

“**I’ve been quite flabbergasted. Big business paying the levy didn’t know anything about it**”

But it continued: “What have her officials been saying to her for the past four months?”

During the session, Ms Milton stressed her door was “always open” to the sector and



AELP  
@AELPUK

Leaving #CPC17 greatly encouraged by @AnneMilton comments & deep understanding of @Apprenticeships reforms after what’s she’s heard here but what have her officials been saying to her for past 4 months?

businesses, although the list of people wanting to see her was “huge”.

She also responded to a question about problems with approving new apprenticeship standards and criticisms of the Institute for Apprenticeships.

She admitted the system would not work “unless there is flexibility in it”.

“Successive governments proceed with good intentions, great ideas. And then the dead hand of the state comes in,” she said.

“This conference is very timely, because there’s just about enough time to pick it up and make sure that enthusiasm and energy

and actually time – people are giving up huge amounts of time to work with the IfA – isn’t lost.”

FE Week put the employers’ concerns about a lack of feedback and flexibility, and too much bureaucracy, to the IfA, which replied they related to rigid guidance determined by the Department for Education.

The institute’s spokesperson added: “We are listening to employers and exploring how we can improve the speed and responsiveness of the processes that we run.”

We put the IfA’s claim to the DfE, but received no response ahead of publication.

# at the Conservative Party Conference

## Halfon wants the levy expanded and improved

JUDE BURKE  
@JUDEBURKE77

The apprenticeship levy needs to be “fine-tuned” to bring in more cash, the chair of the influential education select committee has admitted.

Speaking at a fringe event at the Conservative party conference, Robert Halfon acknowledged that the freedom granted by no longer being a minister meant he was “allowed to say this now”.

“I actually think that we need to fine tune the apprenticeship levy,” said the former skills minister.

“We need to do one of two things – we either increase the levy generally or we increase the

amount of companies that have to pay.”

The levy, introduced in April, is expected to bring in an estimated £3 billion a year by 2021/22, according to Treasury forecasts published alongside this year’s spring budget.

It’s a 0.5 per cent surcharge paid by any employer whose annual wage bills tops £3 million, and is currently only paid around two per cent of all companies.

“Perhaps you should increase that, set it at a wage bill of £2 million,”

Mr Halfon suggested.

He



described it as “incredible” because “it changes behaviours”.

“We need to understand the levy is not a tax,” he said. “The levy is a levy” that companies can use to build a “trained workforce, a highly skilled workforce”.

Mr Halfon spoke with passion about his commitment to “social justice” and proposed using “part of the levy to incentivise people to acquire apprentices from disadvantaged backgrounds”.

He referred to the £60 million in additional support for apprenticeship training in disadvantaged areas, first announced last October.

That announcement came after FE Week’s #SaveOurApprenticeships campaign highlighted the impact of proposed apprenticeship funding rules on the youngest apprentices and those in the most deprived areas.

Mr Halfon suggested “we need to look at how we spend that money better”.

“Part of the problem was that often some people from really disadvantaged

backgrounds are just not ready for the world of work at all,” he said.

He pointed out that there were “incredible grassroots community groups” that work with “people from disadvantaged backgrounds who may have been in young offenders’ centres, who may have been roaming around in doing nothing all day”.

“The records and stats of some of these organisations are quite extraordinary,” he continued.

He proposed using some of the money that currently goes to the National Careers Service and the Careers and Enterprise Company – both of which have “quite a few pennies going to them from the government” – to “support these grassroots organisations to give these younger people a transition 12 weeks or longer”.

That transition would take them “from being completely unprepared to being able to actually seriously do the apprenticeships”, he said.

“I think we have to be quite radical on this; it’s not about age 16 to 19, it’s all ages – but it’s people from disadvantaged backgrounds,” he said.

## Greening’s 27-ish degree apprenticeship ‘projects’

JUDE BURKE  
@JUDEBURKE77

It’s not clear how many actual new degree apprenticeship programmes are being developed from the 27 “degree apprenticeship projects” announced by Justine Greening at the Conservative conference last week.

The education secretary praised the success of the degree apprenticeships programme – which has had 2,000 starts since it was launched in 2015 – during her speech on the opening day of the conference.

“So today I am announcing the next wave of 27 degree apprenticeship projects, that will help meet the growing demand for these opportunities from the next generation,” she said.

The projects were not named at first, nor was the DfE able to say when they would be.

But basic details of all 27 of the new projects were published by the Higher Education Funding Council for England last Thursday.

The projects, involving at least 32 colleges and 31 universities, have been awarded a total of £4.9 million and are set to develop 4,500 new apprenticeship opportunities from September 2018, HEFCE said.

A DfE spokesperson was unable to say how many actual apprenticeships were being created through these projects.

Instead, she said they would cover a variety of different activities, which included

promotion and developing partnerships with employers, as well as actual programmes.

According to HEFCE, the projects “will be spread across the country and are part of a £10 million fund launched in 2016”.

The bulk of this cash – £8.5 million – is to be administered through HEFCE via its degree apprenticeship development fund, the DfE said.

£1.5 million has been allocated to the Education and Skills Funding Agency and will be spent on raising the profile of degree apprenticeships.

The first phase of the DADF, initially worth £8 million, was launched in May 2016, with FE and HE institutions invited to submit proposals to develop degree apprenticeships that “improve vocational opportunities for students and to address skills gaps”.

The 18 successful projects, awarded a total of £4.5 million between them, were announced in November 2016, with delivery starting this September.

When the second phase opened for application in April, it said that a further £4 million was up for grabs.

Proposals for that phase were expected to “bring together employers and professional bodies with HE providers to design on- and off-the-job learning for degree apprenticeships”, according to HEFCE.

With the total awarded so far through the DADF amounting to £9.4 million, FE Week asked the DfE how much of this cash came from HEFCE and how much from the ESFA – but the department was unable to say.



PA/WIRE

Ms Greening used her speech to repeat her pledge to introduce T-levels, and vowed to “pursue excellence in FE, as we have in our schools”.

“We will make sure that the technical education ladder is going to reach every bit as high as the academic one,” she said.

“In 2015, we introduced degree apprenticeships, so individuals can earn while they learn, and in less than two years, more than 2,000 people have started one,” she said.

In the wake of Ms Greening’s speech, the DfE claimed the announcement was one of “a number of steps to continue to diversify the training and quality of qualifications on offer and ensure we remain at the forefront of higher education”.

It also confirmed that the proposed rise in the repayment threshold for student loans will also apply to FE loans – meaning that the adult learners will have to earn before paying back their FE loans will rise from £21,000 to £25,000 a year.

# Barely half of eligible employers are on the levy system

JUDE BURKE  
@JUDEBURKE77

Scarcely half of eligible employers have signed up to use the government's apprenticeships system, new statistics suggest.

Just 10,500 accounts were registered on the system by the end of August – well short of the estimated 19,150 levy-paying companies that are eligible to use the service.

The apprenticeships and skills minister Anne Milton admitted earlier this week that she was “flabbergasted” to learn that so many large companies were unaware of the levy, even though they were paying it.

The experimental statistics, published by the Department for Education on Thursday, show the number of employers signing up to use the service is tailing off.

FE Week reported in July that 8,300 employers had registered by the end of May.

In the three months since then the number has increased by just 2,340 – with 910 companies signing up in June, 740 in July and just 690 in August.

A Twitter survey run by the Education

and Skills Funding Agency suggests the DfE is concerned about the lack of take-up.

The survey, run by the @ESFADigitalService account, asked levy-paying employers why they're not yet registered for the apprenticeship service, and gives four options: “not currently recruiting”, “no framework/standard”, “need skilled staff”, and “other”.

But the survey closed on Thursday morning with just six votes.

Speaking at a fringe event at the Conservative party conference last week, Ms Milton said she had met one managing director who “didn't know anything about” the levy and admitted that more needed to be done to promote it.

The apprenticeships service is the online system that levy-paying employers – around 1.3 per cent of companies – use to manage their funds, including registering “commitments”, or apprentices, and paying for training.

The new statistics show a total of 26,700 fully confirmed commitments – meaning that both the employer and training provider have agreed the apprenticeship start – were registered through the service by the end of August.

## Total number of apprenticeship service accounts registered

Date registered	Number of accounts registered
Jan-17	20
Feb-17	1,320
Mar-17	3,390
Apr-17	2,060
May-17	1,400
Jun-17	910
Jul-17	740
Aug-17	690
Total registered	10,500

Source: DfE experimental statistics, Apprenticeship service registrations and commitments: August 2017

Just over half of these, or 13,500, were for apprentices aged 25 or older, while just 4,800 were for the youngest apprentices, aged 16 to 18.

This represents a small increase in the proportion of apprentices in the youngest age bracket, from 15 per cent in last month's statistical release, to 18 per cent.

But Mark Dawe, the chief executive of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, said he'd been hoping for a bigger increase “because of the school-leaving season”.

“The government's social mobility agenda

means that the incentives for recruiting these apprentices have to be reviewed by ministers urgently,” he said.

The same @ESFADigitalService Twitter account is also currently surveying non-levy-paying employers, ahead of a planned expansion of the service to include all employers by April 2019.

The DfE also recently ran its fifth consultation, which closed on Tuesday, on how reforms to apprenticeship funding are affecting employers and training providers.

The department had not commented at the time of going to press.

# T-levels 45-day funded work placement criticised

PAUL OFFORD  
@PAULOFFORD

New guidance on T-level work placements has been criticised by the Association of Colleges, which fears providers will struggle to fit in the minimum 45 days per learner.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency's guidance has fleshed out Justine Greening's announcement in July, which said £50 million would be available from April 2018 for “high-quality” work placements, before the new “gold-standard” technical qualifications achieve lift-off.

It outlines the main expectations for accessing the capacity and delivery fund (CDF), and stipulates that placements should be an average length of 50 working days, within a range of 45 to 60, for a minimum of 315 hours.

But the AoC boss David Hughes warned there would be an “issue” even meeting the minimum time period.

“It may prove impossible to fit in the 45 days of work placement, plus the full vocational qualification and English and maths,” he said.

“There are some equally interesting challenges about transport for students and access to the full range of work placements to cover all routes, so that young people have a proper choice.

“I hope that the ESFA will use this funding to learn more and evaluate properly what works; I also hope that the bureaucracy can be

## Timescales for funding work placement capacity and delivery fund

Date	Action
September 2017	Guidance published
October 2017	All eligible institutions to receive notification of indicative student numbers and survey link
24 November 2017	Proposed implementation plans submitted by institutions
24 November – mid December 2017	The implementation plans are reviewed
December 2017	Notify institutions with incomplete plans to resubmit by a new deadline
End of January 2018	Final deadline for resubmitted implementation plans back to the ESFA
February 2018	Notify successful institutions of outcome
End of February 2018	Re-submitted plans reviewed
End February 2018	Finalise allocation amounts for each provider calculated
End February 2018	Write to institutions confirming allocations
Early March 2018	Institutions build the work placement funding offer into their funding strategies
April-July 2018 August/	Capacity building activity in progress
September 2018	Payments start
Autumn 2018	First placements delivered

Source: Guidance Work placements – capacity and delivery fund from April 2018 to July 2019: September 2017

kept to a minimum.”

The guidance conceded that delivering significant work placements during T-levels would be “a significant step change for the sector”.

“This is why this funding is being provided now, to help build capacity ahead of the roll out of T-levels, from 2020,” it added.

But the document was clear that work placements “must be delivered on top of the usual planned hours, which must be recorded in the usual way”.

“For some students, particularly in rural areas where the placement may require

additional travel, using some of the funds to support student travel and subsistence would be acceptable,” it said.

The agency expects providers and employers to “start developing the capacity and capability to deliver work placements now in advance of the introduction of T-levels from 2020”.

The CDF, it stressed, will be available from April to “facilitate the build-up of capacity and capability” of “substantive work placements” in 2018/19.

Within this first year of funding, the CDF will not be linked directly to T-levels, and funding “will allow for the development

of students on a vocational programme to undertake a substantive work placement”.

With regards to eligibility, the ESFA said: “General vocational qualifications are included but applied general qualifications are not”.

For the period up to July 2019, the ESFA will allocate the CDF “based on the number of qualifying students in the 2015 to 2016 academic year, at a funding rate of £250 per qualifying student”.

Qualifying learners should be full-time and aged 16, 17 or 18, while those aged 19 at the beginning of their two-year programme won't be included.

Such qualifying learners must be enrolled on level two and three courses, “with a vocational core aim, which might be included in the technical education routes planned for introduction from 2020 to 2021 academic year”.

It also warned that access to CDF in 2018/19 “does not imply future eligibility to deliver or receive funding for the development or delivery of T-levels”.

Providers with low numbers of qualifying learners will be allocated a “flat rate”. Those with one to 10 appropriate learners will be allocated £2,500, while those with 11 to 20 will be allocated £5,000.

Payments will start from next August and providers must fill-in and submit an implementation plan template to the ESFA by November 24.

To find out more visit <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/work-placements-capacity-and-delivery-fund-from-april-2018-to-july-2019>.

## NEWS

# Ofsted to recruit staff with more experience of workplace training

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS  
@PIPPA\_AK

EXCLUSIVE

A senior Ofsted figure has said the inspectorate will employ new inspectors with more apprenticeship experience, as well as asking employers for feedback on how Ofsted can help them choose providers.

It published a new five-year strategy at the end of September, in which it committed itself to being “a force for improvement through intelligent, responsible and focused inspection and regulation”.

Now, its director of corporate strategy, Luke Tryl, said it wants to find out how it can serve FE better.

“Our FE workforce is pretty balanced towards colleges at the moment, and we do need to bring in some new people with specialist apprenticeship experience,” he said.

“There has been a huge expansion of

growth in this sector. We need to focus what we do and make sure we follow it in the right direction.

“I think, on balance, our system has favoured the college sector and it’s something we need to address.”

Ofsted has been holding focus groups with parents around the country to find out how to improve reports for different audiences.

Mr Tryl said the next step would be to do the same with employers, and that he hopes to have wrapped this up by January 2018.

“We want the 2019 common inspection framework to be the best it can be.

If companies don’t think the current framework works, we want to hear from them,” he added.

“Right now our reports are targeted at three different audiences – institutions, the government and the public. Having a report that does three things is difficult. Maybe we need to make sure we present different information with different prominence to



Luke Tryl

difference audiences.

“There’s potential for looking for new ways of presenting information across our remit and through digital means.

“We want to establish with employers what they need from our reports, what needs to change and how best to give them the information.”

The government already has a ‘Find apprenticeship training’ website, but Ofsted’s previous FE and skills data dashboard was closed down in 2016, just two years after it was launched with a promise to help

governors and members of the public keep a check on the performance of providers.

However, Mr Tryl insisted that Ofsted wanted to develop something new.

“A dashboard approach might not be the right way to go. People might want a more narrative approach, although perhaps that won’t appeal to employers so much,” he continued. “We are in a time of limited resource. We aren’t going to invest where we don’t need to.

“We are going to ask how we can do this better. I’m convinced we can do it better.”

# AEB contracts top-up will be paid from unspent £200m

BILLY CAMDEN  
@BILLYCAMDEN

Funding increases in adult education budget contracts for private providers will be paid from the massive underspend on adult training last year.

The government announced a U-turn on AEB funding for independent training organisations at the end of last month, just a few hours after FE Week revealed that FE providers had dramatically underspent their allocations for the 2016/17 academic year by £200 million.

This will bring new funding levels for all private providers up to the value of at least 75 per cent of the amount they had in 2016/17, bringing much-needed parity to those that felt aggrieved by the massive funding cuts imposed after their “successful” bids in the recent tender process.

“We cannot confirm the budget at this stage of the procurement as contract talks are still taking place,” a spokesperson for the Department for Education said, though he did clarify that “the amount will be published once all contracts have been signed. This money comes from underspends in the adult education budget”.

Multiple sources confirmed to FE Week that around 13 per cent of the £1.5 billion

AEB budget went unspent in 2016/17 – a situation sector leaders described as “worrying” and “frustrating”.

Many ITPs would likely also have been infuriated by the unspent £200 million because, unlike FE colleges and councils, they were forced to tender for part of a pot worth just £110 million.

The tender’s outcome was catastrophic: providers which did not bid, or which failed their tender, were given contracts worth 75 per cent of their previous year’s allocation to spend in 2017/18, but organisations which won contracts typically received a fraction of their old AEB.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency attempted to make amends last week, writing to aggrieved ITPs to inform them that extra money had become available for their AEB allocations.

Shadow skills minister Gordon Marsden previously said it would have been a “scandal” if the unspent £200 million had not been spent on more FE provision.

AELP boss Mark Dawe added that the underspend was the “final piece of evidence” that proved the government should “start a transitional shift to full procurement of the whole budget, with greater prioritisation to meet the Brexit skills challenge”.

He pointed out that the unspent money could have been used to treble allocations to independent providers.



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of AEB activity



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**100,000**  
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[www.learningcurvegroup.co.uk](http://www.learningcurvegroup.co.uk)

ncfe.



NEWS

# NAO launches investigation into Learndirect AND the DfE

BILLY CAMDEN @BILLYCAMDEN

The National Audit Office has officially launched an investigation into Learndirect and the Department for Education following outcry from the Public Accounts Committee.

The special treatment offered to the nation's biggest FE provider following its grade four from Ofsted last month has raised eyebrows across the sector, especially at the government's handling of the situation.

Despite being slapped with the lowest possible Ofsted grade after a failed judicial review, Learndirect has had none of its contracts terminated and was even told it could recruit new learners as long as they complete their qualifications by July 2018.

The provider has been repeatedly branded "too big to fail" by many sceptics in the sector.

But in a move that will place the provider and ministers under the biggest microscope yet, the NAO has confirmed it is going to scrutinise Learndirect.

In a note that appeared on the NAO's website this week, the country's national auditor said: "Learndirect is a very large commercial

further education provider, whose core business is skills, training and employment services. Learndirect receives funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency and, in keeping with other further education providers, is subject to inspection by Ofsted.

"In March 2017, Ofsted carried out an inspection of Learndirect and awarded it a grade four ('inadequate') rating. ESFA subsequently made a number of decisions about its ongoing funding of Learndirect. This investigation will set out the key facts relating to those decisions."

Ofsted sent damning evidence that apprentices were not receiving enough training to the DfE at the end of March. An experienced independent apprenticeship funding auditor previously told FE Week this evidence should have raised significant concerns at the department.

The scandal was subsequently referred to the NAO by the Public Accounts Committee, after its chair Meg Hillier hit out at the situation.

"It does not seem to me that in this case the DfE has been a smart client," she told FE Week. "It got to a point where ... if it had started digging it might have gone in and found its problems - so it does seem that Learndirect has been too big to fail."



Upon hearing the news that the NAO had taken up her referral, Ms Hillier said she was "pleased" the national auditor was investigating and "looked forward to examining its findings in due course".

In a statement released last week, Learndirect said it had itself invited the NAO to investigate, claiming it had "nothing to hide".

The provider's chief executive, Andy Palmer, this week welcomed the investigation.

"Learndirect welcomes the investigation which is clearly not an investigation into Learndirect but into the public bodies and stakeholders that have engaged with Learndirect. We believe that it will vindicate the decisions that they have made with respect to Learndirect."

The DfE also welcomed the NAO's inquiry. "Following the Ofsted report, we have taken swift action to work with learndirect and put safeguards in place to protect learners," a spokesperson said.

"We welcome the NAO's investigation and will look at its findings when published."

The exact dates of investigation are not yet known, but the NAO has said it will be conducted during "winter 2017-18".

The NAO told FE Week that its investigations, such as the one following the Kids Company scandal in 2015, are "reactive to a situation" and "offer a rapid assessment of service quality, failure and financial management".



Meg Hillier

# NHS intervenes over Learndirect Apprenticeships

BILLY CAMDEN @BILLYCAMDEN

EXCLUSIVE

Learndirect Apprenticeships Ltd has been removed from part of the purchasing system used by London hospitals, following a joint FE Week and Financial Times investigation.

Last month, FE Week analysis revealed multiple irregularities in a tender application to deliver apprenticeships at a London hospital that was submitted by LDA, a company owned and operated by the owners of Learndirect Ltd since March 2016.

There were at least six potentially misleading claims in the application, in which LDA appeared to take credit for activities that happened several years before it was even set up, which are understood to have been undertaken by Learndirect Ltd.

After reviewing our findings, the London Procurement Partnership (LPP), which the NHS uses to manage the capital's dynamic purchasing system (DPS), launched a review of LDA's position as a provider.

A spokesperson for the partnership told FE Week this week that after investigation, LPP had taken the decision to remove LDA from the "leadership and management apprenticeship" category of the DPS.

"Following an enquiry into Learndirect Apprenticeships Ltd's original application to join the NHS London Procurement



Partnership's apprenticeship training providers DPS, the company has been removed from the Leadership and Management Apprenticeship category, effective 5pm Friday, September 29," she said.

"The award criteria for the Leadership and Management Apprenticeship category requires bidders to provide published and verified success rates which, upon audit, Learndirect Apprenticeships Ltd has not been able to provide to LPP's satisfaction.

"At such time as Learn Direct Apprenticeships Ltd can produce published and verified success rates, the company will be entitled to reapply for a place on the DPS."

have not been available long enough for there to be any statistics at this time".

She added that LDA's application for each of these categories "met the criteria, as confirmed during our audit. Consequently there are no grounds under the OJEU rules to remove the company from these categories."

Now that LDA has been accepted onto the DPS, it will be invited to take part in "mini competitions" in the eligible categories where their claims about historical performance will be verified by individual hospitals who will then "select the most appropriate provider" to deliver apprenticeships training for them.

LDA was created by two of Learndirect Ltd's directors in 2016, and like Learndirect, is owned by Lloyds Development Capital.

The apprenticeships provider has long since used the same branding and shared the website of the nation's biggest FE provider, but after months of troubles which have damaged Learndirect's reputation stemming from a damning Ofsted grade four, LDA has begun to distance itself with a major rebrand.

As previously revealed by FE Week, it has registered its own new website, established a new Twitter handle, and created its own logo.

Learndirect Apprenticeships declined to comment on the NHS' action.



The company still remains as a potential bidder for categories on the DPS including Dental Nurses, Digital Services (IT, data analysis), Healthcare Support Services, Healthcare Science, Healthcare Assistant Practitioner, HR and Recruitment.

According to the LPP spokesperson, these categories currently "do not require applicants to provide published success rates as apprenticeships in these sectors





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- Is the current Common Inspection Framework fit for the Skills Plan era?
- Brexit negotiations and what they mean for colleges
- Apprenticeships – Is the new system working for all?
- Prestige or prejudice? Should T Levels be Level 3 only?
- Do the new GCSE, A Level and Applied General curriculum changes hinder social mobility?
- How much of an issue is reputation?
- The infrastructure and skills conundrum

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NEWS



# Team UK all set for world

**BILLY CAMDEN**  
@BILLYCAMDEN

This week, 34 of the UK's most highly rated young competitors will fly to Abu Dhabi for WorldSkills 2017, where they will compete for global supremacy.

The team, selected from the best our country has to offer, in disciplines ranging from hairdressing to aircraft maintenance, will travel over 3,000 miles to the Middle East on Wednesday to take part in a competition dubbed "the Olympics of skills".

Getting to this point has been no easy task. Each individual has sacrificed their evenings, weekends, and social life in place of dogged training regimes for the past two years, ever since they won their places at the UK's Skills Show in 2015.

Between them, they've put in an estimated 71,000 hours of additional training

beyond their employment and learning, to get themselves both practically and psychologically ready.

Now all of the background work is over, the team is raring to go up against the most talented young people from 76 countries.

"I think we have prepared them to a really high level and now it is their chance to really shine on a global stage," said Ben Blackledge, WorldSkills UK's director of education and skills competitions.

On offer to competitors are gold, silver and bronze medals, as well as medallions of excellence, which are achieved whenever a team member reaches the "international standard" in their discipline.

At the last WorldSkills in Sao Paulo in 2015, Team UK finished seventh overall in the medal table, ahead of favourites France and Germany - bringing home three golds, four silvers, two bronzes and 23 medallions of excellence.

Mr Blackledge told FE Week the team

doesn't have an overall medal haul in mind for what would constitute to "success" in Abu Dhabi, and stressed it is more about ensuring the competitors hit the international standard.

"Yes medals are brilliant and we want to show the excellence of the UK, but we also want to show that we train to a really high level. Getting those medallions of excellence is just as important to us as gold, silver and bronze."

For most of Team UK this will be their first international competition, but for 14 of them this will be their second time competing on foreign soil.

The group flew to Gothenburg last December to compete in EuroSkills, where Team UK brought home two golds, one silver, two bronzes and

eight medallions of excellence.

Among them was welder Josh Peek, who claimed gold.

The 21-year-old says he always wanted to be an engineer because it is "in my blood".

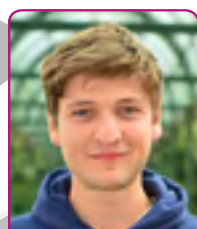
After gaining a taste of success at EuroSkills, Josh says he now wants to "prove myself on the world stage".

Another one to watch is cooking competitor Ruth Hansom, who won bronze in Gothenburg.

The 22-year-old landed her dream job at the Ritz aged 18 and spent four years there before launching her own catering company, Hansom Lambert, this year,



## Meet the high achievers ready to make our



**ARCHIE STOKE-FAIERS**  
Architectural Stonemasonry

**Training provider:** Weymouth College  
**Employer:** www.archiefaiers.co.uk



**JOSH HUNTER**  
Bricklaying

**Training provider:** Hull College  
**Employer:** Geo Houlton & Sons Ltd



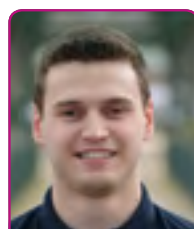
**ANGUS BRUCE-GARDNER**  
Cabinet Making

**Training provider:** Waters & Acland  
**Employer:** Silverlining



**CAMERON NUTT**  
Carpentry

**Training provider:** North West Regional College  
**Employer:** J & R Snodgrass



**MATTHEW DOE**  
Electrical Installation

**Training provider:** Bridgwater College  
**Employer:** Rogers Restorations



**CONOR WILMOTT**  
Joinery

**Training provider:** West Suffolk College  
**Employer:** Cambridge Conservatory Centre



**ADAM FERGUSON**  
Landscape Gardening

**Training provider:** CAFRE  
**Employer:** Hillsborough Castle (Historic Royal Palaces)



**WILL BURBERRY**  
Landscape Gardening

**Training provider:** Merrist Wood College  
**Employer:** Radial Landscape Construction



**ALFIE HOPKIN**  
Web Design and Development

**Training provider:** Coleg Sir Gar  
**Employer:** n/a



**ETHAN DAVIES**  
CNC Milling

**Training provider:** Coleg Cambria  
**Employer:** Electroimpact UK Ltd



**MACAULAY REAVILL**  
Construction Metal Works

**Training provider:** Grimsby Institute  
**Employer:** Allied Protek



**ALEXANDER MCCLUSKEY**  
Manufacturing Team Challenge

**Training provider:** STEGTA  
**Employer:** Carnaud Metalbox Engineering



**JACOB PARKER**  
Manufacturing Team Challenge

**Training provider:** STEGTA  
**Employer:** Carnaud Metalbox Engineering



**JAKE GREEN**  
Manufacturing Team Challenge

**Training provider:** Bradford College / STEGTA  
**Employer:** Carnaud Metalbox Engineering



**BETSY CROSBIE**  
Mechanical Engineering CAD

**Training provider:** New College Lanarkshire  
**Employer:** n/a



**SAM HILLIER**  
Mechatronics

**Training provider:** Toyota Manufacturing UK  
**Employer:** Toyota Manufacturing UK



**TOM REVELL**  
Mechatronics

**Training provider:** Toyota Manufacturing UK  
**Employer:** Toyota Manufacturing UK



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ALWAYS

# skills 2017 in Abu Dhabi



focusing on preparing dishes only using British-grown produce.

Daniel McCabe is another former gold medallist aiming to replicate Gothenburg success.

Following his European triumph the 19-year-old 3D game designer was offered a job at Codemasters, the leading games design company in the UK, and is hoping this real-world experience will bag him more medals at WorldSkills.

"At the age of nine, I began dabbling in Photoshop, having no idea it was used in the process of making games, or that 10 years later I would be sat in Abu Dhabi competing against the best in the world on that very same piece of software," he said.

Anne Milton sang the praises of WorldSkills at the Conservative Party conference this week, describing how the competition is a priority in the government's apprenticeships agenda.

Speaking to FE Week about this year's

competition, the skills minister said: "There is no higher honour than representing your country on the world stage and the pride team members feel in this achievement is equalled by my admiration for the hard work and high quality that a place in the team represents.

"I know that each individual member of the team will give their all to reach their potential.

"These young people have exciting futures ahead of them. WorldSkills Abu Dhabi 2017 is their biggest test yet.

"Another opportunity to grow and develop. A chance to show what they can do. I know they will seize the moment and inspire the next generation to succeed through skills."

Team UK flies to Abu Dhabi on October 11, and will take part in four days of intense competition between October 14 and 19. FE Week is media partner and will be reporting every step of the way.

## Special good luck message from the prime minister

During her keynote speech at the Conservative Party conference this week, Theresa May spelled out plans to create a "first-class technical education system for the first time in our nation's history" [see page 4].

Speaking exclusively to FE Week, she has offered a special send-off message to Team UK.

"I'd like to wish the best of luck to our talented team of apprentices taking part in this year's WorldSkills competition in Abu Dhabi, and congratulations on making it this far," the prime minister said.

"Your achievements set a great example for other young people looking to carve out a vocational career, and demonstrate how important practical skills are in the workforce."



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**JORDAN CHARTERS**  
Painting and Decorating

**Training provider:**  
Edinburgh College  
**Employer:**  
George Charters



**HARRISON MOY**  
Plastering and Dry Wall Systems

**Training provider:**  
British Gypsum  
**Employer:**  
H&R Property Enhancement



**DANIEL MARTINS**  
Plumbing and Heating

**Training provider:**  
EAS Mechanical  
**Employer:**  
Briggs and Forrester



**ARMONDAS TAMULIS**  
Wall and Floor Tiling

**Training provider:**  
Southern Regional College  
**Employer:**  
DLP Tiling



**DAN MCCABE**  
3D Digital Game Art

**Training provider:**  
West Cheshire College  
**Employer:**  
West Cheshire College



**ALEXANDER WOOD**  
Jewellery

**Training provider:**  
The Goldsmiths' Centre  
**Employer:**  
N Goves Ltd



**CATHERINE ABBOTT**  
Visual Merchandising

**Training provider:**  
East Berkshire College  
**Employer:**  
Topshop



**SHANE CARPENTER**  
Cyber Security

**Training provider:**  
Nescot College  
**Employer:**  
BAE Systems



**JOSH PEEK**  
Welding

**Training provider:**  
Great Yarmouth College  
**Employer:**  
L&G Engineering



**KAIYA SWAIN**  
Beauty Therapy

**Training provider:**  
Sussex Downs College  
**Employer:**  
Kaiya Rose Beauty



**RUTH HANSOM**  
Cooking

**Training provider:**  
Westminster Kingsway College  
**Employer:**  
Hansom Lambert



**BRIDIE THORNE**  
Hairdressing

**Training provider:**  
Train with Pride  
**Employer:**  
Pride Hairdressing and Barbershop



**STEVEN LODGE**  
Patisserie and Confectionery

**Training provider:**  
Hull College  
**Employer:**  
n/a



**ELIZABETH FORKUH**  
Restaurant Service

**Training provider:**  
Coleg Sir Gar  
**Employer:**  
The Gleneagles Hotel



**JOSEPH MASSEY**  
Aircraft Maintenance

**Training provider:**  
Coleg Cambria  
**Employer:**  
Airbus UK



**ANDREW GAULT**  
Autobody Repair

**Training provider:**  
Riverpark Training and Development  
**Employer:**  
Glenn Allen Accident Repairs



**DARYL HEAD**  
Car Painting

**Training provider:**  
Thatcham Automotive Academy  
**Employer:**  
Nationwide Repair

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LEARNING



## INVESTIGATES

# Lewisham Southwark College's Cinderella story

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS  
@PIPPA\_AK

Just two years ago, Lewisham Southwark College suffered the dubious honour of being the first FE and skills provider in the UK to receive two grade fours in a row from Ofsted.

But since hitting rock bottom, the college has welcomed a new leadership team, is undergoing a controversial merger with the Newcastle-based NCG group and, most surprisingly of all, has achieved a complete turnaround that it claims will rank it above the national average for learner outcomes and quality.

Our new reporter Pippa Allen-Kinross spoke to Gordon Gillespie (pictured), the college's vice-principal of curriculum, learning and teaching, to find out how things have changed so dramatically in such a short space of time.

When Gordon Gillespie joined Lewisham Southwark College, it had already received its infamous second grade four. Its coffers were empty and it had been placed into administrative status by the FE commissioner's office under a leadership which was, he claims, "indifferent".

He was part of a new senior leadership team brought in by newly appointed principal Carole Kitching in June 2015, who went on a mission to "win back hearts and minds" to the floundering college.

"Carole is a very clear leader," he says. "Her communication with staff is honest and regular, and she's always open for a chat. She knows what she's doing and all of those things add up to success."

"One of the first things we did was tell the staff they weren't all terrible, they weren't all grade four, and actually there was a lot of talent and skill in the college."

"We set to tackling long-standing issues of bad discipline, of a mentality that cared more about bums on seats than proper investment in making sure learners were put on the right courses."

"Within a year we went up to a grade three. We could see there was a change. The really big success was the academic year 2016/2017; all of a sudden the new quality assurance practices, the time invested in learners and making sure they were at the centre of what we do rather than the periphery, it started to show. The culture of the place, the ambience, the environment, everything was feeling a lot better."

The college claims it has now secured a place in the upper tenth percentile of colleges in the UK on performance, and that it ranks above the national average in achievement across all age groups. According to Gordon, if the provider compared itself with last year's national averages it would rank as one of the top 20 colleges in the UK, and in the top two in London. He is confident it would receive a grade two were another Ofsted inspection to beckon, and wants to become 'outstanding' in the next year.

However, Ofsted ratings haven't been the only controversy faced by LSC.

A merger was announced with the Newcastle-based NCG group in March, a decision which Lewisham council at the time told FE Week was "disappointing".

Despite this, Gordon is confident that the merger will bring only more good news, including plans to expand on their higher education and apprenticeship offering, and insists the independence of the college has not been compromised.

"It's rather exciting, because you have something that's large and powerful and strong and has good finances, and it's there to support us rather than direct us. They have the second biggest apprenticeship arm in the UK, and having that experience on board is really helping us," he enthuses.

"We wanted to remain independent, true to local people and the boroughs that we serve, working with local politicians and boroughs for local skills issues without inference. The simple fact of the matter is that if we had merged with another London college we would be a different organisation now."

"There are huge benefits strategically,



psychologically for staff and managers and politically as well to be able to say that we have not changed. We are still LSC."

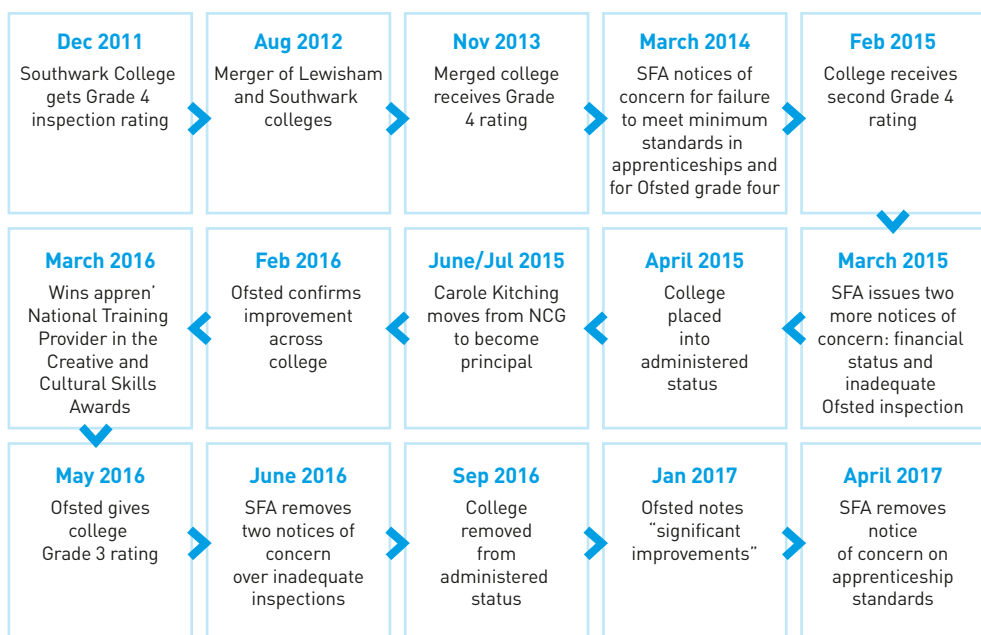
And the college is nothing if not ambitious: its Southwark campus recently received a £43 million renovation, while Lewisham is hoping to have £56 million invested in the next four years, thanks in no small part to NCG's robust bank balances.

"The thing we all feel most proud of is that it would have been easy for managers and staff in this college to really think the plug is

about to be pulled out and the water is going to drip away," he says.

"They stuck with it because they wanted learners to do better than they had done before, and because they were good, honest, hardworking people. As a result of that, and some half-decent leadership, we have turned the college around."

"We are seeing the proper value of not just staff but learners as well. We came from the depths of despair but now the future is looking very bright."



2016/17 Lewisham Southwark College					2015/16 National Rate*
Age	Starts	Retention rate	Pass Rate	Achievement rate	
All	11,724	95.6%	93%	88.8%	82.1%
16-18	3,771	94.4%	89%	84.6%	79.1%
19+	7,953	96.2%	94%	90.8%	86.1%

Source: Lewisham Southwark College education and training unpublished achievement rates  
\* National achievement rate figures for 2016/17 will be published in 2018

## NEWS

# Ex LeSoCo principal steps in at troubled Totton College

JUDE BURKE  
@JUDEBURKE77

The leader of a troubled college has stepped down just 18 months into the job – and will be replaced by the ex-principal of another formerly struggling institution.

Derek Headrige was appointed campus principal at Totton College in April 2016 following a period of turmoil that saw it merge with the social justice charity Nacro.

But he has now resigned and is being replaced on an interim basis by the former principal of LeSoCo, Maxine Room (pictured), the college announced this week.

Ms Room led Lewisham College, and then LeSoCo – the short-lived name for the merged Lewisham and Southwark colleges – for five years until May 2014, when she stood down after the college's leadership was heavily criticised in an FE commissioner report.

Lisa Capper, director of education at Nacro, said she was “delighted to welcome Maxine to the team”.

She praised the work Mr Headrige has done since her took over, and said Totton College “has improved its Ofsted rating and results and has introduced a number of high-quality

technical courses and apprenticeships to match the needs of the local community and industry demands”.

A spokesperson insisted the resignation was not connected to the college's recent Ofsted inspection, in which it improved by just one grade to ‘requires improvement’ in July, and said he was leaving to take a “promotion to a new role within the education and training sector”.

The college joined Nacro in the wake of an ‘inadequate’ across-the-board Ofsted rating in April 2015, amid concerns over its financial situation.

The charity uses skills and training to reduce crime and reoffending in English and Welsh communities.

That merger went ahead in December 2015, and was followed by a period of turmoil as the college consulted on a restructuring plan that threatened jobs.

It was during this time that Mr Headrige, the former group academy dean at BMW, took over as campus principal.

A return visit by the education watchdog in June resulted in the college receiving a grade three across the board.

“Since the transfer of ownership to Nacro in December 2015, the pace of change has been



slow,” noted the inspection report.

Ms Room was in charge of Lewisham College from 2009, and oversaw its merger with Southwark College in 2012.

But when the new body was inspected in November 2013, it was branded ‘inadequate’ – a verdict that occasioned a visit by the FE commissioner Sir David Collins in January 2014.

His report noted that a lack of action to address the weaknesses identified by Ofsted “leaves serious doubts about the capability of the leadership team”, and that there was a “lack of confidence” in the leadership team among key stakeholders.

Despite a recommendation that the college board “develop and implement a succession plan for the post of principal”, it wasn't until May that Ms Room announced she was stepping down.

According to her LinkedIn profile, Ms Room has been working in a variety of consultancy roles since leaving Lewisham Southwark.

She will be supported in her new role by Hannah Avoth, who is being promoted to vice-principal.

“This is a strong set of appointments and I know they will take the college to the next stage of its successful development,” Ms Capper said.

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## EDITORIAL

Milton  
in the middle

Sat at the front of a breakfast event, I was witness to a refreshing account from a skills minister from whom we'd not really heard since June.

On the morning of the third day of the Conservative conference, Anne Milton was speaking at her fifth fringe event.

Freed from the shackles of civil servant minders, employers were able to give her honest and frank feedback.

She declared she was "quite flabbergasted" to find several big business bosses ignorant of the apprenticeship levy.

Others were telling her that employer ownership in practice meant red tape and discussing "inflexibility" from the new Institute of Apprenticeships.

Stuck between her advisors and employers, she said she would need to find common ground, and quickly.

I was also struck by how much degree apprenticeships dominated the debate, as if they were now the only show in town.

But when I asked what the saturation point was for £27,000 management degree apprenticeships, I was reassured that level two and three were also important.

The minister sounded like she was taking the feedback seriously, and change could be on the way.

Whether the "dead hand of the state" ultimately wins, only time will tell.

## Good luck #TEAMUK

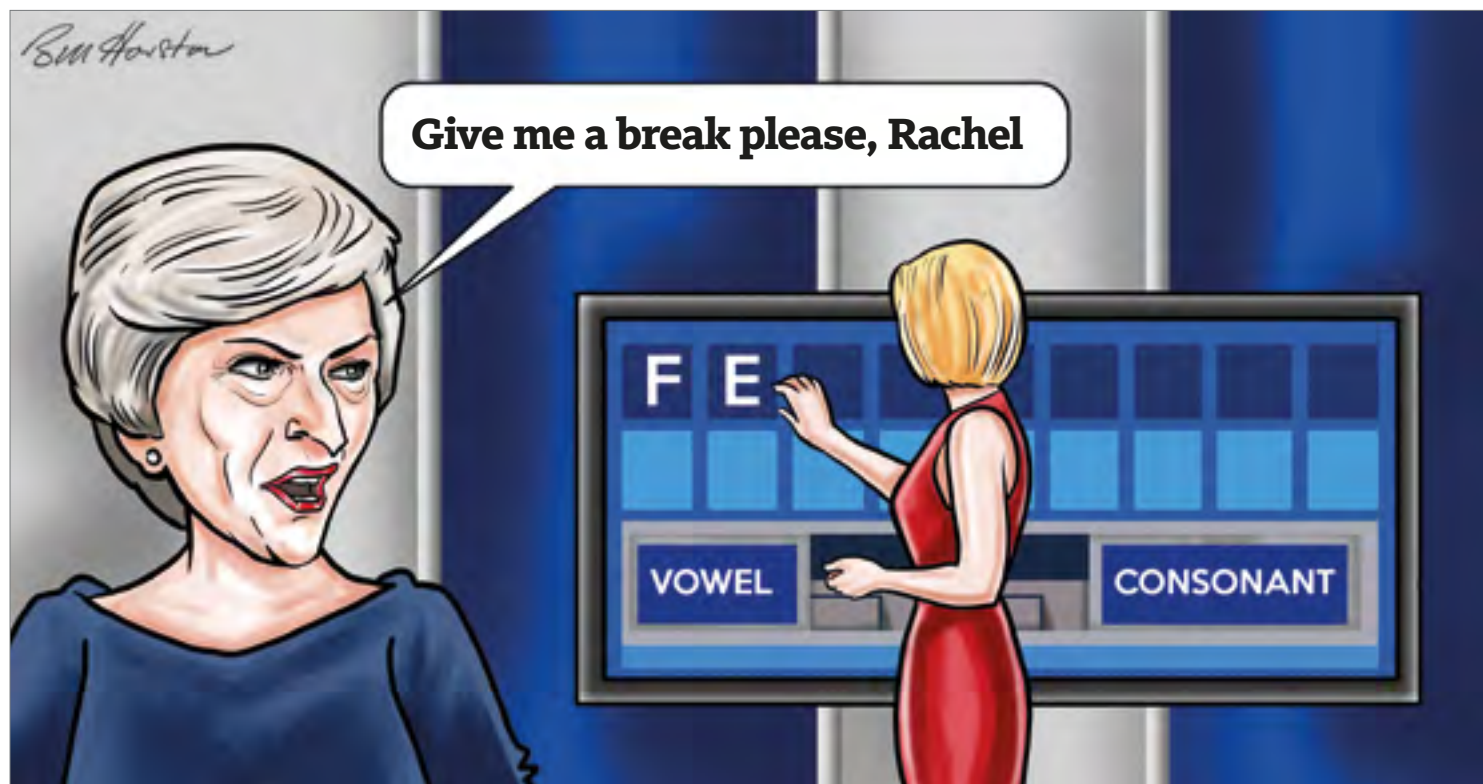
On Tuesday I will be attending the WorldSkills UK Team UK send-off at the Houses of Parliament. I am delighted and proud that FE Week is once again the official media partner for World Skills UK and Team UK. This year we have partnered with Pearson to report live from WorldSkills Abu Dhabi.

Our senior reporter Billy Camden, and managing director Shane Mann, will be heading over to Abu Dhabi next week to bring you all the action and report back on Team UK's success. In partnership with Pearson, included with this week's edition is a "Go Team UK" results poster. I hope you will display this around your organisation and encourage colleagues and students to cheer on the team.

Send your good luck message to the competitors by using #TeamUK on social media.

On behalf of all the team here at FE Week – good luck #TeamUK

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



# Merger at risk over naming row

JUDE BURKE  
@JUDEBURKE77

Yet another area review recommended college merger could be in trouble – due to an argument about a name.

Craven College and Shipley College emerged from their respective reviews intending to create a single Aire Valley College, along with the Keighley campus of Leeds City College.

The plan, recommended by both the West Yorkshire and the York, North Yorkshire, East Riding and Hull reviews, depended on the two colleges acquiring the Keighley campus from Leeds for a reasonable price.

But Leeds principal Colin Booth has told FE Week he's not happy that the campus – recently rebranded as Keighley College – would be given a new name.

"I don't think that renaming Keighley College as Aire Valley College would create a clearer identity," he said.

Instead, he believes the "best way forward" is for it to "create a stronger reputation and identity for itself as Keighley College".

"There are many ways to create partnership working and less competition amongst the colleges along the Aire Valley," he added.

FE Week asked Mr Booth if he was opposed to the merger or just the name change, but he demurred.

The three-way link-up was one of the more

unusual mergers proposed during the area review process.

According to last November's report into the West Yorkshire review, which both Shipley and Leeds City colleges took part in, the creation of an Aire Valley College had been "an aspiration for the district for many years".

But it noted that the Shipley and Craven colleges "may require financing to secure the Keighley site" – although the actual cost "will need to be determined".

And the York, North Yorkshire, East Riding and Hull area review report said in August that the proposal depended on "the transfer of the Keighley College campus from Leeds City College on a financially feasible and acceptable basis".

John Grogan, the MP for Keighley, told a Westminster debate on 16-to-19 funding last month that "Leeds City College seems to be holding out against" the merger and was "putting a high price—possibly above £20 million" on the Keighley site.

He requested a meeting with skills minister Anne Milton to discuss the issue, but told FE Week this week that the meeting hadn't yet gone ahead.

FE Week put Mr Grogan's comments to Mr Booth, but he did not comment on them directly.

Both Craven and Shipley colleges told FE Week that they remained committed to the

creation of Aire Valley College – assuming the price was right.

A Shipley spokesperson added that it was "actively working with the other college corporations, the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and FE Commissioner to develop an appropriate, sustainable further education offer in the district".

But neither college had a comment on Mr Booth's objections to the college's name.

Keighley College had previously been known as the Keighley campus of Leeds City College, but in early 2016 was rebranded as Keighley College – although it is still being run by Leeds.

The college has its own website, separate from that of its parent, launched at the end of last year.

Keighley has been part of Leeds City College since it was formed in 2009 through the merger of three local institutions.

It was last standalone in 2007, when it merged with Leeds-based Park Lane College.

Other college mergers to have been cast into doubt recently include one between Barnfield College and Central Bedfordshire College, after one of their chairs made "regrettable" comments on local TV.

And a proposed link-up between North Shropshire College and Reaseheath College collapsed in August amid accusations that the government was unwilling to provide the necessary funding.

## COMMENTS

### Revealed: £200m adult education budget underspend

Adult Education Budget should be allocated to Adult Education Providers to provide Adult Education and, FE Providers who have Adult and Community departments to ensure that the funds are spent on what they are allocated for "Adult Education". For those who cannot spend it there are plenty who can.

Liza-Jo Guyatt

### Editor asks: Can mega colleges ever be too big to fail?

At least one of these mega colleges will fail in the next five years; it's a racing certainty.

LRoding

### DfE confirms HE fee policy change WILL apply to FE loans

DfE cancelled publication of quarterly updates of Advanced Learner Loan applications in June. There hasn't been any update since February. So much for Open Government! What are they hiding? Annual report on loan applications due out on 26th October. Perhaps we'll find out then.

Mr Michael T Farmer

Yet still small specialist private providers cannot access their own loan contract even with waiting lists for levels 3/4/5. Surely this must be looked at again? Why not allow subcontracting to certain qualifications?

Sheila Turnbull



# Deputy Further Education Commissioners and Further Education Advisers



Department for Education

The FE Commissioner is at the forefront of the Government's drive to establish a strong, resilient Further Education sector that supports educational outcomes and economic growth. The FE Commissioner team is key to leading intervention in colleges facing significant and developing challenges in financial health or educational underperformance and in supporting the implementation of area review recommendations

In July 2017, the Secretary of State for Education announced proposals for an expanded FE Commissioner role as part of a package of reforms for strengthening quality improvement in the Further Education sector. To help deliver these proposals we are looking to appoint Deputy FE Commissioners and FE Advisers with the necessary skills and experience to lead and support interventions in colleges and to assist the FE Commissioner in performing his enhanced role from autumn 2017.

Successful candidates for both positions will have proven experience and an outstanding track record of college leadership and governance. You will have strong financial management skills and be able to demonstrate experience of developing and implementing quality improvement strategies. Candidates will have strong communication skills and the ability to influence complex organisational change, persuading and engaging stakeholders at the highest

levels. You will possess excellent management and interpersonal skills and be able to produce high quality reports to tight deadlines.

In carrying out a Deputy or an Adviser role you will take account of the needs of learners and employers making recommendations for action which will lead to improvements in the delivery of educational provision while achieving value for money.

Deputy FE Commissioners work with a wider team of FE Advisers and a key element of the role will be the leadership and management of this team.

Appointments to both roles will be on a two-year fixed term contract. Deputy FE Commissioners will be remunerated at £700 a day. FE Advisers will be remunerated at £600 a day. The expected start dates for these roles is November / December 2017.

For an **applicant pack** please contact:  
PublicAppointments.DFE@education.gov.uk

**Closing date** is Monday 23 October 2017

# HEAD OF QUALITY



**SALARY:** £44K-£55K BASIC, PLUS PENSION AND PERFORMANCE-RELATED PAY

**LOCATION:** GROUP SITES IN LONDON, HERTFORDSHIRE AND NATIONALLY

We are looking for an outstanding curriculum manager to help us drive quality improvement and define new ways of working across the Hart Learning Group, i.e. in North Hertfordshire College, Hart Learning & Development and the Hart Schools Trust.

You'll need to be a real expert in teaching, learning and assessment with a proven ability to both drive continuous quality improvements and define inventive new approaches that work - drawing together expertise, good practice and new ideas from across the Hart Learning Group, the wider education sector and beyond.

This role would be particularly suited to someone with real experience of apprenticeships and traineeships given the growth we're delivering in those areas.

## JOB PURPOSE

Working direct to the Executive Director for Quality, you will be responsible for quality assurance and improvement of provision in NHC and Hart L&D - and working closely with colleagues in the Hart

Schools Trust. You will be expected to work with colleagues across the Group to provide assurance, constructive feedback, inspirational and substantial input to the improvement of our provision.

## BENEFITS

- £44k-£55k basic
- Pension scheme
- Participation in the Group's performance related pay scheme.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Lead delivery of the Group's quality assurance and improvement framework, including internal review, themed audits, complaints process and teaching, learning and assessment observations.
- Advise and challenge curriculum colleagues on quality assurance and improvement matters - acting as a business partner to them in design, delivery and evaluation.
- Commission, lead on, and improve, the effective use of data to evaluate performance and support improvement.
- Monitor the progress of quality

improvement activity, delivering interventions where appropriate to support continued and further improvement.

- Support the self-assessment process, including the writing and validation of self-assessment reports and quality improvement plans.
- Liaise with a wide range of awarding bodies to ensure compliance and effective working relationships that supports curriculum development.

## PERSON SPECIFICATION

- Degree level qualification.
- Teacher training qualification.
- Management experience in an educational or similar setting preferably in the delivery of successful apprenticeship provision.
- Current, practical, experience of Ofsted common inspection framework.

## WHO ARE WE

The Hart Learning Group is a charitable organisation with a mission to create social and economic value through

learning. The group currently includes:

- North Hertfordshire College (NHC): an occupationally-focussed further education college with campuses in Stevenage, Hitchin and Letchworth.
- Hart Learning & Development (HL&D): a progressive learning and development business which supports businesses to engage with and invest in emerging talent.
- The Hart Schools Trust: a burgeoning schools trust which currently sponsors one secondary and one primary academy - both in Stevenage.

## TO APPLY

- To apply please send a CV and supporting statement (no more than two pages) to [recruitment@nhc.ac.uk](mailto:recruitment@nhc.ac.uk) by Friday 27th October 2017.
- For more information, or an informal discussion with the current post-holder about the role, please email [recruitment@nhc.ac.uk](mailto:recruitment@nhc.ac.uk).
- Please note that early applications are encouraged. If a successful candidate is found before the closing date, the position will be closed.



# BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORS

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Due to a high level of client demand we are now recruiting to a number of permanent Business Development Director roles.

For a confidential discussion contact Samantha Bunn on 01454 617 707 or send your CV to [Samantha.Bunn@fea.co.uk](mailto:Samantha.Bunn@fea.co.uk)



## Be brilliant, deliver prosperity, live in Cornwall

### Group Director of Curriculum & Quality

As the first choice Further and Higher Education College for more than 35,000 students last year, our award-winning students achieve excellent results from pre-entry through diplomas to masters' degrees. We are the No. 1 provider of apprenticeships in the South West and one of the largest providers of degrees locally. With strong strategic partnerships, The Cornwall College Group plays a pivotal role in the social and economic development of the region.

As one of four senior staff with a reporting line to the Board, you will work with the Principal and CE to lead key teams that deliver the strategy of the Group, alongside managing Group Curriculum & Quality and the wider learner experience. We are looking for an exceptional individual, probably already leading Curriculum & Quality within an FE & HE organisation, who is keen to develop their wider management and leadership skills.

An excellent communicator, who fosters a culture of continuous improvement through working directly with staff and students, you will already have delivered outstanding results. With a strong customer focus, you have a passion for working with learners; delivering quality and innovation; have a commitment to build and sustain high performing teams and can translate changes in the external environment into opportunities for the Group. Set in one of the most beautiful parts of the UK, you can become a key player in a diverse and forward thinking college.

**Competitive salary: based on the skills and experience of the successful candidate.**

For an information pack and application form, please email [clerk@cornwall.ac.uk](mailto:clerk@cornwall.ac.uk). For an informal discussion, please contact Raoul Humphreys, Principal and CE on 01726 226557 or Ian Tunbridge, Chair of the Board on 01726 226528.

**Closing date: 13<sup>th</sup> October 2017**  
**Interviews: 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> November 2017**



THE CORNWALL COLLEGE GROUP

The Cornwall College Group is a disability confident employer

Charity by statute

# Assistant Principal, Business and Support Services

**Salary:** range £63,930 - £71, 580



Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES) recently judged by Ofsted Inspection as "officially good and on our way to outstanding" is the largest local authority adult education service in London and one of the largest in the country. We offer a large and diverse programme of further education qualification courses, apprenticeships, as well as extensive community based provision. We have a diverse, enthusiastic student community, taught and supported by well qualified, passionate and dedicated staff. Our three main centres in Westminster are all modern, easily accessible and purpose built, offering high quality teaching and learning facilities.

Due to the promotion of the current post-holder, we have an exciting opportunity for an inspirational senior leader to take on the role of Assistant Principal for Business Support Services.

You will work closely with the Principal, Governing Body and the Service Management Team to deliver our aspirations and plans for a truly outstanding adult education service in central London, inspiring, challenging and empowering our learners and the surrounding communities.

You will strategically lead the Service's business support teams for admissions, funding and data management, ICT and marketing, delivering and supporting the strategic objectives of the Service, within a fast changing environment.

You will have significant senior level experience of raising standards, the ability to motivate successful and effective multi-disciplinary teams and work

collaboratively with a range of partners both internally and externally in a manner that supports the ambition and values of the Service.

You will have the commitment, drive and ambition to achieve high expectations and standards, making a real impact to the progress of our learners and our work with employers and key stakeholders.

In return, the Service offers a competitive salary, employment benefits including a public sector pension scheme and opportunities for Continuous Professional Development.

Job description and application forms are available from [www.waes.ac.uk/vacancies](http://www.waes.ac.uk/vacancies). If you are experiencing problems downloading or have an enquiry regarding a particular vacancy please contact HR by emailing [recruitment@waes.ac.uk](mailto:recruitment@waes.ac.uk) quoting the relevant reference number.

Please quote reference number: **ED/WAES/769** in all correspondence

**Closing date for applications:** 23 October 2017

**Assessment and interviews:** week commencing 6 November 2017





# DIRECTOR - STAFF & QUALITY SERVICES

From £73,000 per annum

Following the retirement of the current post holder, we are seeking to appoint a new Director of Staff & Quality Services to this highly successful College. Our ideal candidate will have a successful track record of quality and curriculum management within a further education context, with strong proven leadership and management skills.

Bridgwater & Taunton College was formed by the merger of Bridgwater College and Somerset College in June 2016, creating one of the largest colleges in the country with a turnover of £53m, 1,600 staff and 20,000 students. The College is the winner of 14 AoC Beacon Awards, a second Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education in 2016, and TES College of the Year in 2016. The College owes much of its success to two fundamental philosophies which it is expected that anyone joining the College will share: students come first and all staff employed at the College are team players.

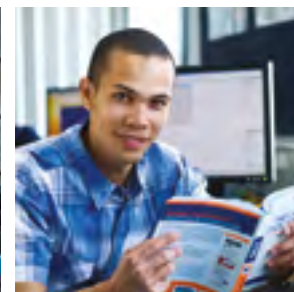
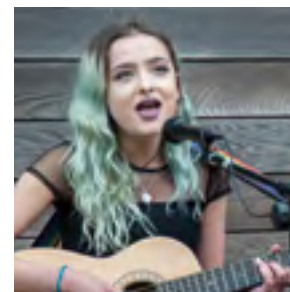
The successful candidate will be expected to make an important contribution to the nine strong Senior Management Team, providing strategic leadership across quality, human resources and MIS and other associated support functions. You will need to be innovative, enterprising and energetic, and enjoy very effective working relationships with colleagues, students and employers alike. You will also need excellent communication skills and high levels of stamina for this demanding and highly rewarding role.

In return, we offer a highly competitive salary depending upon experience and an exceptional opportunity to lead this high performing Area of the College, supported by a professional and positive team who are dedicated to achieving educational excellence.

For more information and to apply visit <https://jobs.bridgwater.ac.uk>

Closing date: 12 Noon – 13 October 2017

Interview dates: 31 October & 1 November 2017



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FE college of the year



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## New College – New Leadership

Be part of an exciting newly merged college!

With an annual turnover of £40m, the newly merged South Cheshire College and West Cheshire College operates across three state of the art campuses and two local authorities, employing over 700 staff and making a positive impact on more than 11,000 students and 1,400 apprentices.

With combined excellent achievement rates, a solid financial platform, significant on-going investment in both college estate and staff, this new FE college for Cheshire has an exciting future ahead. The college will continue to provide innovative approaches to teaching, learning and assessment, an exceptional working environment as well as contemporary equipment and facilities.

### Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality Salary C: £90K & Relocation Support

We are looking for an outstanding, innovative FE Leader to join our College Executive Team and be our new Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality, providing executive leadership for our Crewe campus.

You will have led a broad range of Curriculum (including A Levels) in a successful Grade 2 College and have been a successful College Nominee. A clear grasp of curriculum planning and efficiency with a quality focus is vital to this role. We are investing in leadership at all levels and you will inspire and lead the curriculum team chosen to take the college forward.

Reporting to the Principal and Chief Executive, this is a unique opportunity for an ambitious and talented leader to shape and influence the future of the new College and the region as a whole.

Closing Date for Applications is 9am on 16th October 2017

Assessment Centre will be held on 2nd and 3rd November 2017 at Crewe Campus.

For an informal and confidential discussion about the role contact Ian Sackree 07795 271559 or David Beynon 07970 042334

To apply for this role or to download an application pack visit:  
[www.protocol.co.uk/cheshire](http://www.protocol.co.uk/cheshire)

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## Director of Curriculum, Quality and Continuous Improvement

**Salary:** £60,000 to £65,000 per annum plus Benefits

**Location:** National Role, based Central Manchester

Access to Music (AtM) is the leading 'creative college' operating nationally through its network of delivery centres, and offers study programmes across a range of creative subject areas including - Music Business, Music Performance, Music Technology, Artist Development, Games Design and VFX together with Higher Education 2 year 'accelerated Degree' programmes in Birmingham. We also support a large network of subcontractors offering a varied curriculum in subjects such as Performing Arts, Sports Coaching, Music Technology, A-Levels and Traineeships

We aim to be the number 1 destination for learners wishing to study for careers in the creative industries, by building on and developing our existing curriculum portfolio and by significant learner growth across our national FE, HE and work based delivery network.

Acting as nominee and taking the lead in preparing AtM's Self-Assessment Report for the organisation, to Ofsted inspection, HEFC QAA and other external standards requirements; your role is to ensure robust curriculum, quality assurance and

improvement practices which deliver an outstanding teaching, learning, training and assessment experience for all students and one which delivers the best possible outcomes for learners.

You will be a key member AtM's Executive team, playing a full part in the strategic direction of the business, requiring you to embed and work to AtM's values; working with **Professionalism**, taking **Responsibility** for your actions, and giving **Respect** to clients and colleagues alike.

If you are a commercially savvy, results driven curriculum and quality professional, leader, and qualified teacher in the lifelong learning sector, with the ability to influence, inspire and motivate colleagues, employers and students to meet AtM's strategic objectives we want to hear from you.

Apply online with your cv at [www.accesstomusic.co.uk/jobs](http://www.accesstomusic.co.uk/jobs) We particularly welcome applications from women and ethnic minorities who are under-represented at this level.



### Business Development Manager

Peach Orator is looking to engage a full time **Business Development Manager** who is:

- Experienced in sales within the training sector
- Able to build and utilise networks
- Familiar with funded training and apprenticeship rules
- Able to sell full cost training programmes

**Location** - Flexible to work nationwide / Ideally South Yorkshire Based  
**Salary** - dependent upon track history

### Self Employed / Freelance

Peach Orator is looking to work with **Leadership & Management Trainers & Assessors** who are:

- Capable of delivering inspiring and motivational Leadership and Management training programmes
- Familiar with ILM standards & apprenticeship framework
- Able to work with groups and individuals to develop their leadership potential
- Able to deliver levels 2, 3 & 5 qualifications

**Location** - UK wide  
**Salary** - per learner / flexible

### Self Employed / Freelance

Peach Orator is looking to work with **Education Training Professionals** who are:

- Up to date with latest Ofsted Common Inspection Framework
- Familiar the latest changes and developments within the schools sector
- Able to deliver training from a suite of short and long term development courses including
  - Prevent/ safeguarding
  - Ofsted readiness
  - School improvement
  - Pupil premium utilisation
  - School leadership
  - Supporting teaching and learning

May also have existing training programmes that can be marketed to our clients  
**Location** - UK wide  
**Salary** - per day / flexible

#### To apply:

Please send your application to:  
[sarah.brooks@peachorator.co.uk](mailto:sarah.brooks@peachorator.co.uk)

#### Contact Details:

Sarah Brooks  
01226 246583  
[sarah.brooks@peachorator.co.uk](mailto:sarah.brooks@peachorator.co.uk)

### Self Employed / Freelance

**Trainer / Assessors for Level 2 & Level 3 Apprenticeship in Supporting Teaching & Learning in Schools**

Applicants must have:

- Experience of working within the school environment
- Certificate in education or equivalent
- Assessors qualification
- Familiarity with the apprenticeship framework
- Capability of developing literacy, numeracy and ICT

**Location** - UK wide  
**Salary** - per learner / flexible

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# FE Week

# ANNUAL APPRENTICESHIP CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION 2018

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## **The flagship national apprenticeship conference for employers and providers.**

On the back of the tremendous success of AAC 2015, 2016 and 2017, the fourth Annual Apprenticeship Conference and Exhibition is set to be our biggest event yet.

AAC 2018 is the calendar's one truly not-to-be-missed three-day policy and practice conference dedicated to apprenticeships.

AAC has rapidly become recognised as the premier professional apprenticeship conference, providing policy and practical updates in partnership with the Department for Education, and it is also now the largest conference in the sector.

Across the three days, delegates will have access to more than 100 workshops, 50 exhibitors, top policy officials and sector experts. Senior staff from colleges, training providers, universities, employers and assessment organisations will all have access to business-critical news, advice, and keynotes.

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## EXPERTS



## FIONA ALDRIDGE

Assistant director, the Learning and Work Institute

# ‘Traineeships’ is jargon: talk about careers advice

If we want to get our NEETs back into work, says Dr Fiona Aldridge, we need to speak more plainly

Last week, in partnership with the Department for Education, L&W hosted a conference entitled *Traineeships: Why they work* to provide practical insight into effective and innovative ways in which traineeships can be delivered to secure positive outcomes for young people, employers and local areas.

Ensuring young people get a firm first step on the career ladder must be a priority for us all; there is clear evidence that being unemployed while young can have a permanent scarring effect on long-term pay and job prospects.

It was in the context of particularly high levels of youth unemployment that traineeships were launched in 2013, to provide a focused pathway for young people to gain the skills and experience needed to get an apprenticeship or a job. Comprising work experience, work preparation training and support with English and maths, the programme has engaged over 50,000 young people in its first three years.

“Perhaps branding is not always as important as we think it is

Although youth unemployment is now falling, far too many young people are still locked out of opportunities to enter and progress in the labour market. At 12.5 per cent, the youth unemployment rate is almost three times higher than the overall unemployment rate of 4.6 per cent. Our research shows growing numbers of young people spend more than a year not in education, employment or training (NEET) – storing up longer-term trouble for the 800,000 young people in this position. Now is not the time to take our foot off the pedal.

The overriding theme of the day was that the strength of the traineeship programme is

in its flexibility – creating opportunities for providers, employers and others to develop new approaches that best meet the needs of their particular context and learners. But while flexibility is certainly a strength, it can also create challenges, not least in how best to describe and promote the programme.

Our DfE speaker assured the audience that they have heard the message that low awareness of the ‘traineeship’ brand is hindering providers’ success - and plan to take action. This will be welcome news for many.

However, others were keen to point out that the “traineeship” label rarely plays a prominent role in their engagement of young people or employers. Instead, they find it much more effective to focus on what young people and employers are looking to achieve, and create an offer that supports this from the flexibilities offered by the programme. As one provider said: “We’ve stopped marketing traineeships; we’ve started marketing careers advice”.

So perhaps branding is not always quite as important as we think it is – and certainly in relation to traineeships, developing clear and concise messages for employers, young people and their parents about what the programme includes is an issue. While we want to build confidence in the quality and effectiveness of provision on offer, we should also remember that sometimes the best way of engaging people in learning is to take a step outside of the language that is familiar to us within the sector, and focus instead on connecting with the aspirations and ambitions of those we are seeking to engage. (If you’re interested in great examples of what works, take a look at the case study videos on our website.)

Most young people want to work – but many of these will not be motivated by a traineeship – they rarely approach a provider or a Jobcentre Plus work coach asking about the programme. But they do want to earn money, support themselves and build their future. It is crucial therefore that we give our young people a clear line of sight to work and deliver focused support through creative and engaging programmes. Providers such as Millwall Community Trust, NACRO, Harlow College and Qube, all of whom contributed to our conference last week, are leading the way in doing just this.



## ALI HADAWI CBE

Principal, Central Bedfordshire College

# FE is perfectly placed to set EdTech agenda

The opportunity for artificial intelligence-backed virtual reality to revolutionise technical and vocational education and training is upon us, says Ali Hadawi

There is a distinct opportunity for the FE sector to lead the change in delivering truly inspirational learning and training using present-day technology. Machine learning, or artificial intelligence, moves the boundary into a domain where computers learn, adapt and change in response to the way a learner is responding. Better yet, the computers don’t get bored, they don’t have favourite times and they don’t mind repetition.

When this technology is coupled with an immersive or virtual reality environment, we can create training that works well in the technical and vocational sphere. It collects analytics to enable the trainee and the trainer to see which elements of a routine – for example, changing a part on a machine – are taking longer than they should or which routine – such as dealing with an elderly person in a health and social care setting – is performed hesitantly. The possibilities are limitless.

The time is now, and technical and vocational education has the right mix of expertise and skill to make use of technology to advance its approach and deliver amazing training. At Central Bedfordshire College, we have been experimenting for the last 12 months in partnership with a leading global technology company, and this week we launched an immersive training initiative. We are happy to share our experience and findings with colleagues across the sector.

Noting that most of our learners are more technology-savvy than us, we are moving the learning and training into a domain that is even less familiar to many of us than to our learners – even though it might mean we have catching up to do.

Many business leaders tell me that they have two main concerns: the availability of skilled people to take jobs, and trainees who arrive at a business with the right mix of social and work ethics in addition to their technical abilities.

Using the AI-VR will allow colleges to work creatively with teachers, trainers and lecturers to reimagine and reconfigure their teaching approach, and hence the time they spend with learners on developing the kind of

traits and skills that machines can’t teach.

Staff have so much more to give to their learners than the technical elements – some of which will still need to be trained by a human. For example, the nuances of a specific industry, how to approach a certain situation, how to deal with colleagues, how to respond to a manager... the list is endless.

“TVET has the right mix of expertise and skill to make use of technology

FE can and should lead the way in reconfiguring the role of the teacher/trainer, to focus on what needs to be done by a human. We have the trainer expertise (central to AI), we have the links with employers, we understand the employment market well, we understand qualifications and the accreditation process, and we understand the communities we serve like no other to make a success of this development.

One note of caution: this is not a cost-reduction proposition.

This proposition is to enable UK TVET to achieve two things: deliver truly inspiring and engaging world-class training and secondly, and arguably more importantly, enable teachers to spend more time developing citizens, socialising learning and enhancing the communities we serve. AI-VR has the potential to enable colleges to improve without increasing the cost of running their operations.

To this end, we need four key actions:

- Policy makers must trust and back the sector to lead the AI-VR revolution into TVET.
- The TVET sector should embrace this agenda and not to wait to be told what to do.
- Ofsted needs to start thinking about how to adapt its inspection model to fit with the new world of TVET.
- Awarding organisations should embrace change and focus on what matters to our economy.

## EXPERTS

**This year's adult education budget has been a debacle, according to Mark Dawe, who wants the whole process substantially rethought and redesigned to avoid underspending on one hand and underfunding on the other**

There's no denying that the recent tender process for the independent training providers' £110 million share of the £1.5 billion adult education budget was a bad experience for everyone involved. Frustrations were made worse because over 90 per cent of the total budget was inaccessible to ITPs as it's grant funded, while there are persistent reports that almost £300 million of it wasn't even spent in 2016-17. What we needed instead was a tender that achieved fair outcomes, led to a value-for-money delivery, and met policy requirements.

The outcome of original procurement achieved very little of this. The way regional priorities were determined seemed broken, while providers with 'outstanding' provision which had met the government's standards for years suddenly found themselves with a fraction of what they required.

Who know whether it was AELP lobbying or FE Week's coverage of the Learndirect and Somerset County Council cases, the threat of a microscopic examination of events by the Commons Public Accounts Committee, or all three, that prompted the U-turn. The first two certainly exposed the flaws in the process and the DfE's ability to change rules at will. Ministers must have finally seen sense over the unfairness of it all.

**The AELP wants the government to pay for all level two apprenticeships, but this is not the answer, argues Adrian Anderson**

The two drivers behind the apprenticeship reforms are to increase productivity and enhance social mobility. From a productivity and economic perspective, if the UK is to prosper and succeed we need to develop a high-skill economy and apprenticeships that deliver the skills employers need to increase productivity.

The call from AELP to prioritise funding for level two apprenticeship provision and pay for such a proposal by increasing employer co-investment for apprenticeships at levels four to seven, on a sliding scale from 20 to 50 per cent is fundamentally flawed. Is their argument really that priority should be given to level two apprenticeships in business administration and customer service, rather than to STEM apprenticeships in vital technical-level roles, or to level six apprenticeships in digital and engineering occupations?

The argument that prioritising level two provision supports social mobility also only goes so far. Certainly, apprenticeships at level two support young people entering the workforce. That's great, but then what? And why prioritise level two apprenticeships for adults including those in employment?

To maximise social mobility, don't we need to use apprenticeships as the basis for work-based progression routes to open pathways for new types of learner cohorts to



**MARK  
DAWE**

CEO, AELP

## Time to rebuild the adult education budget process

AELP is awaiting feedback from member-providers but reallocating 75 per cent of supposedly "non-priority" delivery through extended contracts to make it fair for successful bidders was absolutely the right and necessary thing to do, and something we had proposed as a solution many weeks ago.

The next step is to allow providers who have been delivering priority learning to bid for growth, to enable them to plan ahead and maintain capacity. As always, this will only be successful if adequate money is allocated for this growth. Bearing in mind with the size of the reported underspend, adult contracted delivery could treble and there would still be money left over.

We should now take the opportunity to

review the whole future of AEB funding, in the context of the extended devolution timetable. AELP understands that elected mayors will not countenance this as an academic exercise with the ESFA effectively retaining control; they will want a budget allocated under them to meet their local economic priorities. There will be a great deal of pressure on them to keep the bulk of their funds grant-allocated, even if the AEB is underspent to a significant degree.

It may require a transition process but we would like to see all combined authorities and LEPs move over to commissioned funding. That may mean more work for bid-writers but that is far better if it means better outcomes and improved value

for money. Moreover if the education select committee is about to examine the prevalence of subcontracting in the sector, we should hardly be taking decisions that will encourage continuing a practice with an abundance of top-slicing.

The Department for Education has recently indicated that funding for traineeships for 19- to 24-year-olds will no longer be part of a devolved AEB. Having sat through several fringe meetings at the main party conferences listening to a wide range of experts complain about the previous lack of local ring-fencing for SEND budgets for schoolchildren, I have to say that AELP is in full agreement with the decision.

**“ Ministers must have finally seen sense over the unfairness of it all**

It doesn't matter if we are talking about areas with notional full employment; we believe that traineeships are needed nationally when half a million young people are still unemployed and many of them won't have the skills to compete in a post-Brexit labour market. Greater investment is required in traineeships and at the same time their budget needs to be protected from raids for other things.



**ADRIAN  
ANDERSON**

Chief executive, UVAC

## Fully funding at level two is fundamentally flawed

well-paid technical, associate professional, professional and managerial occupations? To disincentivise employer spending on high-level apprenticeships, as AELP proposes, reduces opportunities for those completing level two and level three apprenticeships to move through work-based learning programmes to technical-level and senior managerial occupations.

AELP argues that removing the 10-per-cent co-investment requirement would lead to a dramatic increase in the number of level two apprenticeships. Perhaps, but surely if an employer will not even pay 10 per cent of the cost of an apprenticeship, they don't exactly value the programme or see it delivering benefits to their business. The answer is for training providers to focus on new standards and deliver value to employers, so they decide to invest in higher-level apprenticeships.

So, where does UVAC stand as the organisation representing higher education providers?

Firstly, it is essential that the 10-per-cent employer co-investment requirement is retained for apprenticeships at all levels. The contribution will ensure the market is driven by employers and that they invest in meaningful apprenticeships.

Secondly, the funding system should be used to incentivise non-levy-paying employers to use apprenticeships to support a post-Brexit economy, as businesses will need to compete internationally, or to support individuals acquire the skills to deliver vital public services. This could be achieved by raising the employer contribution required for apprenticeships in occupational areas such as business administration and customer care at level two to, say, 25 per cent. The savings could

then – if there were issues of affordability – be used for more STEM apprenticeships, to increase technician apprenticeships at below bachelor's degree level, or to increase funding bands for high-cost apprenticeship provision needed by the UK economy.

**“ Don't we need to use apprenticeships as the basis for progression routes?**

Thirdly, shouldn't the funding system reward employers who do the most to support the learning, development and progression of their staff? Perhaps the funding system could incentivise the development of progression pathways from apprenticeships to technical, managerial, associate professional and professional job roles. For entry into apprenticeships at levels three to seven, the funding system could perhaps reward employers who recruit from under-represented groups, tackle gender imbalance or low level BEM participation.

Wouldn't we rather have this than yet more "free" training that adds little to the government's twin priorities of increased productivity and social mobility?

## CAMPUS ROUND-UP *with Samantha King*

### Incredible charity haul for Alzheimer's



(L-R) Andy Hensby, Claire Hebron - Alzheimer's Society, Emma Buttrick, Julie Buttrick, Jane Kinnaid and Mick Lochran (Deputy Principal)

A member of staff from North Lindsey College has led a successful fundraising campaign for the Alzheimer's Society after her father was diagnosed with the disease.

Emma Buttrick, a health and social care learning facilitator at the college managed to raise a total of £1,536.83 for the dementia support and research charity through a three-part challenge, inspired by her father's diagnosis.

With the support of staff in the health and social care department, the money was raised through cake sales, a cycling challenge and memory walk; £200 was raised through the

cake sale alone.

"This year the focus was on fundraising and next year is about awareness-raising," said Buttrick. "This was devastating news to my family and we are now coming to terms with the challenges we are facing.

"The money raised is absolutely amazing, and I am now in touch with a lady from the society and we have planned for someone to come and talk to the health and social care students and share their knowledge."

Alzheimer's is the most common type of dementia and affects an estimated 850,000 people in the UK.



Let them eat cake



(L-R) Film students Katie Jellicoe, Ellie Checketts and Harry Gibbons with lecturer Sarah Downing

### Going for gold on the silver screen

Five budding film critics from Stratford-upon-Avon College have taken top prizes in a film-reviewing competition.

The group of students, who all study the college's A-level film course, submitted reviews to the review of the week competition run by Into Film, an educational organisation funded by the British Film Institute.

Their submissions were selected as the winners from hundreds of entries, and they will now each receive a badge, a certificate and a DVD randomly selected from the organisation's film library as their prizes, as well as having their reviews featured on the Into Film website.

Among the submissions was a review of Richard Ayoade's film *Submarine*, by 17-year-old Katie Jellicoe, and a review of the adaptation of Stephen King's *IT*, written by 16-year-old Harry Gibbons.

"It's difficult to believe that when they wrote their reviews they had only been studying film for a week," said Sarah Downing, the A-level film lecturer. "I'm immensely proud of them and look forward to seeing them flourish in their future careers."

Harry added: "I think I've caught the film review bug a little bit. Film criticism is definitely something I'd like to consider in the future."



A lesson in origami

### Engineers and the art of origami

A group of engineering students have been studying origami to help them understand how compact space-saving structures are created.

The level three extended diploma students from Darlington College began by making paper birds, before looking at how the centuries-old technique can be used to make prototypes for bigger projects.

Students learned how NASA uses origami to create compact solar arrays, which are purified silicon packages that attach to satellites and unfurl when in space, converting solar energy to electrical power.

"Origami is so useful in space research

because there is such limited space on rockets and origami allows large structures to be compacted for launch. It is also invaluable in testing prototypes because paper is such a cheap material," explained engineering tutor Rob Elliott.

"It is the ideal engineering exercise and helps students visualise in 3D what start as two-dimensional plans."

Student Chhitij Singh, 16, added: "I used to be in an origami club, but hadn't realised the full implications of paper folding to engineering which are amazing. I'm interested in aerospace and can certainly see how paper folding can be used in design."

### Textiles students are all jazzed up

Current and former fashion and textiles students from Shrewsbury College have come together for an annual textile design competition, winning a whole host of accolades.

The Shrewsbury Drapers textile competition has been running since 1995 and this year, it asked residents of Shropshire to design a piece of textile work that reflected the theme of 'All that jazz'.

Katie Blower, studying a level three diploma in fashion and textiles, took home a bronze award for her afternoon tea dress, and entries from her coursemates Jazmyn Titcombe and Lauren Rees were both highly commended.

A-level textiles students from the college

also won prizes: Abby Roberts received a gold award, Emma Shakeshaft took bronze, and Aoife Holbrook and Emily Yeomans were both highly commended.

Former student Amelia Roe won the Jackie Ryan Memorial Award for her submission – an embroidered bowler, winning a two-week work placement with tweed manufacturers Tweedmill Textiles.

"We love to challenge our students with industry related, live projects and the competition really engaged them creatively and helped them to consider traditional, British materials and techniques," said James Staniforth, principal and CEO of the Shrewsbury College Group.



Tooting her horn: Amelia Roe's winning bowler

CAMPUS ROUND-UP *with Samantha King***Hundreds of dogs descend on college campus**FEATURED  
CAMPUS  
ROUND-UP

Students from Hartpury College got embroiled in the world of competitive dog agility last weekend, as the campus played host to a national dog show, reports Samantha King

Competitors and their dogs from across the UK gathered in Gloucester for the Hartpury UKA show, an event for people who are serious about dog agility to chance their arm in a range of categories.

Attendees and their dogs could compete in agility, jumping, steeplechase and casual events, at levels ranging from beginner and novice, to senior and champion.

A total of 16 student volunteers from courses including animal care, veterinary nursing and equine ran the two-day event, setting up the courses across four different rings, logging scores, managing queues and checking in competitors.

The courses had been previously designed by competition judges, so students had to build the course to their exact specifications, and adjust the height of equipment to cater for different types of dog.

“Out of the students who volunteered, only one was actually ever involved with dog agility previously,” explained the college’s animal collection manager, Aleksandra Lipinski, who helped set up the event. “Most of them had no idea what to expect or what a dog agility show looked like. They went in blind,



A test of agility

and managed to do a really amazing job.”

Two of Hartpury’s own students took part in the event, and Julia Shimwell, a student taking the level three extended diploma in animal management, even competed with her dog Dizzy for the first time. Jess Radnor, another student and an experienced competitor took a top prize.

Ms Lipinski decided to set up the agility show after noticing how many horse shows there were at the college, and not so many events featuring smaller animals.

“We have a lot of equine events and some

sports events, but we don’t really have much from the animal department. I know a horse is an animal, but it’s a separate department,” she said.

“I go to all these dog shows and they say they’re always looking for new venues and things, so I thought, ah, that might be good – so we started setting up something that students could run.”

Open to competitors registered with competitive dog agility group, UK Agility, the event cost the college a total of £1,500 to run, with spectator ticket sales and competitor fees



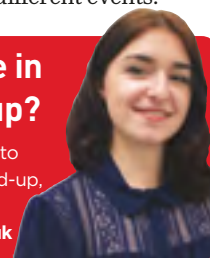
Student Julia Shimwell with Dizzy

covering the cost.

The event attracted almost 200 competitors, with a grand total of 920 dog runs – including those competing with more than one dog, or the same dog running in different events.

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

If you have a story you’d like to see featured in campus round-up, get in touch by emailing [samantha.king@feweek.co.uk](mailto:samantha.king@feweek.co.uk)

**Dr Maxine Room CBE**

Principal, Totton College

Start date October 2017

**Previous job**

Director of Medacrii.com

**Interesting fact**

She is the director of a social enterprise that runs organic sourdough bread-making courses.

**Alison Robinson**

Principal and CEO, Myerscough College

Start date April 2018

**Previous job**

Vice-principal and deputy chief executive at Myerscough College

**Interesting fact**

She will be the second woman to lead the college in its history, and has lived down the road from the main campus for over 20 years.

**Matt Bagley**

Head of farms, Askham Bryan College

Start date September 2017

**Previous job**

Head of agriculture at Askham Bryan College’s Penrith campus

**Interesting fact**

He sits on a number of national committees including the National Sheep Association and the Sheep Vet Society.

**Steve Burgin**

Chair of governors, South Staffordshire College

Start date November 2017

**Previous job**

Vice-president of GE Power in Europe

**Interesting fact**

He is deputy president and board member of the French Chamber of Commerce of Great Britain.

**Bruce Carnegie-Brown**

President, the Chartered Management Institute

Start date September 2017

**Previous job**

Chairman of Lloyd’s of London and Moneysupermarket.com group

**Interesting fact**

He is a trustee of Historic Royal Palaces and a deputy lieutenant of Greater London.

**Movers & Shakers**

...

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

# Wednesday, 1 November 2017

# The Principal Hotel, Manchester



## Towards an Inclusive Skills Strategy - 12 months on

The AELP Autumn Conference, sponsored by City & Guilds, will take stock of the roll-out of the apprenticeship levy so far. We will also look at the T Level reforms, quality issues and overcoming barriers to social mobility. With more elected mayors in place, an update on skills devolution has now been added to the agenda.

*Visit the website to view the agenda*  
[www.aelpautumnconference.org.uk](http://www.aelpautumnconference.org.uk)



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Theme topics will include:

- Levy payer viewpoint - Grafton Merchanting GB
- Public sector roll-out - Health Education
- Government update - ESFA
- Provider perspective - Kaplan
- Traineeships - DfE
- 16-18 funding - Skills for Growth
- Disadvantaged and LLDD - Natspec
- English, maths & digital skills - Carillion PLC
- Government update - DfE
- Work placement challenge - Develop
- Partnership working - WTPN
- Matching the T Level to Apprenticeship Reform - C&G + Activate Learning
- Ofsted update - Ofsted
- Standards and EPA - IfA
- Role of technology in improving delivery - Canvas
- Challenges of EPA - Innovate Awarding



### 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

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

**Difficulty:**  
**EASY**

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

**Difficulty:**  
**MEDIUM**

**Solutions:**  
 Next edition

### Last Week's solutions

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

**Difficulty:**  
**EASY**

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

**Difficulty:**  
**MEDIUM**

### Spot the difference To WIN an FE Week mug



Spot five differences. **First correct entry wins an FE Week mug.**  
 Email your name and picture of your completed spot the difference to: [news@feweek.co.uk](mailto:news@feweek.co.uk).  
**Last Edition's winner: John Wiles, Priory Federation of Academies**