

# FE Week

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Exclusive

BILLY CAMDEN @BILLYCAMDEN

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# FE Week

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## NEWS

# Halfon: 'Ofsted must start inspecting subcontractors'

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS

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EXCLUSIVE

The head of the Commons education select committee wants a “wholesale review” into why Ofsted is yet to inspect a single subcontractor more than a year after the rules changed.

Robert Halfon, a former skills minister, made the demand days after chief inspector Amanda Spielman admitted that she too was worried by this lack of action.

“We need a wholesale review into subcontracting and whether it enhances or curtails quality apprenticeships,” he told *FE Week*.

“I strongly believe that Ofsted needs to make the inspection of subcontractors a priority.”

It is “wrong that so many subcontractors are not inspected”, he continued, as it is hard to know otherwise whether apprentices get the quality of training “they deserve”.

The rules appeared to change in September last year, when Ofsted inserted a line into its handbook to emphasise that it “reserves the right to inspect and grade any subcontractor and its provision as a separate entity”.

It said: “As part of the inspection, inspectors may inspect any provision carried out on behalf of the provider through



Robert Halfon

subcontract(s) or partnership arrangements, including by subcontractors that hold additional direct contracts of their own.”

An *FE Week* investigation in July found that Ofsted had not directly inspected a single subcontractor in the subsequent 10 months. We went back to the inspectorate after Tuesday’s committee meeting to find out whether there’d been any progress in the last four months.

“We inspect subcontractors through main contractors, not separately. We believe this is the most efficient and effective way of doing so,” said a spokesperson, who refused to



Amanda Spielman

identify any specific inspections.

“However, we keep subcontractor data under constant review. If that data suggested a specific subcontractor inspection would be necessary, we would not hesitate to carry one out.”

Worse still, Ofsted appears to have no subcontractor inspections in the offing, and could not confirm any intention to change the situation.

Nevertheless, as of January this year, there were 1,200 subcontractors accessing £693 million in government funding. Of these, 161 had a contract worth over £1 million.

Ofsted has now collected more thorough data on around 500 subcontractors from the Department for Education.

The Skills Funding Agency had warned as long ago as 2010 that the subcontractor arrangement was “prone to mismanagement and abuse”.

However, Ofsted’s spokesperson insisted that the “most efficient and effective” way to proceed was by inspecting subcontractors through main contractors and not directly.

He also claimed the rule change in September last year did not amount to a change in policy, and that it had simply been to clarify that the watchdog could choose to inspect subcontractors, contrary to what Ofsted leaders had previously told *FE Week*.

Ms Spielman told the hearing that “there is a great deal we shouldn’t be comfortable about” with subcontracting.

She said Ofsted was looking at “how best to use” data on subcontractors, and “might” to decide to inspect “some” subcontractors.

“I’m not saying it’s a perfect model, but I am saying we get a great deal of information that helps us to identify many of the problems in the system,” she added.

She also admitted that Ofsted has “a number of concerns about apprenticeships and apprenticeship provision”, and expressed disappointment about the “deterioration” in the grades of FE providers.

## Major home health care employer provider branded ‘inadequate’

PAUL OFFORD

@PAULOFFORD

Ofsted has rated a major home healthcare employer-provider ‘inadequate’ across the board, in a report that condemns it for “woefully low expectations”.

Nestor Primcare Services, which was previously rated ‘requires improvement’ overall, was inspected in September – and an excoriating report found “no key strengths”.

The company employs 125 apprentices, of whom “approximately a quarter were on a learning break” at the time of the inspection.

Inspectors were highly critical of teaching, assessing and apprentices’ progress, and raised grave safeguarding concerns.

“Managers set woefully low expectations for their assessors and these, in return, fail to motivate apprentices to complete their learning programme on time and to a high standard,” it stated.

Its assessment practice as a whole is “insufficiently rigorous”.

“In too many cases, assessors wrongfully accept and sign off, as valid and complete, work which is incorrect, or of a poor standard. For example, an apprentice described a sprained ankle as an example of a localised infection requiring antibiotics,” the report found.

Leaders and managers were also guilty of

an “object failure” to challenge themselves and their teams to deliver high standards.

“Teaching, learning and assessment are weak; they do not support apprentices to progress well and to acquire new occupational skills and knowledge,” it went on.

Management had “overlooked the importance” of keeping apprentices safe, and been slow to ensure that all leaders have taken required safeguarding training.

“Apprentices do not prioritise their learning; too often they miss appointments with assessors and/or do not complete their work on time,” inspectors decided. “As a result, many apprentices have long periods of time when they do not submit their work.”

Nestor Primcare Services, which was allocated £550,000 by the Education and Skills Funding Agency for 2016/17, was bought two years ago by the Aurelius investment group and now trades as Allied Healthcare.

Most apprentices are studying health and social care, with others on administration and business management programmes.

The report said the company, which was approached for comment by *FE Week*, must “radically develop” the quality of its teaching, learning and assessment.

It was also called on to “immediately implement a comprehensive review of the effectiveness of the existing safeguarding arrangements”.

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## NEWS

# Huge spike in higher-level apprenticeship commitments

JUDE BURKE  
@JUDEBURKE77

Levy-funded apprenticeships at higher and degree level jumped by a whopping 424 per cent in September, according to the latest experimental Department for Education statistics.

The figures, based on commitments made through the apprenticeship service since May, suggest that the sudden rise of management apprenticeships is not slowing down.

Commitments for higher or degree apprenticeships – those at level four and above – shot up by 3,140 from August's total of 740 to 3,880 in September.

While commitments at all levels were up by 153 per cent, the 424-per-cent rise at level four and above dwarves that at lower levels.

As a result, higher- and degree-level apprenticeships now make up a far greater proportion of the total commitments, from one in 10 between May and August to almost one in five.

These figures will fuel concerns that the apprenticeship levy, which kicked off

on May 1, would encourage businesses to fund management courses for existing employees rather than offering lower-level apprenticeships to young people.

It's not clear which standards or frameworks these commitments relate to, as that information isn't included in the statistics.

However, the most popular higher- or degree-level standards in 2016/17 were both management courses: level five operations/departmental manager and the chartered manager degree apprenticeship at level six.

*FE Week* reported last month that management had soared in popularity to become the second most popular framework in 2016/17.

Degree apprenticeships were first launched in September 2015, but have only been eligible for funding since May.

Peter Lauener, the interim chief executive of the Institute for Apprenticeships, told the public accounts committee last month that businesses had been expected to use the levy to pay for higher and degree apprenticeships – which he described as a “rapidly growing element of the programme”.

Period	Intermediate	Advanced	Higher/Degree	Level not recorded	All levels
May to August	16,040	12,080	2,980	20	31,100
	52%	39%	10%	0%	
Sep-17	7,060	9,830	3,880	210	21,000
	34%	47%	18%	1%	

The institute had “done a lot of modelling”, he explained, which included “an expectation that there would be an increasing number of degree apprenticeships in the system as a result”.

Of the 195 standards currently approved for delivery, 65 are at level four or above.

Twenty of those are at level six, while a further six are at level seven, which is equivalent to a master's degree.

Many of the new degree apprenticeship programmes have received funding through the degree apprenticeship development fund, administered by the Higher Education Funding Council for England.

The first phase of the fund, announced in 2016, provided £4.5 million for 18 projects involving 35 HE institutions and 20 FE colleges to support up to 5,200 new degree apprenticeship places from September.

The second phase, announced by the education secretary Justine Greening at the Conservative Party conference last month,

awarded £4.9 million to 27 projects, to develop a further 4,500 degree apprenticeship places by September 2018.

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

Currently only large employers that are subject to the apprenticeship levy – those with an annual wage bill of at least £3 million – can use the service.

AELP boss Mark Dawe, who called this week to ensure FE reforms support social mobility (see page six), was concerned by this spike.

“Growth is something the government has been striving for and it is great to see real traction,” he said.

“However, this growth must not be at the expense of lower-level apprenticeships and opportunities for young people. If the direction of travel continues, the whole skills social mobility agenda will be undermined.”

Period	Intermediate	Intermediate shift on previous month	Advanced	Advanced shift on previous month	Higher/Degree	Higher shift on previous month	Level not recorded	All levels	All levels shift on previous month
May-17	3,500		2,280		780		-	6,600	
Jun-17	3,940	13%	2,740	20%	630	-19%	-	7,300	11%
Jul-17	4,540	15%	3,560	30%	830	32%	10	8,900	22%
Aug-17	4,060	-11%	3,500	-2%	740	-11%	10	8,300	-7%
Sep-17	7,060	74%	9,830	181%	3,880	424%	210	21,000	153%
Total	23,100		21,910		6,860		230	52,100	

Source: ESFA Apprenticeship service registrations and commitments to September 2017.

Analysis by FE Week

## Milton to review technical education at levels 4 and 5

JUDE BURKE  
@JUDEBURKE77

Higher-level technical education will be the focus of a “long overdue” government review – although the sector is demanding more detail on when it will happen and what it will involve.

The review will investigate all education at levels four and five, focusing in particular on how technical qualifications can better meet the needs of learners and employers.

Anne Milton, the skills minister, announced it at the end of October, describing it as the “next logical step” after the apprenticeship reforms and T-levels.

“High-quality technical education helps young people and adults get into new, fulfilling and better paid careers – that’s good for them and good for our economy,” she said. “This is the way we build a better, higher-skilled workforce.”

The review will touch on progression into the workplace from T-levels or other full-time

education, as well how the qualifications work for those already employed.

The announcement contained precious little detail about the form the review will take or when it will begin, but it did say that “employers, providers, learners and others with expertise in this area will all feed into this review”.

Gordon Marsden, the shadow skills minister, agreed that the review was “important” but the lack of detail “raises more questions than it answers”.

“Until we’ve seen the terms of reference, it’s difficult to say whether it’s going to be a major or minor review,” he said.

Mr Marsden is not convinced that “simply looking at levels four and five would do the business” in terms of “delivering the step change we need for technical education”.

His views was echoed by Stephen Evans, the chief executive of the Learning and

Work Institute, who wants “a system-wide approach” to “develop clear pathways for all young people and adults to improve their skills and build their careers”.

David Hughes, the boss of the AoC, said the review is “long overdue, because it addresses a long-term, structural problem within our education system” – that is to say, the “very low” numbers of people with skills at this level, particularly in relation to those with degrees.

“If our economy is to be strong, we will need to find ways to fund and provide more options for young people and adults wishing to retrain,” he said.

Professor Alison Wolf, an influential government education adviser who reviewed vocational education in 2011, said she was “highly relieved” by Tuesday’s announcement.

“A review of higher technical education is not only welcome but necessary, because what is left of English higher technical provision

is rapidly disappearing, and doing so at a time of evident skill shortages that are likely to get worse,” she said.

This latest review will build on recent attempts to improve technical education at lower levels.

The government announced in November 2015 that it had plans for reforming post-16 skills training, starting with the Sainsbury Review, which looked at lower levels.

In May 2016 *FE Week* exclusively reported that there would be an academic and vocational divide at 16, with 15 new technical education routes.

Then in July, the government officially responded, and confirmed the plans for 15 routes in a post-16 skills plan, which then developed into plans for new T-levels from 2020.

The DfE was reluctant to provide further details on what the latest review will look like.

“The review will consider the supply of, and demand for, high-quality higher-level classroom-based technical education,” said a spokesperson. “More information will be available in due course.”



Anne Milton

“

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**Maryam Taher**

Studying Biomedical Sciences at the University of York, Overall BTEC Student of the Year 2017, BTEC Applied Science

A portrait of Maryam Taher, a young woman wearing a green hijab and a white lab coat, looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a blurred green and blue.

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\* Source: UCAS and HESA data on entry to HE (2017)



## AELP AUTUMN CONFERENCE

# ESFA planning new 'trusted provider status' for employer levy account management

BILLY CAMDEN  
@BILLYCAMDEN

Employers may soon be able to farm out the administration of their apprenticeship accounts to providers, but the ESFA insists its plans will "maintain employer ownership".

Keith Smith, the Education and Skills Funding Agency's director of funding, told delegates at the AELP autumn conference in Manchester that "trusted provider status" could be introduced next year, to simplify the bureaucracy around account management.

"What we mean by that is allowing a relatively good relationship, where employers are confident they have the best provider, to actually enable the employer to authorise the provider to do much



Mark Dawe

more of the accounting and administration on their behalf," he told delegates.

"That will stop some of this to-ing and fro-ing. We think we will introduce this as a choice; some employers are telling us they absolutely do want to control everything end-to-end, but others not so much. So we want something that gives them that choice, and something you will be able to work with employers on."

More immediately, the ESFA will introduce a function that allows providers to change their own information on the levy system.

"The short-term stuff that we are going to do by this autumn or by the end of this year is introduce the ability for you to change information within the system," he said.

"This editing functionality will be introduced to help this commitment process. We think this is all good news but I'd be interested



Keith Smith

in getting your feedback about whether this goes far enough."

AELP's boss Mark Dawe told *FE Week* that he supported the proposals.

"It is not so much about ownership, rather than saying that there are roles for the employers and the providers, and that the provider is there to support the employer," he explained. "If the employer trusts the provider, then give them the opportunity

to help. It is something that we and our members have been saying for a long time. My thinking is the quicker the better.

"I think the choice is about the relationship between the provider and the employer. It is the job of the provider to get that trust, and it may be that the employer just wants control. That is not saying the provider is no good, just that the provider has a different view. But at least it is there and can be done."

## Major talking points of AELP's autumn conference

Over 300 delegates from providers, employers and businesses across the country travelled to Manchester on November 1 for AELP'S autumn conference. *FE Week* picks out the main topics of discussion.

### Off-the-job training concern

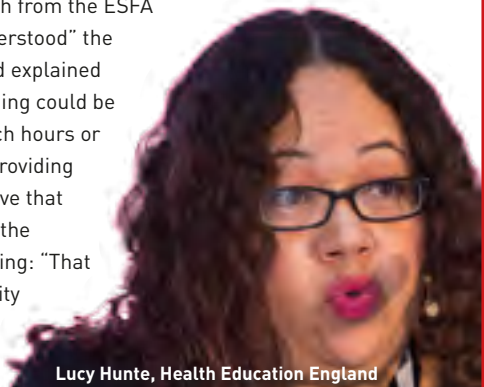
The government has been urged to prioritise employer resistance to the 20-per-cent minimum off-the-job training rule for apprenticeships.

It was a common theme at Wednesday's conference, where two large levy-paying employers – Health Education England and Grafton Merchanting GB – led the way on voicing concerns about it.

Both firms claimed they couldn't afford an apprentice who is "non-productive" for one day every week in order to meet this criterion.

During a Q&A, one audience member described the current rule as an "absolute killer" and called for the off-the-job training to be allowed outside of contracted hours.

Keith Smith from the ESFA said he "understood" the concerns and explained that the training could be done "in lunch hours or after work, providing employers give that time back to the person", adding: "That is the flexibility of the model".



Lucy Hunte, Health Education England

### Work together for technical education

Private providers and colleges have been urged to work with each other to make technical education reforms work.

Activate Learning boss Sally Dicketts claimed that the two groups had needlessly hindered each other through blind competition for too long, and could more effectively influence reforms, for example to the new T-levels, apprenticeships, and higher-level technical education, through teamwork.

"Technical education is seen as the problem at the moment," she told a session chaired by Kirstie Donnelly of City & Guilds. "But our circle of influence would be huge if we worked together.

We should be fighting on the same side because we have the same end instead of scrapping around in our backyards for each other's."



Sally Dicketts

### Calls for a social mobility campaign

AELP's boss wants a campaign to ensure FE reforms support social mobility.

Mark Dawe lamented a "fairly depressing picture" that he said was due largely to the "abandonment" of level two apprenticeships, which have traditionally helped people from disadvantaged backgrounds on the road to higher-skilled and better-paid jobs.

"There is a need for some sort of campaign or something around social mobility," he told delegates. "If something is not done, things are going to get worse and worse and not better."

Paul Cocker, a lead inspector for Ofsted, warned delegates that 2016/17 saw an 11-per-cent drop in numbers taking level twos.

Ashley McCaul, from Skills for Growth, was also "extremely concerned" as lower-level apprenticeships "would predominately have been used as a stepping point".

Delegates also heard from Clare Howard, Natspec, who said that just 9 per cent of apprentices have learning difficulties and disabilities, "which is a huge underrepresentation".



Ashley McCaul



# FE Week

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## NEWS

# Awards recognise high achievement against the odds

JUDE BURKE  
@JUDEBURKE77

**E**ight people who overcame all sorts of barriers to take their first steps towards teaching other adult learners have been crowned 'the best student group' at this year's Workers' Educational Association awards.

Now in their fifth year, the awards celebrate the people – including learners, tutors and WEA staff – who have transformed their own lives and the lives of those around them through lifelong learning.

Among them are the eight learners at the WEA's New Leaf project, based in Cheshire and Warrington and funded by the Big Lottery Fund.

The group impressed the judges with their "clear evidence of collective learning and support for one another" during their 10-week level three NCFE qualification in education and training.

Between them they have had to tackle a range of difficulties including dyslexia, cerebral palsy and self-esteem issues related to abusive relationships to complete their course, which prepared them to teach adult learners.

Ruth Spellman, WEA's chief executive, said she was "moved and humbled" by the stories of the group, and all the other winners.

They "show the breadth and depth of the WEA and our enduring capacity to engage hearts and minds in the serious business of learning. The outcomes and impacts on

individuals and communities are truly inspiring," she said.

Other winners include Sharon Proud, a nursing assistant studying for a level two functional skills qualification, and Mohammed Sadiq Omari, who joined an ESOL and employability project.

They were named joint winners of 'the Olive Cordell skills for life student award', which recognises learners that have overcome substantial barriers, after judges were unable to choose between them.

Sharon nearly died in February 2017, partway through her WEA course, in Ashington, Northumberland.

She described it as a "life-changing moment" that gave her a renewed focus, and she now has a place at Teesside University to study a higher apprenticeship in healthcare.

Mohammed moved to the UK from Afghanistan in September 2015, where he had no formal schooling and hadn't learned to read or write.

Through his six-week course in 2016 with WEA North Ayrshire council, he gained work experience and improved his spoken English, and was offered a job as a result.

Other winners included Arts Etcetera, an inclusive arts project based in Kidderminster, run by two WEA tutors, Sarah Tamar and Judith Farrar, which won 'the social impact award'.

Jane Walton, based at WEA in Sheffield, was presented with 'the WEA tutor award' for her "tireless" work to support and inspire students and staff over the past five years.

And Carole Clohesy was rewarded with 'the Olive Cordell skills for life tutor award' for her work teaching ESOL at WEA's Salma Centre in Leicester.

'The WEA volunteer award' went to Penny Stewart, for her 25 years of commitment and passion to the Petts Wood and Orpington branch in Bromley.

Margaret Callaghan and Debbie Corrigan, a mother and daughter, were jointly awarded 'student of the year', after they overcome dyslexia to have a book of stories and poetry published thanks to their studies with the WEA.

Angus O'Henley of North Ayrshire council was presented with 'the WEA regional partner award' for its work with the WEA on its ESOL and employability project, while the Huntingdon branch went home with 'the WEA branch award' in recognition of its successful efforts to boost learner numbers.

Six regional winners also received awards at the event, while playwright and screenwriter Lee Hall and Big Issue co-founder Lord John Bird were made the first ever fellows of the WEA in recognition of their long-lasting contribution to adult education.



The award winners



## NEWS

# Open letter demands budget action for FE

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS  
@PIPPA\_AK

Leading voices in FE have joined forces to demand more funding for the sector ahead of the autumn budget.

An open letter signed by the heads of 10 unions and major learning bodies is calling for investment to create a “stable and well-resourced further education sector” that will boost social mobility and address skills gaps.

It warns that investment in “technical learning alone” is not enough to reverse the effects of previous cuts, and that flexible educational opportunities will encourage progression to higher-level post-school learning or employment and “build confidence and resilience, develop basic skills or return to education in later life”.

Philip Hammond, the chancellor, will deliver the autumn budget on November 22.

“Successive funding cuts have weakened our nation’s skills infrastructure and reduced the availability of learning opportunities for young people and adults,” states the letter.

“While the government has made welcome commitments to expanding technical education and apprenticeships, other areas of learning – many of which support the most vulnerable in our society – have been scaled back.”

This reflects wider concern that the government is increasingly focusing

resources on apprenticeships, with the target of three million starts by 2020 still standing, and the development of T-levels seemingly at the expense of other traditional priority areas in FE, such as English courses for speakers of other languages.

The letter mentions thousands of talented staff who have left the sector as their jobs have been cut and their pay and conditions eroded.

“Unless we ensure that further education is well placed – and funded – to meet different needs, too many people will remain unable to access the qualifications and jobs which support higher productivity and economic growth,” it continues.

“There are few spending commitments which could have greater transformative potential – both for individuals and our economy.”

Separately, other FE associations are also putting pressure on the chancellor to remember the sector in his budget.

The Association for Employment and Learning Providers wants to review how non-levy apprenticeships will be funded after April 2019, while the Sixth-Form Colleges

Association is demanding a £200 increase to the national funding rate for 16- to 19-year-olds.

University and College Union general secretary Sally Hunt was one of those who signed up to the letter.

“Cuts to further education have closed off vital learning opportunities, putting a cap on aspiration for too many people,” she told *FE Week*.

“In order to boost productivity and social mobility, the government must now ensure that the further education sector is properly funded to deliver whatever skills people need to get on in life.”

Other FE leaders to sign are Unison general secretary Dave Prentis, Association of Colleges chief executive David Hughes, National Union of Students president Shakira Martin, Association of School and College Leaders general secretary Geoff Barton, and the joint general secretaries of the National Education Union Kevin Courtney and Mary Boustead.

Also undersigned are Hoxex director of policy Sue Pember, Third Sector National Learning Alliance chief executive Tim Ward, Learning and Work Institute chief executive Stephen Evans and Voice general secretary Deborah Lawson.

Dear Chancellor,

In her speech to the Conservative conference last month, the Prime Minister outlined a desire for everyone to have the opportunity to study more after they leave school.

This commitment is not only important for individual social mobility; it will also be crucial for boosting the UK's productivity, addressing skills gaps and encouraging economic growth.



Shakira Martin

Dave Prentis

## £10m available for new adult learning pilots

JUDE BURKE  
@JUDEBURKE77

Up to £10 million is now available to help providers develop new ways of supporting adults to progress or retrain.

The flexible learning fund, launched last week by the Department for Education, is part of a £40 million package piloting new approaches to lifelong learning that were announced in this year’s spring budget.

It has been welcomed by many across the sector, including the Labour MP David Lammy and Sue Pember, a former top skills civil servant, as a first step towards improving adult learning.

The pilot fund has been “established in the context of the Conservative manifesto commitment to produce “the best programme of learning and training for those in work and returning to work in the developed world”, according to published guidance.

It will provide grants of up to £1 million to projects that “design or enhance a method of delivering learning that is not currently widely available, and that is accessible to in-work adults or labour-market returners, catering to their specific needs in a way that breaks down barriers to learning faced by these groups”.

Mr Lammy, who was minister for skills

in 2007 and 2008, and who has campaigned recently for a widespread return to widespread “night schools”, said he was pleased to see the government was “beginning to recognise the importance of lifelong learning”.

“But we need to move beyond pilots to concerted action at a scale that matches the problem if we are serious about reskilling our workforce, dealing with the productivity crisis holding back our economy and closing the skills gap that will only get worse when we leave the European Union,” he said.

Ms Pember said the new fund would “help to secure new ways to motivate and fund adults”.

“We are particularly pleased that it recognises that there is a gap in the existing offer and that more needs to be done for the low-skilled and for the older learner,” she said.

Stephen Evans, the chief executive of the Learning and Work Institute, also welcomed the new fund but added that “people face other barriers to learning such as cost, information and advice”.

To be considered for funding, projects must “centre on the delivery of basic skills, or on intermediate or higher-level technical learning”.

Proposals are expected to fit within at least one of four “categories of interest”.

These include delivery of a “flexible or convenient timetable”, such as outside normal working hours, or “outside the classroom”.



David Lammy

The remaining two categories cover “making online and blended learning work for adults”, and “delivery methods that allow for caring responsibilities and returning to the labour market”.

Bids, which are welcomed from single organisations or partnerships, are expected to “show the support of relevant employers or employer bodies”.

Up to £1 million is available per project, which can be used towards the “design and development” of the project – although funding may also be awarded towards the “additional costs that non-standard forms of delivery

accrue”.

The deadline for applications to the fund is January 31, and grant support is available until March 2019.

The government’s industrial strategy green paper, published last January, acknowledged a “growing challenge” with lifelong learning.

It committed to exploring “ambitious new approaches to encouraging lifelong learning, which could include assessing changes to the costs people face to make them less daunting, improving outreach to people where industries are changing, and providing better information”.





# AoC Annual Conference & Exhibition

## Book your ticket TODAY!

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AoC's Annual Conference and Exhibition is the must-attend further education event of the year. This year's exceptional programme features distinguished speakers from education, government and business environments coming together to analyse and advise on all the key topics within the sector including curriculum reform, the Skills Plan, funding challenges and merger strategies. Here are some of the highlights across the two days.

### Day one highlights

- ▶ Keynote sessions with writer and journalist Matthew Syed, Rt Hon Jeremy Corbyn MP, Ofsted Chief Inspector Amanda Spielman and Rt Hon Anne Milton MP, Minister of State for Apprenticeships and Skills and Minister for Women
- ▶ Breakout sessions including 'Everything you need to know about college funding' and 'Apprenticeship matters - Transition, funding, delivery'
- ▶ AoC Awards Dinner and drinks reception



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## Day two highlights

- › Keynote sessions with Alistair Campbell, journalist, political aide and author, Ben Page, Chief Executive of Ipsos Mori, science writer and broadcaster Timandra Harkness and a panel session on the student voice with NUS and FE students
- › Breakout sessions including 'Planning for technical education reforms: A local approach' and 'Intrinsic quality – The strategic embedding of maths and English for maximum success'
- › AoC Funding Forum and AoC Data Forum
- › 8 hot topic discussions including 'Brexit negotiations and what they mean for colleges' and 'Apprenticeships: Is the new system working for all?'



Alistair Campbell



Ben Page



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## INTERVIEW

An interview with FE Commissioner

# RICHARD ATKINS

*FE Week asks: Won't his new powers see him clashing with the ETF?*

JUDE BURKE  
@JUDEBURKE77

**Richard Atkins completed his first year as FE commissioner in October. In a special interview to celebrate his anniversary, *FE Week* asked him about his expanded role, including the new £15 million fund to help failing colleges improve their education and training.**

Almost exactly a year to the day since he took the torch from Sir David Collins, Richard Atkins is full of enthusiasm and keen to talk about his work.

But as his remit expands, he's at risk of straying into other institutions' territories.

Take the new £15 million strategic college improvement fund, for example – shouldn't that have gone to the Education and Training Foundation, which is after all supposed to be responsible for boosting standards and quality in the sector?

Not according to the former Exeter College principal, who insists he does a "different job".

"Most people actually ask if we're duplicating the work of either Ofsted or the ESFA, rather than ETF," he says.

"I think what we do is intervene, or provide diagnostic assessments and early intervention, at a governance and leadership level, with a real focus on institutional success. Our understanding of governance, leadership and institutional sustainability is second to none."

He does believe the ETF is doing a good job, but won't be drawn on what else he thinks they could be doing.

"They're a non-governmental agency," he says, "which provides a wide range of support services to colleges, from teacher training to English and maths – which is great, but they don't do what we do."

What's more, he says he will "absolutely" work alongside them, and is happy to endorse their services.

"I have no doubt that if the ETF is offering the right thing, I will recommend it," he insists.

The SCIF is just one aspect of Atkins' expanded role, first announced by Justine Greening in July, which is designed to ensure he can support colleges before they hit crisis point.

Previously the FE commissioner intervened at failing colleges – those which had either been rated 'inadequate' by Ofsted or were in financial trouble – and overseeing the area review process, which ended in March.

"The thing that hit me when I first started the job is that there's something frustrating about only working with colleges that have already hit the bottom," he says.

This led to conversations "from very early on" with the education secretary's strategy team, about how to "work with colleges that are on the way to becoming 'inadequate' and prevent them from becoming 'inadequate'".

He explains that the team "consulted extensively" with a range of people across the sector, including the Education and Skills Funding Agency, Ofsted and the afore-mentioned ETF.

"I had a significant input into [the strategy team's] work, and what you see now are many of the suggestions that I made have turned into policy," he says.

He definitely "suggested" that his office needed money – although he claims he "didn't put an exact amount on it", as "the strategy unit did that".

The improvement fund, he says, while "not enormous" in terms of the overall DfE budget, is nonetheless "enough money to make a real difference".

"I've spoken to a number of colleges; if we made between £200,000 and £300,000 available in-year and focused it on key quality-improvement, they've all said to me that could make a real difference," he suggests.

The idea behind the fund, which is running in pilot form until July 2018, is to encourage peer-to-peer support – which Atkins wants colleges to see as a positive.

The scheme will see weaker colleges – those rated grade three or four overall or for their apprenticeship provision – work with a stronger college to develop and implement an improvement plan, and both colleges will be named on the application form.

Eligible costs aren't predetermined, and can include diagnosing a college's quality issues and developing a plan to tackle them, mentoring and other professional development activities for senior leaders, or the cost of staff time.

**"Most people ask if we're duplicating the work of either Ofsted or the ESFA, rather than ETF"**

He wants to learn from the pilot before deciding what will be funded during the main phase.

Between 10 and 15 colleges are expected to receive cash, with the rest of the money available in the first half of 2018. It is expected to run until March 2020, though it could be extended.

It aims to engage leaders from 'good' or 'outstanding' colleges, to use their expertise to support colleges that need to improve significantly in one of more areas, which could lead to an application to the fund.

Atkins and his team will only be involved at the beginning

and end of each plan, "to do a health check" and also "see what's effective and how we can spread the best practice".

While the commissioner will give his views on bids to the fund, he won't be involved in the final decision over who gets the cash – that will be made by a "group in the DfE".

Another new aspect of his expanded improvement toolbox is diagnostic assessments. These will see two members of his team spending a couple of days with colleges that "have the early symptoms of becoming unwell, but which haven't yet developed the full illness" – to prevent them from slipping further towards failing.

These visits will result in recommendations for improvement, but no published minister's letter.

Atkins says he's about to start the first of seven pilot assessments, but estimates that "up to a third of colleges" could benefit from one.

He's also setting up a college improvement board, which he hopes will meet for the first time after Christmas.

The plan is to bring all the different bodies involved in college standards, including the DfE, the ESFA, the Institute for Apprenticeships, Ofsted and the ETF, to develop a "strategic overview" for improvement.

While a part of the focus will be on failing colleges, and developing a coordinated approach from all the parties involved – "because if you're trying to turn around a failing college you do not want another government official arriving every day of the week" – he says he believes the board will discuss "all colleges".





He tells me that the sector is in a better financial position overall than it was before the area review process – thanks to the resulting mergers.

“We’ve absorbed some of the really difficult cases,” he says. “They’ve now merged with a stronger partner and they’re much less likely to be predicted to fail.”

He insists the process was a success overall, “but I never thought for a minute that every recommendation would go through”.

But what about those merger plans that have fallen through?

He points out that many of those are, or have been, going through an appraisal of structure and prospects to find new partners: there are 10 this year, and 10 more expected in 2018.

Atkins describes the process as a “much more meaningful way” for a college to find a partner than area reviews.

“It’s the difference between going to a speed-dating event and going to an introduction agency and having a courtship,” he jokes.

The difference is “the focus it brings on an individual college”, which “tends to lead to meaningful mergers”.

He says he’s “pleased with the trajectory” of colleges over the past year; fewer are in intervention, and fewer are rated ‘inadequate’, while two thirds are ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ – but there’s still more to be done.

“I’d like to see that two thirds grow to three quarters,” he says. “That’s my initial target, and long-term I’d like to get to where schools are, around 80 to 85 per cent.

“You’ve got to start – and we’re starting now.”

## Quick questions:

### How many miles have you racked up as FE commissioner?

I’ve travelled approximately 40,000 miles in my first year in the job, much of this during the area review period. In one week I visited Lancashire, London, Norfolk, Northamptonshire and Manchester, in that order! Fortunately my working life is more manageable now. I always travel by public transport, either by train or plane.

### Is there anything you wish you had known when you took the job?

How to manage myself without a PA, after 21 years of being supported by one! Recently, I’ve had an excellent new PA appointed, which helps a lot.

### How many colleges have you visited in the past year?

I estimate that I’ve visited 70 colleges in my first year, and in the same way that enthusiasts visit football stadia or

tube stations, I’m keen to visit many more this coming year. I find every visit fascinating, because every college is different.

### How many hours do you work in an average week?

I usually work an average of 45 to 48 hours over four days per week – which is less than when I was a principal! We had 16 days holiday in Canada in September, during the college enrolment period, as they’re too busy to respond to me then.

### Which do you prefer – being principal of an outstanding college or FE commissioner?

I loved being a college principal for 21 years, especially the final few years when my college was rated as ‘outstanding’, but it was the right time to go and I have no regrets at leaving. I didn’t expect to take on another major job, but the FE commissioner opportunity came up and I’m enjoying the work very much.



## EDITORIAL

## Big BAME focus - really?



The government went to the trouble of setting a target in 2015 to increase apprenticeship starts for ethnic minorities, but Justine Greening's claim of a "big focus" in the past two years simply does not stand up to scrutiny.

And it's worth considering what a 20-per-cent increase actually means in terms of actual figures.

The government told us that this week that it's only looking to increase the number of BAME apprenticeships to just under 12 per cent overall – from just over 10 per cent in 2015/16.

Would a simple shift in general demographics achieve that 20-per-cent increase by 2020 – without DfE doing anything proactively?

Despite a gap of more than a year from the commitment, at the end of 2015, to launching in February 2017, the Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network could help make a significant difference. But far more than 27 employers need to not only get involved, and begin to proactively recruit BAME apprentices.

So *FE Week* will be watching the work of the Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network closely.

And in the general context of promoting social mobility, we won't shy away from continuing to fact check ministerial claims.

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

**AELP CONFERENCE #AC2017 TWEETS:**

**Dan Lally** @D\_Lally

Gone 14:30 and I think that is the first mention of brexit #ac2017

**Laura-Jane Rawlings** @lrawlings

Great outcome for @YEUK2012 today at #AC2017 DfE officials agreed to sit down with our young members to hear views of y/p on gvt reforms

**SPES** @StaffsPES

A challenging & full agenda at AELP autumn conference #ac2017 from T levels to apps - common factor what drives social mobility

**Mike Smith** @mikejsmith6

Outrageous comment by Lucy Hunt from HEE re 1% charge made by NHS on providers to contract with them - where's the integrity in this? #AC2017

**Richard Alberg** @RichardAlberg

#AC2017 depressed by NHS presentation. Training is not a target to be achieved. It is an opportunity to upskill staff so they can improve.

## Less talk and more action demanded for BAMEs

**BILLY CAMDEN**  
@BILLYCAMDEN

**FROM FRONT** **EXCLUSIVE**

The education secretary has been accused of putting more talk than action into growing apprenticeships amongst ethnic minorities.

Justine Greening repeatedly told the education select committee that the Department for Education has had a "big focus" on encouraging "a higher proportion of BAME [black, Asian and minority ethnic] young people going into apprenticeships", during a recent session.

The current picture for BAME representation is bleak.

DfE apprenticeship starts figures do not include ethnicity with an age breakdown, so *FE Week* looked at the ESFA's national achievement rate tables and found that just eight per cent of England's young apprentices are BAME.

In the rest of FE, 23 per cent are minorities, who make up 18 per cent of the country's total population (see tables).

The DfE was unable to identify a single actual policy to create more BAME apprenticeships since 2015, when we asked what the minister meant by "big focus".

A spokesperson could only identify one target, set two years ago, to increase the proportion of BAME starts a fifth by 2020, and pointed to one employers' network with just 27 members that supposedly promotes diversity.

"Justine Greening has fallen into the age-old trap of simply reannouncing something that was thought of two years ago, and which there apparently has not been much progress on since," said the shadow skills minister Gordon Marsden, in reference to the 2020 target.

"Talk is cheap and delivery is difficult, but let's see some beef from this rather than rhetoric," he added.

The DfE claimed it is "making progress", but such efforts as it is making are proving slow: the proportion of all-age BAME apprenticeship starts increased by less than one percentage point in 2016/17 on 2015/16, according to provisional figures.

It drew attention to the Apprenticeship

Diversity Champions Network, launched nine months ago by former skills minister Robert Halfon, who now chairs the very committee which grilled Ms Greening.

However, *FE Week* understands the group only meets four times a year and has so far been used as a platform for employers to share best practice, rather than to produce solid policy proposals.

The network's 27 members pale into insignificance when compared to the 20,000 or so employers that are eligible to pay the apprenticeship levy, for instance.

According to the DfE, the group's members are "committed to encouraging other employers to promote diversity in apprenticeships and to championing apprenticeships in BAME communities".

Andy Forbes, a co-founder of the BAME Principals Group, who leads Conel College in London, told *FE Week* that "there appears to have been a lot more talk than action in this area so far".

"Last February, Mr Halfon launched the network, but we haven't heard anything about how this work is progressing," he said.

He said that his own organisation is "ready at any time" to help the education secretary "turn aspiration into action and get the 'big focus'

that is so urgently needed".

Mark Dawe, the boss of the AELP, has not been impressed by the government's attempts to hit its own target.

"We have to say that in terms of matching the rhetoric, the initiative has been a bit slow to get off the ground especially in terms of engaging providers with the employer links in areas with significant BAME populations," he said.

"It's another example of the social mobility agenda, including tackling the disability employment gap, where we would hope to see more action."

In its 2015 'English apprenticeships: Our 2020 vision' document, the DfE said it would ensure its youth-employment campaign included "targeted material for BAME audiences", and that it would work with local enterprise partnerships to encourage employers to diversify their workforce with BAME apprentices.

The DfE said its relatively recent 'Get in go far' campaign, which "featured apprentice role models from diverse backgrounds", was one measure that helped.

It is also currently working with local partners to develop approaches to increase representation in apprenticeships at a local level, the spokesperson claimed

### Young people

### BAME %

England (ONS census 2011) 16 - 19 year-olds	18.2%
Education and Training 15/16 NARTS 16-18	22.6%
Apprenticeships 15/16 NARTs 16-18	8.0%

### All ages

### BAME %

England (ONS census 2011) 16 - 19 year-olds	14.6%
Education and Training 15/16 NARTS 16-18	26.8%
Apprenticeships 15/16 NARTs 16-18	10.9%





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College**



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**Salary c£70k-£85k plus negotiable benefits**

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The successful candidate will be passionate about teaching, learning, assessment and the student experience with the necessary skills and creativity to lead the innovative development of the curriculum to deliver outstanding student outcomes. The post holder will be results driven with the leadership and management experience to influence internal and external stakeholders and to motivate and inspire staff.

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Closing date: Thursday 23rd November at midnight

Assessment Centre: 11th and 12th December 2017

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[www.protocol.co.uk/myerscough](http://www.protocol.co.uk/myerscough)

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Our Assistant Director will support staff across the college to deliver the best contemporary teaching, learning and assessment practices whilst securing the best outcomes for our students.

We have retained FE Associates to assist us with these important appointments.

For further information and a candidate pack access our microsite:  
<https://cityofbristolleadership.fea.co.uk>. Early confidential discussions are encouraged. Please contact [Samantha.Bunn@fea.co.uk](mailto:Samantha.Bunn@fea.co.uk) or call [01454 617707](tel:01454 617707).

**Closing date for both roles:**  
Friday 24th November 2017 at noon

**Interview Dates:**  
Vice Principal: Monday 4th and Tuesday 5th December 2017  
Assistant Director: Monday 11th December 2017







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The College is seeking to appoint a leader who has energy, drive and enthusiasm to review, develop and continuously improve the outcomes for students through the enhancement of teaching, learning, assessment and effective performance management.

The post holder will act as the lead during Ofsted Inspection and will deputise for the Principal in her absence. They will have significant influence over the curriculum and leadership of the College and undertake project work relevant to the role.

This post will be of interest to senior leaders from Sixth Form Colleges, Schools/Academies or Further Education Colleges who are committed to supporting students to maximise their full potential. The successful applicant will be joining the College at a very exciting time as it moves from being a standalone Sixth Form College to an academy within the East Norfolk Multi Academy Trust.

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**The assessment process will be held on 30 November 2017 & 1 December 2017.**

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- Expert knowledge of teaching, learning and assessment
- Successful experience of leading, performance managing and empowering and developing staff in a Sixth Form College, High School or FE College
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# 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

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

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- 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

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- 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 26th November 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.





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Your passion for working with learners, delivering quality and innovation, paired with a commitment to building and supporting the professional development of tutors and assessors is essential.

Key responsibilities:

- Lead on the services observation of teaching and learning policy, to ensure that all teaching staff are supported and able to develop further
- Support the senior management team to drive forward quality improvement strategies and achieve continuous improvement in key performance indicators across the service
- Coordinate the production/consultation and moderation process of the annual self-assessment report and produce the annual quality improvement plan
- Carry out a proportion of observations of teaching, learning and assessment; contribute to tutors' development plans.

Your skills:

- Ability to coordinate strategically, identify opportunities for development of the service and promote innovation in delivery
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills, including the ability to write accurate reports in plain English and present complex information easily in an understandable form, ability to be able to influence a wide range of stakeholders
- Ability to maintain accurate records and manage outcomes, organising self and others to ensure that defined outcomes and goals are delivered effectively
- Ability to cope with continuous and complex changes, to be flexible, with a 'can do' attitude.

Essential for the Role:

- Relevant vocational or professional subject specialist qualifications
- Recognised teaching qualification, Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong
- Learning Sector (DTTLs) PGCE or equivalent
- Although an IT qualification is not essential it is expected that you are able to use office software packages, management information systems effectively and are competent with Excel.

There is a requirement to pass an enhanced DBS check, which will be paid for by the service.

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**Closing Date: 17th November 2017**

**Interview Date: w/c 20th November 2017**

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# Director of Learner Services

**Salary:** Competitive



Halesowen College is a very successful tertiary further education college located in Dudley in the Black Country. We are seeking to recruit a candidate who shares the College's values and commitment to learners and can lead the learning support functions to be outstanding.

The College's aim is to recognise the individual needs of learners and put in place support and direction through the delivery of an inclusive portfolio of provision from entry level to higher education.

You will be joining a successful College Leadership Team and have specific senior responsibility for a range of learner service and support departments including the

line management and functional activities of: Learning Support (EHCPs); IAG; Careers; College Counsellors; School Liaison; Library and Learning Centres. The role includes lead responsibility for safeguarding and the College's approach to students' Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare (PDBW).

**Closing Date:** Monday 27 November 2017 at 1400 hours

**Interview Dates:** Thursday 14 and Friday 15 December 2017

**To apply,** please visit: <https://jobs.halesowen.ac.uk/>





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## Job Vacancy: CEO/Principal

The Principal of Kendal College, Graham Wilkinson, who has led the College since 2001, has announced his retirement in May 2018.

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**Salary:** Competitive

Further information and application form can be downloaded from the College website:  
[www.kendal.ac.uk/careers](http://www.kendal.ac.uk/careers)

**Closing date:** Monday 13th November

**Interview days:** 12th and 13th December



**Kendal College, Milnthorpe Rd, Kendal LA9 5AY, UK**

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## DEPUTY PRINCIPAL - CURRICULUM

Salary package c£80,000 plus benefits

Sparsholt College is in an exciting phase having merged with the former Tertiary College in Andover in 2007 to build a diverse, innovative and successful College and University Centre of circa £29 million turnover. Sparsholt College has maintained its reputation as one of the leading land based FE/HE colleges in the country and has doubled the student enrolment at Andover College in 10 years through an excellent GFE and Sixth Form provision with strong community and local authority support.

With the impending retirement of our current Deputy Principal, in July 2018, the College is seeking to recruit a high calibre individual to lead the Heads of Faculty and Dean of HE in their responsibilities for the delivery and quality of the curriculum across both campuses and the safeguarding of the learning community.

The position offers a very significant opportunity to join a dynamic leadership team and to develop your senior career pathway within the FE College sector in a high quality and supportive environment.

An application pack can be downloaded from [www.sparsholt.ac.uk/college/jobs](http://www.sparsholt.ac.uk/college/jobs) or alternatively contact [HR@sparsholt.ac.uk](mailto:HR@sparsholt.ac.uk) or the recruitment line: 01962 797438

**Closing date for application: 13 November 2017**

**Interview dates: 7 & 8 December 2017**

Sparsholt College Hampshire, Sparsholt, Winchester, SO21 2NF

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We are committed to equal opportunities for all, irrespective of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, marital status, religion or sexuality. The college is registered with the Disclosure and Barring Service and successful applicants will be required to apply for a disclosure

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- Self-generate new business, using a variety of methods, including, networking and social media
- Identify new business opportunities, contributing to the growth and range of the apprenticeship programmes delivered
- Ensure that Employers understand and appreciate the benefit and value of Apprenticeships and that they are prepared to make the necessary financial contributions, in line with government and company requirements
- Establish, maintain and develop relationships with employers, to identify their training requirements, including the preparation of training needs analysis
- Provide regular progress and identify any problems in programme delivery so that



they can be resolved immediately

- Prepare progress and development reports to senior management team on a monthly basis.

## PERSON SPECIFICATION

- Well-developed networking and inter personal skills, with the ability to act as an ambassador for the company
- An insight into current marketing techniques
- Excellent knowledge and links in the local area to quickly generate opportunities
- A proven ability to generate recruitment of employers and learners
- A Knowledge of current issues affecting the publicly funded training sector and strong research skills to ensure that knowledge and understanding are maintained
- Understanding of a wide range of frameworks and standards

**Closing Date: 10th November 2017**

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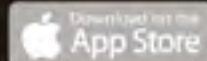
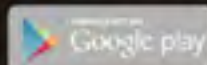
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## EXPERTS



# ANDY WILSON

CEO, Capital City College Group

## Big colleges can be bold and beautiful

Andy Wilson, who heads up one of the largest college groups in the country, explains why size does matter

Large college groups are too easily dismissed as money-saving exercises, but this attitude overlooks the other benefits of scale.

The College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London is the latest member of the Capital City College Group (CCCG), joining City and Islington College, Westminster Kingsway College and our training division, Capital City College Training, to form one of the largest training organisations in the country. We will engage 37,000 students each year, employ 1,700 staff and spend an annual budget approaching £110 million, as big as many universities.

It is true that we will review costs and invest in systems to enable smarter working, which in turn will free resources to be focused on teaching, learning and support for students and professional development for staff. However, CCCG's size provides many more opportunities.

A large college group can provide the best education and training across the widest range of specialisms with simple signposting for those accessing these services. All three colleges have specialisms and a national profile amongst employers, and at least one of our colleges provides programmes to at least level three in every area except agriculture and horticulture.

Combined with this breadth of opportunity for students, we will maintain the individual identity of each college and thus remain true to the local communities we serve. While the administrative processes will be centralised and the learner record will remain with CCCG, the student experience – including websites and marketing – is designed around the college they're enrolled at.

Our apprenticeship provision will be centralised in Capital City College Training – the fourth delivery arm of the group, with employers as its key clients. Its staff and systems will be designed to provide a simple service to businesses and a single gateway to the widest range of apprenticeships of any provider in London.

The group's colleges will maintain a considerable level of autonomy: college boards will continue to oversee the strategic plan, quality assurance and student satisfaction, much the same as a typical college. However the group board, which will oversee most of the finances, holds the ultimate accountability. The group also provides a safe, conducive

environment for staff to share their experiences and learn from an extended network without the pressures of competition. We will invest at least £500,000 per year in a development and innovation unit to support colleagues in developing professional practice and innovating their curriculum delivery.

Of course CCCG's size never provides a guarantee against failure, but we can marshal resources to provide extra support to areas requiring improvement. Again, the safe environment allows us to exchange data and other intelligence to identify where support is required and how this can be directed to aid improvement strategies.

We welcome discussions with Ofsted over inspection arrangements, but our structure allows much of the present model of inspecting individual colleges can be maintained.

CCCG has no plans to bring in more members, though we are developing proposals for a group institute of technology specialising in life sciences, to meet the needs of the London employment market. This is an exciting development in partnership with Middlesex University, and is already attracting substantial employer interest.

“**The group's colleges will maintain a considerable level of autonomy**”

We are committed to leading and supporting other partnerships that enable us to improve and extend services for our students and employers. Over the coming years we will want to explore how we develop a wider suite of professional training. We will always have a traditional FE ethic at our heart, but we want to be trusted by businesses to outsource all their training and workforce development.

Not every college will want or be able to be part of a group. However, we believe Capital City College Group, its partner colleges and training provider will be crucial to meeting the demands for a skilled and productive indigenous workforce, something ever more crucial to post-Brexit London.



# SAFARAZ ALI

Chair, BAME Apprenticeship Alliance

## The DfE's blanket BAME strategy is cloth-eared

The government's strategy to increase BAME participation in further and higher education ignores important differences between ethnic groups, argues Safaraz Ali

It is critical for all of us in the post-16 education sector to take action to widen BAME participation in apprenticeships across England, but it is only by recognising missed opportunities that we can move forward.

And while I'm very positive overall about the education secretary's attempts to increase the proportion of BAME young people in apprenticeships, there's much more to be done.

The government's BME 2020 vision set ambitious targets: to increase the proportion of apprenticeships taken up by those from BAME backgrounds by 20 per cent, and to increase those attending university by the same extent.

This blanket approach is flawed by design. By lumping all the non-white ethnicities together under one target, we miss the differences in existing patterns and future needs for specific groups.

The proportion of BAME apprentices varies around the country, but low apprenticeship take-up is more significant among British Asians than in other BAME communities, where take-up is nearer the representative population.

While the proportion of black/African/Caribbean/black British people participating in apprenticeships (3.4 per cent) is similar to the latest census (3.5 per cent), British Asians are significantly under-represented (4.2 per cent compared with 7.8 per cent). So rather than wholesale targets, government support needs focus.

We also need to appreciate that BAME population growth is skewed towards younger people. In Birmingham, more than one in three (36.5 per cent) British Asians and a similar proportion of black people (31 per cent) are under 15, compared with fewer than one in five white British (18.5 per cent). With more children and fewer elderly people, the BAME population is growing faster than the population as a whole. It means that people from a BAME background need this kind of training more than the overall population.

Each region of the country is different, and a targeted approach should account for these regional differences in ethnicity and population age, setting clear goals at a local. This could only be achieved by a collaborative approach between government, local and

combined authorities and groups representing employers, colleges and training providers.

In terms of university growth targets, we are already on the other side of the coin, as disproportionately many more British Asians and black students go to university than those of white British origin. The government's blanket approach here is therefore not only unnecessary, but could actually be perceived as damaging the apprenticeship agenda.

“**How do we actively engage and change the mindset within BAME communities**”

If nothing is done to address this imbalance, British Asians will continue down the university route with very little thought towards the alternative, vocational pathway. Apprenticeships are still seen by many with an element of stigma, or as a second choice rather a career option.

We all realise there is a lot of work that needs doing, so roughly 18 months ago we launched the Asian Apprenticeship Awards, for which we have just held our second ceremony in Birmingham. This has only transpired with the support of a cross-section of organisations and employers, whose focus is on something practical that will make a positive difference.

In addition to our work with the Asian Apprenticeship Awards, we formed the BAME Apprenticeship Alliance, with the backing and support of prominent training providers and employers, to encourage peer working and further support and promote the apprenticeship diversity agenda.

The question that needs to be asked is this: how do we actively engage and change the mindset within BAME communities to ensure we have a skilled diverse workforce for future economic growth and to ensure a fully integrated society?

I believe this change in mindset needs a proactive approach that engages with the community, using positive role models and creates a buzz around apprenticeships, which will lead to more awareness and acceptance within the community itself.



## EXPERTS

Early reports into the efficacy of work placements suggest that they'll be tough to get right, writes Bill Esmond

The Sainsbury Review's proposals for technical education, enthusiastically welcomed by government, focus on high-quality work placements as part of every course. The process is limbering up slowly, but research studies, modelling exercises and evaluations commissioned by government are yet to report on how it might work.

There are, however, early indicators from a research report funded by the Gatsby Foundation published last week, exploring models currently used for work-based learning on study programmes. The study was commissioned to find models for securing access to workplace learning, which may end up consuming quite a slice of the additional £500 million budget. After all, a world short on job opportunities for young people is also a world short on work placement opportunities.

Alongside the differences in arranging placements, from well-established schemes with plenty of employer involvement to learners making their own ad-hoc arrangements, other important issues for FE colleges emerged.

#### Length does not equal quality

Although the length of a placement is central to Sainsbury's proposals, and much study programme work-based learning is strikingly brief, time spent in the workplace does not directly determine what kind of learning programme takes place. College staff will know that learners on early childhood or health and social care programmes may already be required to spend months in workplaces.



## PROF BILL ESMOND

Associate professor of learning and employment, University of Derby

# Work-based learning is the next big battle

But although they learnt about behavioural expectations in these settings, those in the study did not have the same kind of access to specialist, advanced knowledge as those on what will be other future technical routes. If technical education is going to offer advanced skills unavailable in college, workplace learning needs to identify what learning opportunities will be available there.

#### Workplace learning is not automatic

Learning is not an automatic result of depositing a learner in the workplace. The best examples are built around planned programmes, with access to expertise and learning opportunities that enable students to learn identified skills. These were the product of highly organised liaison between colleges and work organisations, but they also depended on a proactive approach by employers committed to offering the right opportunities.

By contrast, some "work-based learning" involved no real experience in workplace settings; this was a characteristic of creative and media courses we studied, all of which made use of "employer projects" where students worked towards solving a problem set by an employer but colleges provided the technical skills in studio settings. These appeared to better develop technical skills than some work-based programmes, as well as enhancing learners' confidence and softer skills.

#### College-workplace integration is essential

The more tutors are directly involved in these processes, the better. In the best-organised examples, staff used what learners had discovered in the workplace to advance their college-based studies. In other areas, work-based learning was seen more as meeting a funding requirement. One programme manager compared his own projects to the token activity

at his daughter's school that "gets her out of their hair for a week".

In the same way, workplace learning is often carried out in ignorance of college programmes; one workplace trainer eloquently described what she taught but had very little idea how it related to any course requirements. "They get a qualification at the end of it, I think," she said. It seems unlikely that technical education will provide the expected benefits without greater integration between workplaces and colleges.

“Some 'work-based learning' involved no real experience in the workplace

Technical education will require much more proactive involvement from staff, rather than simply negotiating satisfactory placements. Of course, this may delay implementation, or restrict technical education to a narrower field than originally envisaged.

A broader question for policymakers is whether the wider institutions exist to support an integrated system on the lines of the UK's European competitors. While German dual training is sustained by employers' associations, small businesses, trade unions and the state, the English system remains largely voluntarist despite the levy, benefitting those most able to invest individually in training. But that's another story.

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Supporting Apprenticeship Delivery





## CAMPUS ROUND-UP *with Samantha King*



Students share their stories

## Raising awareness of autism

Students diagnosed with autism-spectrum disorder have shared their experiences of living with the condition at Rochdale's regional autism conference.

Students from Hopwood Hall College gave a talk to parents, carers and educational professionals about their day-to-day lives and how ASD affects them.

One 18-year-old level two art and design student, Blaine Bennett, showed delegates some artwork he had created that has been inspired by his experiences, while a play written by the students about sensory overload and the Q&A session that followed helped

guests understand their experiences further.

"The students were absolutely fantastic. There wasn't a dry eye in the house," said Julie Dalton, the autism lead at Rochdale council's additional needs service. "It was brilliant for parents to see such positivity and that there can be light at the end of what must be a dark tunnel at times."

The conference also featured keynote speakers including Ros Blackburn, a 48-year-old who lectures internationally on her experience of living with severe autism, and Rita Jordan, an emeritus professor in autism studies at the University of Birmingham.

## Sunderland College is on the ball

Sunderland College has welcomed its first ever crop of international students onto its Football Development Centre course.

Andreas Kokoska from Spain, Dimitri Limbo from the Philippines and Mohab Elmarakbi from Egypt are the first international students to join the programme, which combines practical football training with academic study.

The trio have travelled from their home countries to pursue the qualification, which also incorporates participation in regional, national and international competitions as part of the course criteria.

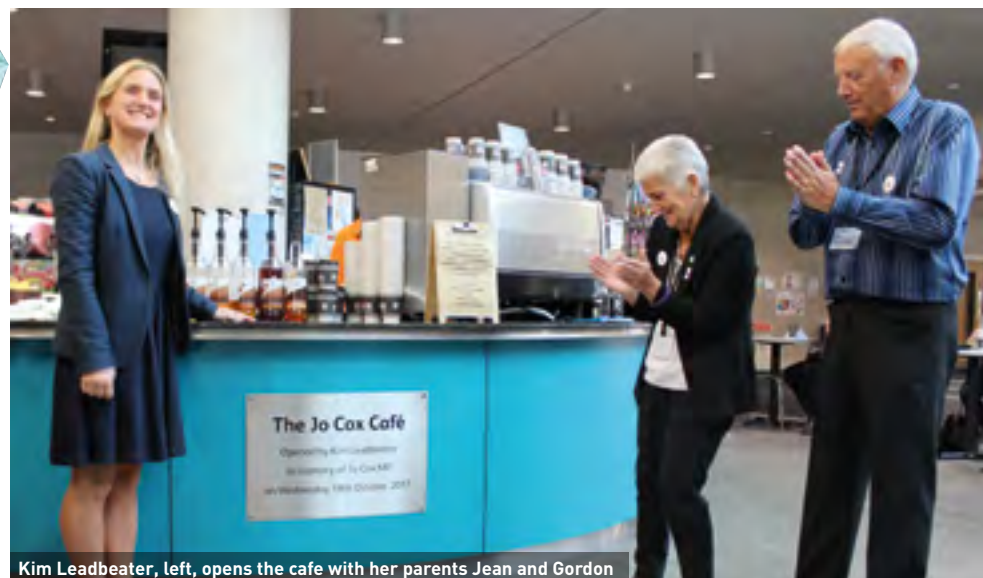
"I chose Sunderland College because it allows me to study and play at the same time," said nineteen-year-old goalkeeper Andreas. "It is a big change from home but I've been welcomed by everyone, although I'm still trying to understand the accent."

"We're thrilled to welcome our first international players to the centre," added John Rushworth, the faculty director for sport and health and wellbeing at the college. "The fact we have students travelling thousands of miles to be part of the elite football development centre illustrates how well-thought of the programme is on a global scale."



Dimitri Limbo, Andreas Kokoska and Mohab Elmarakbi

## Bradford café named in memory of Jo Cox



Kim Leadbeater, left, opens the café with her parents Jean and Gordon

The sister and parents of the murdered MP Jo Cox have opened a café named in her honour at Bradford College.

The idea to name the café in memory of the former Labour MP for Batley and Spen came from some of the college's social work students, who have just launched a new anti-hate crime campaign with Active Citizen Bradford.

Ms Cox's sister, Kim Leadbeater, was a sports lecturer at Bradford College for 11 years, and officially cut the ribbon for the new site.

"I want people to come to the café but not sit and be sad about what happened. I want

them to come here and create something positive because that's exactly what my sister would have wanted," she said. "Talk about how they're going to make a difference in the world. That is what I would love to happen in the Jo Cox café."

A film was shown at the launch urging people to stand up to hate crime, featuring key figures from the local area, including Naz Shah, the Labour MP for Bradford West.

"Renaming this café will be a permanent reminder that things aren't always right in the world but if we club together there are things we can do about it," said Andy Welsh, CEO of the Bradford College Group.



The sensory room

## Special award for special needs

Worcestershire college has been recognised by the National Association of Special Educational Needs for its SEND provision.

Heart of Worcestershire College was acknowledged for its "excellent practice in further education" at the Nasen SEND awards 2017 during a ceremony hosted at the Museum of London in October, with Derby College and Chichester College also shortlisted in the category.

The college was recognised for its sensory room, which has beanbags, bubble lamps and even a projection of a dog, as well as a mock-up flat used to help learners develop the skills they will need to live independently.

The awards celebrate individuals and organisations making a difference in the lives of children and young people with SEND. Other categories include "inspirational teacher" and "exceptional parental engagement", and HoW was the only FE institution to take home an award.

"This is a great reflection on all the staff and the hard work they put in every day to ensure our learners get the best quality experience," said Claire Heywood, the college's assistant principal for inclusive and employer learning. "Most of all though, it's a brilliant reflection of all the talented, committed and enthusiastic supported learners we have here."



CAMPUS ROUND-UP *with Samantha King*FEATURED  
CAMPUS  
ROUND-UP**Animal challenges are anything but cute or cuddly**

Animal management students have introduced local young carers, their college principal and the MP for the Forest of Dean to a series of critter-eating and handling tests, reports Samantha King.

The I'm A Celebrity... style event at Hartpury College was arranged to raise awareness of Gloucestershire's young carers, and challenged them to step out of their comfort zone with four separate experiences: an eating task, an animal handling task, one in which animals were handled blindfolded, and a treasure hunt.

The eating task involved milkshakes made of tripe, a pizza topped with haggis, mealworms and crickets, and a liver and kidney kebab all made by the college's catering students. If anything, the handling tasks were worse, featuring tarantulas, scorpions and a blue-tongued skink.

Three teams competed in the event: two made up of carers – one of which had college principal Russell Marchant in tow – with the third team comprising members of local businesses.

The event was the brainchild of the head of department for animal management, Grace Watkins, who hopes to make it an annual occasion to raise funds for young carers.

"We had a variety of delights that they had to eat, and for bonus points they could



Gearing up for critter pizza and tripe milkshakes



MP Mark Harper gets hands on

eat extra critters including locusts," she said. "They all gave it a go, and we did have somebody who vomited."

"People did start to wonder how dark my mind was when I was thinking up the challenges. It was a gruesome event, but once I get the bit between my teeth I tend to get a bit carried away. We just ran with the idea, we haven't done anything like this before."

The MP for the Forest of Dean, Mark Harper, ended up grappling with a snake and a scorpion after he was

invited by Watkins to "pop down" and see what was going on.

"It was a lucky strike really, because he was in doing a talk to our sports department. He was ever so obliging and came down and handled lots of animals, including a scorpion. He was really up for it," she said.

As well as stretching the limits of its participants, the event helped animal management and animal science students develop their people skills, specifically

on how to judge whether an animal is safe in the hands of a nervous participant.

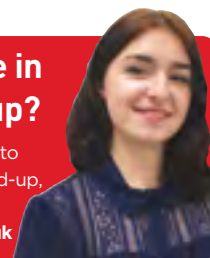
"Students assessed the approach and the attitude of the participant and put them at ease. They had to make sure that when they handed an animal over, that person wouldn't then let go," she said.



Principal Russell suddenly regrets his career choices

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

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

**Sarah Temperton**

Chief executive, NLT Training Services

Start date August 2017

**Previous job**

Head of training at the East Midlands Chamber

**Interesting fact**

Sarah likes to keep fit and practices hot pod yoga as well as zumba and HIIT in the local gym.

**Chantelle Astley**

Farm manager, Askham Bryan College

Start date October 2017

**Previous job**

Agricultural lecturer at Askham Bryan College

**Interesting fact**

Chantelle's interest in farming was triggered at the age of eight when she began helping a neighbour milk cows.

**Trudy Harrison**

Co-chair, the Apprenticeship Delivery Board

Start date October 2017

**Previous job**

Conservative MP for Copeland (ongoing)

**Interesting fact**

Trudy's voluntary roles as a parish councillor and school governor influenced her interest in politics.

**Christy Johnson**

Vice-principal, Plymouth College of Art

Start date August 2017

**Previous job**

Professor and chair of the art department at Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle

**Interesting fact**

Christy was born in California, and has lived and worked in London, Seattle and Los Angeles.

**Alicia Bruce**

Chief finance officer, Moulton College

Start date October 2017

**Previous job**

Executive director of finance at Northampton Partnership Homes Ltd

**Interesting fact**

Alicia sings with a Northamptonshire community choir called Elation Community Voices.

**Movers & Shakers**

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



# FE Week

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### FE Week Sudoku challenge

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

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

Difficulty:  
**EASY**

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

Difficulty:  
**MEDIUM**

Solutions:  
Next edition

### Last Week's solutions

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

Difficulty:  
**EASY**

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

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@feweeak.co.uk](mailto:news@feweeak.co.uk).  
Last Edition's winner: John Wiles, Priory Training