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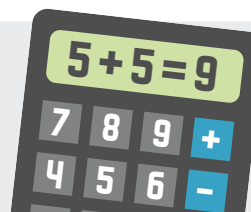
MILTON: UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

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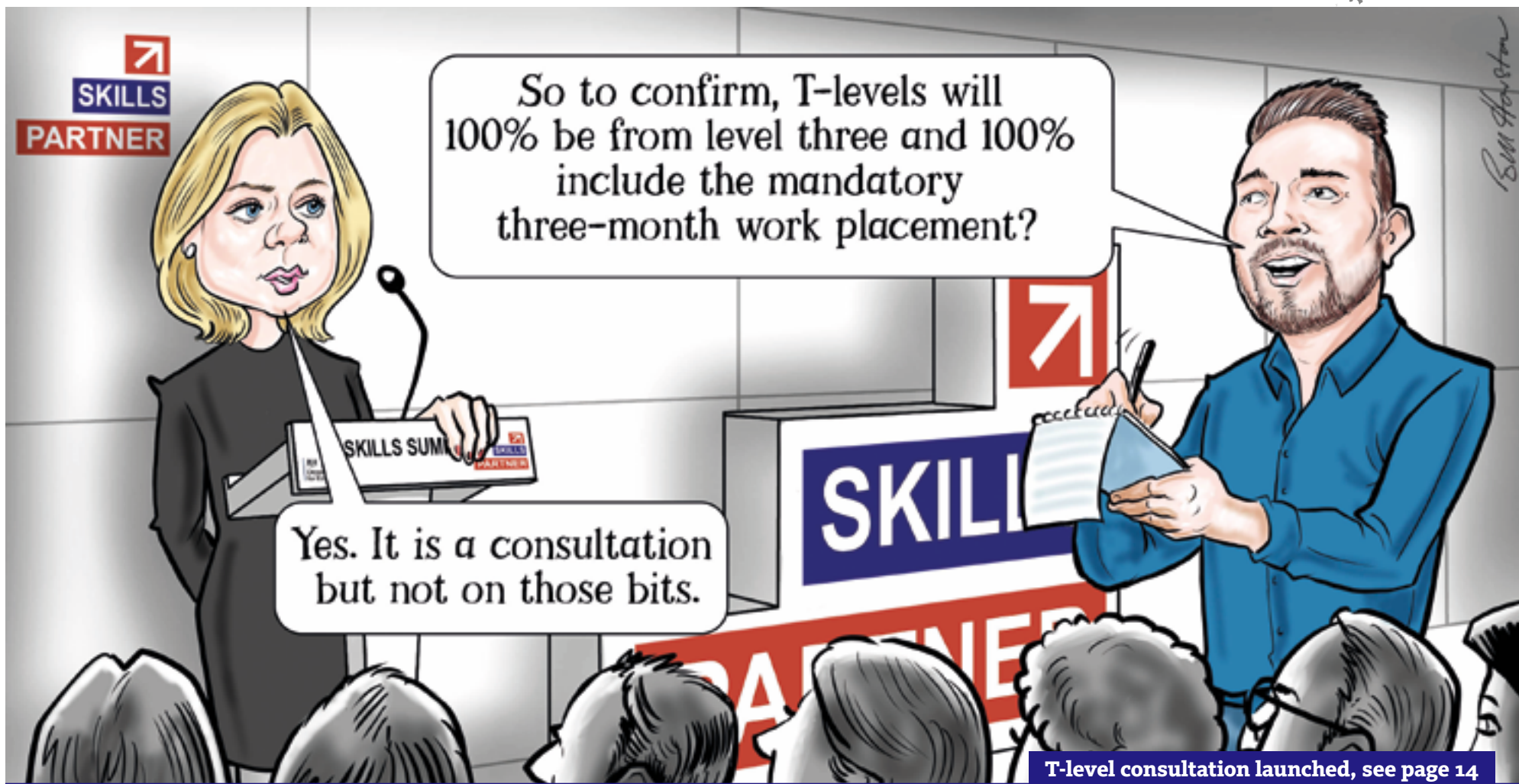
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COLLEGES BOUNCE BACK

- > Seven colleges improve Ofsted grades, but too late for the chief inspector's report
- > Proportion at 'good' or 'outstanding' hits highest level for two years at 72%

Exclusive **BILLY CAMDEN** @BILLYCAMDEN

See full investigation on page 3

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NEWS

Ofsted upturn for colleges, but it's too late for chief inspector's annual report

BILLY CAMDEN
@BILLYCAMDEN

England's colleges are showing signs of turning a significant corner in their Ofsted performance.

Seven have managed to dig themselves out of failing grades in the early part 2017/18 – where none managed the same feat during that period last year.

Frustratingly however, this success will not be recognised in the education watchdog's imminent annual report, which will only count inspections published up to the end of 2016/17, and which is expected to describe a huge decline in standards.

Just 69 per cent of colleges were rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by August 31, FE Week analysis revealed.

This represented a fall for the third year running for schools and colleges in the measure Ofsted effectively considers its minimum acceptable standard.

Now, though, FE Week's analysis of the 12 full college inspections that have been published between September and November shows that eight have improved their grades: seven increased from 'requires improvement' to 'good', and one has moved from 'good' to 'outstanding'.

Three more declined – two moving from 'good' to 'requires improvement' – while one moved from 'requires improvement' to 'inadequate'.

This represents a massive upswing in college performance; of the nine colleges that had full inspections published in the same period in 2016/17, six saw their grades go down and three stayed the same.

In other words, not a single one improved.

If Ofsted were to consider the full inspections published so far during this academic year in its annual report, the proportion of colleges rated 'good' or 'outstanding' would sit at 72 per cent, higher than it was even in the 2015/16 annual report (71 per cent).

A spokesperson for the inspectorate said nothing had changed in terms of its inspection arrangements, and said it couldn't draw any meaningful conclusions for why the improvement had been so substantial.

Two of the colleges that went from a grade three to a two – City of Liverpool and Richmond-Upon-Thames – have been subject to interventions from the FE commissioner since their previous inspections, which is likely to be one reason for better performance.

The five other colleges – North Hertfordshire, Wirral Metropolitan, Grantham, Burton and South Derbyshire, and Suffolk New College – however, have had no obvious support or intervention from the government.

David Russell, the chief executive of the Education and Training Foundation, said the noticeable surge in colleges' Ofsted grades in recent months was "great news".

He told FE Week there was a "large number of complex factors" which interact to create national patterns in Ofsted grading, but it seems "implausible" that the recent improvements are entirely unconnected to the "high-quality programmes" his organisation has been running over the last four years, such as CPD training.

This shock upturn in performance is welcome news after last month's analysis showed that colleges are lagging considerably behind sixth-form colleges and independent learning providers.

Of these, 81 per cent were rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by August 31, a massive 12 percentage points ahead of colleges' 69 per cent.

The slump had continued an annual trend which has seen the number of high-achieving colleges fall by 10 per cent in just three years, after a high of 79 per cent in 2014.

The findings backed up chief inspector Amanda Spielman's comments to the education select committee in October, when she admitted that colleges "have the biggest funding challenge" and said Ofsted had seen "disappointing outcomes" in FE.

Colleges are dealing with "an enormous amount of work" and "a big challenge" as they face "reforms in practically all areas", she told MPs.

Ofsted confirmed FE Week's findings this week in an official statistical release for FE and skills inspections and outcomes.

It pointed out that during 2016/17, there



Amanda Spielman

were twice as many colleges that declined to 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' (18) than improved to 'good' or 'outstanding' (nine).

The proportion of colleges with a grade two or one declined by two percentage points, from 71 per cent in August 2016, to 69 per cent in August 2017.

This decline would have been greater if the colleges that officially closed as a result of a merger had been included.

GFE Colleges as at 31 August 2017

Grade	Number	Percentage	Total	Overall %
Grade 1	25	13%	130	69%
Grade 2	105	56%		
Grade 3	54	29%	58	31%
Grade 4	4	2%		
Total colleges	188			

GFE Colleges as at 30 November 2017

Grade	Number	Percentage	Total	Overall %
Grade 1	26	14%	135	72%
Grade 2	109	58%		
Grade 3	48	26%	53	28%
Grade 4	5	3%		
Total colleges	188			

Full college inspections published from September to November 2017/18

College name	First day of inspection	Date published	Overall effectiveness	Previous overall effectiveness	"Improved/declined/stayed the same"
Suffolk New College	17/10/2017	30/11/2017	2	3	Improved
North Hertfordshire College	31/10/2017	23-Nov-17	2	3	Improved
The City of Liverpool College	02/10/2017	21-Nov-17	2	3	Improved
Richmond-upon-Thames College	10/10/2017	17-Nov-17	2	3	Improved
Redcar & Cleveland College	10/10/2017	16-Nov-17	4	3	Declined
Bradford College	10/10/2017	14-Nov-17	3	2	Declined
Fareham College	03/10/2017	10-Nov-17	1	2	Improved
Wirral Metropolitan College	03/10/2017	7 Nov 2017	2	3	Improved
Grantham College	19/09/2017	31-Oct-17	2	3	Improved
Stratford-upon-Avon College	19/09/2017	30-Oct-17	3	2	Declined
Halesowen College	18/09/2017	26-Oct-17	2	2	Stayed the Same
Burton and South Derbyshire College	26/09/2017	20-Oct-17	2	3	Improved

NEWS

IfA red tape leaves 13 standards in limbo

BILLY CAMDEN
@BILLYCAMDEN

Thirteen separate apprenticeship standards with approved assessment plans have been left in limbo for two or more months because their costs still haven't been agreed, FE Week can reveal.

It is understood that the holdup is the result of various new lengthy and complicated processes which came into force when the Institute for Apprenticeships introduced a funding board in April, which tries to secure value for money.

These processes have caused "stalling in decision making", according to trailblazer groups who have developed the 13 standards, who admit they are "astonished" at the lack of urgency officials are displaying in approving costs.

"We are frustrated," said Colin Huffen, the head of education at the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity, who has been leading on the development of the 'leisure duty manager' standard.

The problem, he said, comes from "complicated, unstandardized, lengthy processes for rate approval that seem to change regularly without notice to trailblazer groups", and the "ability of the IfA to deal with anything quickly, outside of the standard approvals cycle".

He added that his group are "astonished at the proposed time for approval" of a new standard, which now has a best-case scenario of 12 months.

"This does not meet their needs in a fast paced commercial world," he said.

Delays over costs are a new obstacle in approving standards; before the IfA was put in place, the funding band was allocated at the time of signing off the assessment plan.

But now there are various processes which can put cost approval on hold (see chart), and the IfA ultimately leaves final responsibility to

the apprenticeships and skills minister.

The effects of this longwinded process are already being felt.

There are 124 employers with 902 apprentices ready to start their MBA apprenticeships, expecting teaching to get underway in January, according to the Chartered Management Institute.

Even though the standard was approved in August, and had an official launch last month, the fee scale will not be finalised until the end of January, meaning it cannot get underway beforehand.

The trailblazer group involved wants the funding band set at £27,000, but that is contested by the IfA.

"Processes have been changing, which has not been helpful and has created huge frustration among the employers ever since the standard was approved," said Petra Wilton, director of strategy at the CMI, which is supporting the trailblazer group responsible for developing the senior leader master's degree apprenticeship.

"Organising apprenticeships is quite a big personal commitment for individuals to potentially rearrange lifestyles to do them. They've taken the decision and got themselves excited for this and now there is personal frustration."

Mr Huffen said his trailblazer group was also in dispute with the IfA over the funding band for the 'leisure duty manager' standard. It was initially proposed to cost £3,500 but his group wants the price set at £5,000.

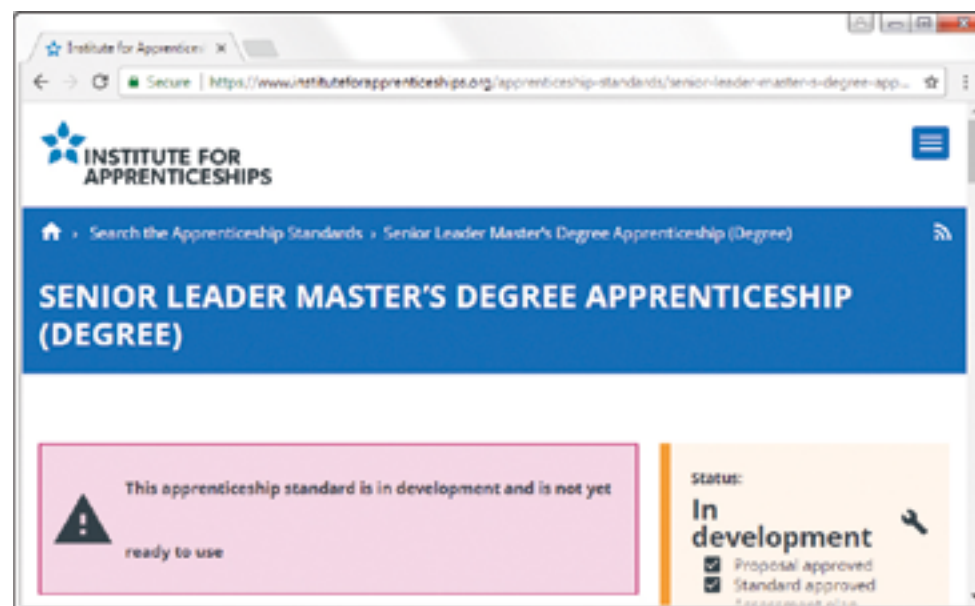
"The delay in approval starts a chain of delays for training providers and end-point assessment organisations in developing programmes and resources to deliver and assess the standard," he said, pointing out that the holdup also delays the recruitment of apprentices for employers.

A spokesperson for the IfA explained that the institute took the "conscious decision" to publish assessment plans for standards in development "as soon as we can – not to wait until the remaining elements of the standard are also approved".

He said that while this does mean there can be a "gap" between the assessment plan's publication and the standard being approved for delivery, trainers and assessment providers "benefit from having greater time to prepare accordingly".

"We listen closely to feedback from trailblazer groups and all those involved in apprenticeships, and are working hard with them to improve the process," he added.

The Department for Education would not provide any separate comment.



The 13 standards left in limbo

Sector	Apprenticeship Standard	Level	Standard reference number	Date AP Published
Conveyancing and probate	Probate technician	4	ST0102	21/08/2017
Sport & physical activity	Leisure duty manager	3	ST0301	21/08/2017
Energy and Utilities	Electrical power network engineer	4	ST0475	23/08/2017
Metrology	Senior metrology technician	5	ST0283	23/08/2017
Supply Chain	Supply Chain Practitioner (Fast Moving Consumer Goods)	3	ST0201	23/08/2017
Powered pedestrian door	Powered pedestrian door installer and service engineer	2	ST0373	24/08/2017
Risk and Safety Management	Risk and Safety Management Professional (Degree)	7	ST0465	24/08/2017
Leadership & Management	Senior leader master's degree	7	ST0480	31/08/2017
Creative industries	Creative venue technician	3	ST0106	06/09/2017
High Speed Rail	High Speed Rail and Infrastructure (HSRI) Advanced Technician	4	ST0528	14/09/2017
Facilities Management	Senior / head of facilities management	6	ST0410	20/09/2017
Construction	Lifting technician	2	ST0267	27/09/2017
Skills for Health	Optical assistant	2	ST0530	27/09/2017

Trailblazer employer group submits costing proposal to IfA route panel



IfA route panel advises IfA Approvals and Funding Committee



Approvals and Funding Committee advises Trailblazer employer group of likely rate



Trailblazer employer group can appeal rate



Approvals and Funding Committee advises the Skills Minister (Anne Milton)



Skills Minister signs off the rate and IfA announce standard is approved for delivery

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NEWS

Adult education budget devolution delayed by a year

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS

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The devolution of the adult education budget has been delayed until 2019, just two weeks after the man in charge of skills funding in England claimed it would begin next year.

The government said it would “devolve the adult education budget to mayoral areas in 2019” in its white paper on industrial strategy released on November 28.

This contradicts several earlier claims made by the government: back in January, the Skills Funding Agency said seven regions would get devolved AEB budgets from August 2018, and London would join from August 2019.

And less than two weeks ago, during a workshop at the Association of Colleges conference, the ESFA’s director of funding and programmes, Keith Smith, said that devolution would “start to happen from next year” before “full devolution” in 2019/20.

“We’re in conversations with the combined authorities concerned at the moment about the way the annex or devolution will actually feel next year, so we do expect there to be in all those areas an influencing model,” he said.

“What we mean by that is for that year the secretary of state still retains statutory responsibilities for the delivery of adult

education until it’s fully devolved the year after.”

The seven areas set for devolution were Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, Greater Manchester, Liverpool City, Sheffield City, Tees Valley, West Midlands and the West of England.

A spokesperson for the Department of Education did not deny that AEB devolution would be delayed, repeating that it would be “devolved to mayoral areas in 2019”.

“We want to make sure that mayoral combined authorities have enough time for this transition and we are working with them to make sure that we get it right,” she said.

“This is a significant move to give local areas more freedom to spend their adult education budget where it is needed the most.”

The DfE refused in July to comment on whether its own timetable for AEB devolution was viable, after an FE Week investigation found regional deals were likely to be delayed beyond the 2018/19 delivery date.

Five of the seven combined authorities preparing for devolution told us they were not confident that the government had set a realistic timetable, as a result of disruption from local elections, the EU referendum and the unexpected general election.

The industrial strategy said local strategies would be “long-term, based on clear evidence and aligned to the national industrial

strategy”, which could include addressing skills issues, improving infrastructure, supporting new businesses or identifying leading sectors to inform the development of deals.

It envisions colleges and universities as “key” players in these strategies, which will “prioritise areas with the potential to drive wider regional growth, focusing on clusters of expertise and centres of economic activity”.

Areas with a mayoral combined authority are set to have a single strategy led by the mayor and supported by local enterprise partnerships. For parts of England without a mayor, the development of the strategy will be led by LEPs.

However, the document acknowledged that the performance of LEPs across the country has been “varied” since 2013, and the workings of the business-led regional bodies would need to be reviewed.

AELP’s chief executive Mark Dawe said last December that he wanted LEPs to have a new “fair and transparent” contracting process if they deal with AEB cash, after an investigation by the Mail Online alleged that certain LEPs had made more than 270 payments to companies or other projects connected to their own board members, ranging from £13,000 to £1 million.

LEPs already control much of the funds available to FE providers for capital spending.



Keith Smith

“We are reviewing the roles and responsibilities of LEPs and will bring forward reforms to leadership, governance, accountability, financial reporting and geographical boundaries,” the government wrote in the industrial strategy.

“We will work with LEPs to set out a more clearly defined set of activities and objectives in early 2018.”

Advanced learner loans less popular than ever

JUDE BURKE

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Advanced learner loan applications are continuing to fall dramatically, according to new government statistics.

Applications so far for 2017/18 are down 11,100 – or 17 per cent – on the same time last year.

FE Week reported last month that final 2016/17 loan applications dropped across all age groups to which they were available in previous years.

The statistics, published on November 30, show there have been 54,900 loan applications for the year to date, down from 66,000 last year.

Applications from those aged 24 to 30 have shown the biggest drop, down 20 per cent 19,630 this time last year to 15,650 this year.

Apart from A-level applications – numbers of which remain very small – other level three courses have taken the biggest hit.

Just 33,860 applications were for certificate, diploma or vocational courses at this level so far in 2017/18 – down 21 per cent.

Gordon Marsden, the shadow skills minister, branded the latest figures “awful”, and another “example of a department that is increasingly accident prone and self-combusting”.

“The government has consistently, ever

since advanced learner loans came in, just gone hell for leather to expand loans and scrap grants without waiting to see the impact on particular groups,” he said.

Mark Dawe, the chief executive of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, called the statistics “disappointing” – particularly as they are “an important part of the skills offer” discussed at the government’s Skills Summit on the same day.

“The frustrations are that some independent training providers could deliver more loans-funded learning if growth wasn’t capped and that the door is currently closed to new providers,” he said.

And Stephen Evans, chief executive of the Learning and Work Institute, called for “urgent action” to reverse the downward trend.

“This includes testing new approaches through new career learning pilots and reforms to the system, including greater flexibility to fund modules that adults and employers often want,” he said.

FE loans, originally known as 24+ loans, were introduced in 2013/14 for learners studying courses at levels three or four and aged 24 and older.

Their introduction corresponded with a fall in adults studying at levels three and four+, from 273,400 in 2012/13 to 195,200 in 2013/14,

Advanced learner loan applications compared - 2016 and 2017

	2016/17	2017/18	Difference	% Change
All applications	66,000	54,900	-11,100	-17

Course	2016/17	2017/18	Difference	% Change
A-level	600	430	-170	-28
Access to HE	17740	16520	-1220	-7
Level 3	43090	33860	-9230	-21
Level 4+	4410	3960	450	-10

Course	2016/17	2017/18	Difference	% Change
19-23	16100	14020	-2080	-13
24-30	19630	15650	-3980	-20
31-40	17980	14950	-3030	-17
41-50	9080	7590	-1490	-16
50+	3160	2620	-540	-17

Source: DfE, Advanced learner loans application information: November 2016 & 2017

according to the DfE’s own statistics.

That number had fallen further still, to 169,400 by 2015/16.

Yet loan eligibility was expanded in 2016/17 to include 19- to 23-year-olds, and courses at levels five and six.

This expansion led to an increase in overall application numbers in 2016/17 – but this masked drops of between eight and 12 per cent from those age groups that were previously eligible for the loans.

FE Week revealed in September, through a Freedom of Information request, that a massive 58 per cent of FE loans funding – amounting to almost £1 billion – had not been

spent since 2013.

The Student Loans Company, which processes advanced learner loans for the government, revealed that only £652 million in loan-funded provision had actually been delivered since 2013, compared with £1.56 billion in allocations.

Former Education and Skills Funding Agency and Institute for Apprenticeships chief executive Peter Lauener took over as leader of the SLC this week, following the dismissal of its previous boss Steve Lamey.

A DfE spokesperson said: “We will continue to work with colleges and training providers to raise the profile of advanced learner loans.”



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NEWS

DfE dragging its heels on subcontracting transparency

PAUL OFFORD
@PAULOFFORD

The government has been accused of double standards on subcontracting charges, after it missed its own deadline for issuing templates for providers to submit their figures.

Colleges and independent training providers had since 2013 been obliged to publish the amount of government cash they withheld before paying subcontractors to run training by the end of November each year.

But the government recently decided it would publish all the figures instead.

A government spokesperson told FE Week last December, following the change, that “providers will be given three months after the end of the financial year” to submit the data, i.e. in April.

But a long-promised form that providers will use to outline their charges has still not been issued, and no official guidance is available on when the information must be returned.

The Department for Education told FE Week on November 7 that it would issue the template and provide a deadline for returning

the data “later this month”, but it refused to comment when we followed up this week.

The hold-up has provoked speculation that the government could be stalling, as high subcontracting charges have proved to be controversial in the past.

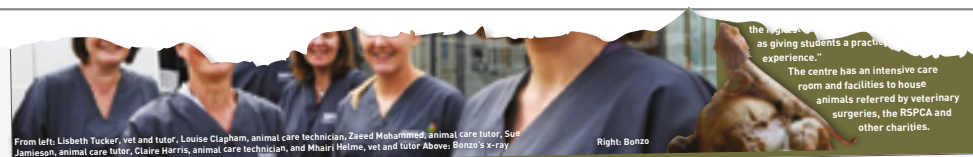
Subcontracting will be investigated by the Commons education select committee, led by former skills minister Robert Halfon, who has spoken out on the publication delay.

“More information should be available in the public domain about the fees providers charge their subcontractors, and this should be published in a timely fashion,” he said.

“Transparency is needed to ensure providers aren’t engaging in excessive top-slicing in their fees. We will tackle the issues around the poor training provided by subcontractors as part of our current inquiry into the quality of apprenticeships and skills training.”

Shadow skills minister Gordon Marsden complained that it was wrong of the government to delay, when providers had been hauled over the coals in previous years if they hadn’t published their figures by the November deadline.

“Whether it’s lack of competence, capacity



From left: Lisbeth Tucker, vet and tutor, Louise Clapham, animal care technician, Zaeed Mohammed, animal care tutor, Sue Jamieson, animal care tutor, Claire Harris, animal care technician, and Mhairi Helme, vet and tutor Above: Bonzo's x-ray

Right: Bonzo

the experience as giving students a practical experience. The centre has an intensive care room and facilities to house animals referred by veterinary surgeries, the RSPCA and other charities.

£142M CONTRACTOR TOP-SLICING ‘EXTORTIONATE’ 40 PC

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The country’s biggest Skills Funding Agency (SFA) contractor is charging management fees up to an “extortionate” 40 per cent of contract values, it has been revealed.

Learndirect, with a current allocation of £142m and 70 subcontractors including colleges, charities and independent learning providers, was easily the biggest SFA provider this year — and lists the range of fees it charges subcontractors on its website.

A spokesperson for Learndirect, a formerly public-owned company that reportedly made a gross profit last year of just over £22m, told FE Week its fees included central services such as IT and marketing along with performance monitoring, and often fell short of the 40 per cent maximum.

The SFA has, since August last year, required providers to list the range of

management fees they charge when taking on subcontractors. And since Monday last week (November 24) the SFA has also required providers to specify what they charged each subcontractor last academic year. Learndirect failed to meet the new duty, but the 40 per cent top-slice was declared in its range of fees.

“As this is the first year of this requirement we have had to introduce new systems and complete checks to ensure the information is displayed in line with the policy. While it’s yet not available it will be within the next two weeks,” said the Learndirect spokesperson.

However, HIT Training, which had the fifth largest SFA allocation with £25m did meet the new duty and did publish specific details of its management fees to its 15 subcontractors, which reached 15 per cent. Operations director Sara Goldie said: “We are keen to ensure our subcontractors don’t experience the extortionate service charges that HIT experienced in the early days when some

primes were charging as much as 40 per cent.” It comes after an Ofsted survey of subcontractors in 2012 uncovered fees of more than 15 per cent — overcharging according to SFA guidance. An SFA spokesperson would not comment on the size of individual providers’ fees or their compliance with the publication duties, but said a “programme of compliance work to check that actual supply chain fees and charges for 2013/14 have been published” would begin soon.

Newcastle College Group (NCG) and Leeds City College were also in the top five biggest SFA contractors. NCG, which has a current allocation of £34m, met the new duty and charges up to just over 20 per cent, but Leeds City College, with an allocation of £26m didn’t. It charges up to 30 per cent in fees according to its published range of fees.

A Leeds City College spokesperson said: “The college is awaiting its final reconciliation statement from the SFA. As one of the UK’s

largest colleges, this can be a larger task than it is for smaller general FE colleges. Once the ILR is finalised the college will publish its subcontractor data.”

Babcock Training, which has a current allocation of £27m and 35 subcontractors made up mostly of colleges and a few charities, was also among the top five SFA contractors, but did not meet either duty. It claimed it did not need to under SFA rules because it did not subcontract entire programmes.

A spokesperson said: “Babcock self-delivers all programmes as far as possible and has no learners entirely subcontracted. In a small number of cases we subcontract part of a programme to a specialist provider or a college.”

NCG declined to comment on its fees. Leeds City College was unavailable for comment on its fees.

See editor’s comment on page 4

or transparency, it is double standards and it’s only going to damage confidence in the subcontracting system,” he said.

Learndirect is a controversial example of particularly high subcontracting fees. In 2015/16 it retained £19.8 million from its 64 subcontractors, 36 per cent of its total SFA funding for that year.

It came uncomfortably close to the 40-per-cent threshold that the former SFA boss Peter Lauener, told FE Week at the time that he would consider unjustifiable.

Updated 2016/17 guidelines on subcontracting charges ordered providers to

tell the ESFA the “actual level of funding paid and retained for each of your subcontractors” in order that it could publish the information itself.

It is understood that agency changed the rules after it grew impatient with lack of compliance.

A DfE spokesperson denied the rules had been changed as result of any cover-up or efforts to play down subcontracting charges.

“In order to increase the transparency of each provider’s actual fees and charges, this information will now be published in a single location,” she said.

ESFA embarrassed as payment system breaks down

PAUL OFFORD
@PAULOFFORD

The government has been swamped with complaints about its malfunctioning apprenticeship payment systems, which are incorrectly demanding cash from levy-funded employers.

Numbers providers have been leaving anguished and irate messages on the Education and Skills Funding Agency’s online FEConnect forum.

One of many to leave a message is Chris Bradley, who showed FE Week an apologetic message he recently received from the ESFA’s business operations service centre.

It recognised that the apprenticeship funding system had been incorrectly expecting cash contributions from levy-funded employers, in a case relating to Nottinghamshire-based provider SREducation, where Mr Bradley is data and contracts manager.

“We have identified an issue with the funding calculation which is incorrectly classifying learners as co-funded and reporting an expected employer contribution for learners who should be fully funded,” the message stated.

“We are working on a fix for this. Once this is live it will correct any future payments, but a further change, which will be made at a later date, will be required to correct the payments already made.

“Please accept our apologies for any inconvenience caused.”

Only employers with an annual payroll of at least £3 million contribute to the levy, which was launched in April this year, and their training is funded using this pot.

Meanwhile, smaller firms also have to contribute to training costs for their first time under the new system, through a 10-per-cent co-investment model, which should involve the government paying 90 per cent of costs from leftover levy revenue.

Mr Bradley warned on FEConnect about “confirmation from period-end reports” that

levy-payers had been “coming through as 90-per-cent ESFA and 10-per-cent employer contribution due”.

He went on to express sympathy for staff working on the ESFA’s service desk, saying it was “not down to them”.

“It is the people in control that have no clue. Heads need to roll in my view,” he added.

Another user of FE Connect concurred.

“I don’t feel I am being unreasonable here, but I would like to be able to reconcile funding summary reports, remittance advice, monthly

co-funding reconciliation reports so that it all agrees. Am I the only one pulling my hair out?” they said.

An ESFA “known Issues” document dated November 28 lists nine apprenticeship funding-related problems with its software.

It notes: “This issue has been raised with our technical team as a defect and they are working on a fix.”

Neither the DfE nor the ESFA were available to comment on the complaints or issues with the payment system.

Reconciliation with payment advice

Education & Skills Funding Agency feconnect

HOME FORUM BLOG USEFUL LINKS HELP

Reconciliation with payment advice

Home > Forums > Data issues > Reconciliation with payment advice Tagged: reconciliation

This topic contains 20 replies, has 11 voices, and was last updated by chrisbradley 1 day, 16 hours ago.

Viewing 21 posts - 1 through 21 (of 21 total)

Author	Posts
A	Worth pointing out also that as per a thread on here a couple of weeks ago, they're still taking co-investment payments for learners who are 16-18 and at a small employer, despite assurances that it would be fixed this month. Am I the only one pulling my hair out?

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NEWS

Is FE ready for the big frameworks switch-off?

The process of closing the old-style apprenticeship frameworks to new starts began in March 2016, but only those with few or no starts have so far been affected. That's about to change, as two of the most popular frameworks – health and social care, and hospitality – are due to be withdrawn at the end of December. FE Week found out whether providers are ready.

JUDE BURKE
@JUDEBURKE77

The most popular apprenticeship framework in 2016/17, responsible for around 17 per cent of all starts, is about to be switched off.

Even though the level two and three health and social care framework clocks up 86,500 starts last year, Skills for Care and Development announced in April that it would be closed from December 29.

Replacement standards are available, but starts are low.

So what will happen when the framework is switched off? And is it a good thing it's

being closed?

Expense was a major issue that was raised by providers.

A spokesperson for MiddletonMurray said it hadn't yet started to deliver the level two adult care worker or level three lead adult care worker standards that replace the health and social care framework, citing cost as a major barrier.

The framework attracted between £1,500 and £2,000 per learner, depending on the pathway, while the standards have a funding cap of £3,000.

But, she said, this is "economically unviable for training providers" when factoring in "the costs of qualification registrations and claims, delivery hours,

resources, functional skills delivery and examinations, and the end-point assessment" together with the longer duration of the standards than the frameworks.

However other providers, including Barnsley College and Sheffield College, have already switched over either entirely or in part to standards, a decision they said was led by employer demand.

One provider which did not want to be named said it would have been "impossible" to deliver the minimum government requirement for 20-per-cent off-the-job training on the funding available for the frameworks.

"With the standards you don't make any more money, but it enables us to deliver that requirement," they admitted.

The off-the-job training requirement became mandatory for all apprentices this May, as one of a number of changes introduced alongside the levy, including an employer contribution from non-levy paying employers.

These changes have hit the health and social care apprenticeship market hard, a number of providers said.

Care homes are "a predominantly small- and medium-sized enterprises market", the anonymous provider said, and many "aren't prepared to pay the 10 per cent".

For those that are willing to pay, "some providers have stayed on frameworks purely to keep that 10-per-cent contribution lower, but I don't know how they financially deliver the 20-per-cent off-the-job delivery model".

Richard Goodwin, the managing director at the JGA Group, said starts across both frameworks and standards had been "flat as a pancake" since May.

"I think it's all migrating over to loan-funded learning, because what they really want is the diplomas for professional reasons," he said.

However, not all

Julie Carrigan



providers are so pessimistic about the future for health and social care standards.

Julie Carrigan, the curriculum and quality manager at Acacia Training, said she was "excited" about the switchover.

With the new standards, "the assessors are going out and focusing on key areas, it's allowing them to look above what the standards are asking".

"It gives them some more time with the learner to focus on what's important," she said.

"Both of these frameworks are being withdrawn by the issuing authorities, a strong indication of the sector's desire for the standard to be taken-up," said a Department for Education spokesperson.

"We have been actively encouraging employers and the authorities in question to work with us when moving across to the new, high-quality standards."

Skill for Care and Development declined to comment on the withdrawal of its frameworks.

Poised to deliver with hospitality

The hospitality framework, which had 25,440 starts across levels two and three in 2016/17, is due to be switched off on December 31.

John Hyde, chairman of HIT Training, was positive about the changeover to standards – a move he said HIT had started over a year ago.

"We've not had a single complaint from the employers – they love them," he said.

But, he conceded "they are a lot harder work to deliver".

The hospitality framework was funded to the tune of £1,500 to £2,500, depending on the level and pathway, which Mr Hyde said was "peanuts".

"How can you deliver a quality programme at that price?" he asked.

The replacement hospitality team member and hospitality supervisor standards each have a cap of £5,000.

"In all honesty you're not going to make an easy buck – you have to do twice as much work," he insisted.

Not all providers are quite as ready to deliver the standards as HIT, however.

Mr Hyde, who chairs the AELP hospitality group, said he had been "quite worried" at the group's last meeting a few months ago, as it was "very apparent" that a number of small providers hadn't looked at the standards.

Annette Allmark, director of strategic policy at People 1st, said the decision to withdraw the frameworks had been taken following a "thorough consultation" involving employers and training providers.

"The majority of feedback, particularly from employers, was to withdraw the frameworks as soon as possible in order to focus on the new apprenticeship standards," she said.



Health and social care: comparison of framework and standards

	Framework starts 2016/17	Standard starts 2016/17	Framework funding	Standard funding
Level two	44,910	460	£1,500/£2,000	£3,000
Level three	41,590	280	£1,500/£2,000	£3,000
Total starts	86,500	740		

Hospitality: comparison of framework and standards

	Framework starts 2016/17	Standard starts 2016/17	Framework funding	Standard funding
Level two	17,280	790	£1,500/£2,000	£5,000
Level three	8,160	250	£2,000/ £2,500	£5,000
Total starts	25,440	1,040		

Sources: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fe-data-library-apprenticeships>
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-funding-bands>

PROFILE

ANNE MILTON

*Apprenticeships and skills minister*BILLY CAMDEN
@BILLYCAMDEN

EXCLUSIVE

Anne Milton has just passed her six-month mark as apprenticeships and skills minister. FE Week paid her a visit to find out how she's handling her vast brief, and her vision for FE

A self-confessed troublemaker who was always up to mischief at school, Anne Milton now wants to change the way parents and teachers view careers for young people.

"I would like to see a shift in parent and teacher attitudes to the career choices their children make," she says, when asked what she wants to achieve during her time as minister.

"They need to understand the huge range of choices that are out there for their kids, and not automatically, as a knee-jerk reaction, look at university as the only option."

Pushing alternatives to higher education has always been a passion for Milton, which dates back to her school days, where she admits she was a reluctant learner.

"I always sat at the back of the class," she explains. "I was quite disruptive and a complete pain to teach, looking back on it."

As a middle-class girl growing up in West Sussex, she attended the "high-achieving" Haywards Heath Grammar School, where there were three options if you didn't want to go to university: be a nurse, a teacher or an executive PA.

Admitting that she didn't have the application or desire to consider higher education, she dug her heels in when her teachers pushed her in that direction, and instead became a nurse, which she worked as for 25 years.

Now she's come full circle.

"Nursing in those days was typically an apprenticeship route. You applied for the school of nursing, not university, and the students were essentially the workforce. We did exactly what an apprenticeship does today; we earned some money and learnt as we went along, trained off the wards and did some on-the-job training," she says.

"Here I am back again in apprenticeships."

Nursing is a far cry from a career in politics, so what prompted her to become an MP?

"If my teachers had considered why I was disruptive in class and why I talked too much they might have suggested that politics was a fine option for me," she admits with a chuckle.

Later in life, she realised that her lifelong "burning passion" was to right injustices and make sure people were represented well – not in a political sense but generally – could be channelled into a career in parliament.

"A vessel, if you like, into which I could put all of that burning passion that had simmered away inside me for years," she says.

Since becoming the MP for Guildford in 2005, Milton has served as a shadow minister for both tourism and health. She has also been parliamentary under-secretary of state for health, and a government whip.

It could be argued that she has inherited the ministerial role at the most critical time in FE's history, considering the extensive reforms to apprenticeships and technical education. So how is she finding the challenge?

The brief "fits me like a glove", she smiles.

"All through the years of the Labour government when there was a big push on university, I constantly used to think, 'what about the 50 per cent that don't go to university?' We want a versatile workforce – and for people's happiness we need versatility – and that is what I'm here to push."

"We need to get employers realising there is an opportunity available for them in the levy and I want them to start using it."

She feels very fortunate that the sector – learners, training providers and employers – are "fundamentally enthusiastic about the direction we are travelling in", and that has made her even more determined to get the reforms right.

"There are huge amounts of goodwill to make this work," she says. "Six months into the job I feel I have the background to understand well where the sticking points are, where we need to put some oil on the wheels."

Milton says the skills brief is a "very practical" role and she is clear that both her department and the Institute for Apprenticeships need to be nimble and responsive.

Besides changing parental and teacher perceptions of university as the only route into a successful career, she wants the apprenticeships service working like "like a piece of silk" by the time she leaves the role.

But she is acutely aware of the challenges.

"The challenge is that it is all new," she confesses. "The levy is new, the IfA is new but now it needs to be fast and effective and efficient and adaptive."

"We need to get employers realising there is an opportunity available for them in the levy and I want them to start using it."

She adds that she wants employers to be "evangelical" about apprentices, and get to the stage where the success of their business can be attributed to them.

While her enthusiasm for the ministerial role is clear, Milton cannot deny that has made some controversial decisions over the past six months.

"Procurements," she says without hesitation, asked what the hardest part of the job has been.

"They're really hard. It is essentially a competition, and



Anne Milton when she was an NHS nurse



The skills minister at WorldSkills Abu Dhabi with WorldSkills UK chief executive Dr Neil Bentley (left) and WorldSkills UK chair Carole Stott (right)



Speaking at this year's AoC Conference

about making sure that you have got bars set in the right place to make sure you get the best.

"But you also have to make sure you have a mitigation scheme for those that lose out as you don't want to destabilise the system."

She's referring to the two procurement exercises that have infuriated the sector since she came on board: the adult education budget and non-levy tenders. Both have descended into farce as the government battled with oversubscription and last-minute rule changes.

She seems torn between admission of failure and saving face, insisting they have "not gone badly" before she contradicts herself and concedes they have "not been great".

But the government is about "making decisions" and that is what her department has had to do.

She did, however, offer her "sincere apologies" to providers that have been caught up in the current non-levy tender debacle, after the results of the second attempted procurement were postponed.

"I really understand people's frustration," she claims. "It is terribly frustrating when people expect deadlines to be kept,



and the message is 'I understand your frustration and you have my sincere apologies'.

"These exercises are not easy to run. Things will only be delayed to make sure we get it right."

No matter what the FE sector may think about some of her decisions over the last six months, nobody can doubt Milton's passion for FE and skills.

She became the first skills minister in eight years to attend a WorldSkills competition, held this year in Abu Dhabi, and she pleaded for renewed "partnership" with providers at last month's Association of Colleges conference.

"Absolutely," she replies when asked if she's up to the challenge of spending the next chapter of her career creating a culture of skills in our country.

"I was talking to a school recently about careers and I said 'don't think about what you want to be or the job, think about what skill you've got. Reframe the question.'," she recalls.

"If you want to do well, pick a skill where there is a shortage of people. It is not about the job you do, it is about the skills you've got and what sort of lifestyle you want. Believe me, the range of careers out there is wide."

It's a personal thing

What is your ideal weekend?

Getting all my outstanding work done by Saturday, a day in the garden, on the sofa with a good film, reading my book or having the luxury of a doze!

What do you want for Christmas?

Lots of apprentices – and then being with my family.

Who was your favourite ever prime minister?

I don't really do favourites, but as minister for women it's great to have another female PM because it's a message to young girls that they can do anything they want.

If you could choose any dinner guests, who would they be?

Field Marshall Alan Brook
Susie Orbach
Marie Curie
Mary Watts (wife of GF Watts)
Jo Brand

INVESTIGATES

Who could run the new FE centres

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS
@PIPPA_AK

The autumn budget brought with it a commitment from the government to invest £40 million in new further education centres of excellence for maths. FE Week looks at where these new maths hubs might be built.

Plans to spend money to address the government's forced GCSE resits policy were widely welcomed last week, including the idea for new maths centres of excellence.

The Treasury's budget statement pledged "£40 million to establish 'further education centres of excellence' across the country to train maths teachers and spread best practice".

The Department for Education said they will support the post-16 sector to "design, deliver and disseminate best practice", and help with the development and evaluation of "new, high-quality" teaching methods. It will also support the sector to "use diagnostic tools to help teachers understand the capabilities of their students" to allow for more targeted teaching.

The DfE has not yet announced where the centres will be situated, or even how many

there will be.

However, FE Week has had a think about where it might want to build them. Based on analysis of national achievement rate data for 2015/16, we have identified the top 10 best performing colleges for maths in the country.

They are ordered by percentage pass rate for A* to C at colleges with a cohort of 200 or more.

The data revealed that the top eight colleges had an A*-to-C pass-rate in maths that was more than double the national average rate of 17.6 per cent.

But what do these top-performing colleges make of the centres of excellence, and would they be interested in joining?

Dudley College was the clear leader: all its 240 GCSE maths students managed an A-to-G pass and 52.3 per cent achieved A* to C.

Its principal Neil Thomas described centres as a "potentially exciting" idea.

"We're keen to know more and would not rule out applying to be one in the future," he added.

Since 2013, all 16- to 19-year-olds without at least a C in GCSE maths or English have had to enrol in courses in these subjects alongside their main programme of study.

The requirement was tightened in 2015 to require all of those with a grade D – now a 3 –

in those subjects to sit a GCSE course, rather than an equivalent stepping-stone course such as functional skills.

But this places huge extra pressure on FE providers, which have had to massively increase their GCSE maths and English provision, and recruit extra teachers to cope. And after successive annual GCSE results showed huge numbers of learners aged 17 and older failed to improve their grades in

resits, many in the sector have now demanded government action to improve the situation.

A spokesperson for Seevic College in Essex, which came third with an A*-to-C pass-rate of 40.9 per cent and total pass rate of 99.2 per cent, agreed that the centres could be a "really exciting initiative" which it hopes to be "fully involved with".

Fourth-place New College Swindon had 38.9 per cent of students achieve A* to C in maths

Table showing the top 10 colleges by 16-18 A*-C GCSE math grades where t

Rank	Institution Name	Overall Cohort Grades A* to C	Aims Passed Grades A* to C
1	Dudley College	240	120
2	Cambridge Regional College	380	170
3	Seevic College	250	100
4	New College Swindon	430	170
5	Richmond Upon Thames College	290	110
6	Derby College	590	220
7	Loughborough College	310	110
8	West Herts College	290	110
9	Guildford College of Further and Higher Education	300	100
10	Blackpool and the Fylde College	440	150

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/618905/Education_

Dudley College shares secrets of its success

Dudley College has shared the secrets to its impressive resits success.

The college achieved a 100-per-cent A-to-G pass-rate for all ages in both the English and maths GCSEs.

Its principal Neil Thomas said it had "placed a great emphasis over many years" on improving student outcomes in the subjects.

In 2015/16, 52 per cent of learners achieved A*-C in maths and English. And according to Mr Thomas, results in 2016/17 showed further improvement, with 71 per cent achieving grade 4 or above in English and 55 per cent receiving C or above in maths.

"Given that the majority of our learners are

resitting these examinations after failing to achieve at school, we are very proud of these results," he said.

"This has been realised after a sustained period of improvement in which we reviewed all aspects of the delivery and made a series of changes, both large and small, that have made all the difference."

Improvements made include restructuring timetables to emphasise English and maths, creating a team of teaching specialists, and continually reinforcing the importance of the subjects to learners.

Mr Thomas became principal on December 1, as former principal Lowell Williams was

promoted to chief executive of the college and the Dudley Academies Trust.

Dudley College of Technology was rated 'outstanding' in its most recent Ofsted report, published in June this year, and particular praise was paid to the college leaders and their "ambitious vision" for the provider and the "significant" improvements in learner outcomes.

The number of pupils at schools in Dudley and Sandwell that achieve five GCSEs at A* to C, including English and maths, is below the national rate. Dudley is ranked among the 35 worst local authorities in the country for secondary school attainment.

However, the report commended the culture

and learning programmes at the college.

"Learners and apprentices develop skills in English and mathematics exceptionally well, and achievement rates in these subjects are continuing to improve," it said.

Also noted was the investment in "high-quality buildings and equipment" including £9 million spent on a 'centre for advanced manufacturing and engineering technology' which opened in 2013, and £12 million on a 'centre for advanced building technologies' – known as Dudley Advance II – which opened this year.

The report was the first grade one for a general FE college in 14 months.

Table shows 100 per cent pass rates achieved by Dudley College for English and maths GCSE courses in 2015/16

Age	GCSE Type	Overall Cohort	Aims Passed Grades A* to C	Pass Rate % Grades A* to C	Aims Passed Grades D to G	Pass Rate % Grades D to G	Total Aims Passed	Total Pass Rate %
16-18	GCSE Mathematics	240	120	52.3	110	47.7	240	100.0
16-18	All GCSE Type	550	250	44.7	300	55.3	550	100.0
16-18	GCSE English	310	120	38.9	190	61.1	310	100.0
19+	All GCSE Type	200	100	51.8	100	48.2	200	100.0
19+	GCSE English	110	50	50.0	50	50.0	110	100.0
19+	GCSE Mathematics	90	50	53.8	40	46.2	90	100.0
All Age	All GCSE Type	750	350	46.6	400	53.4	750	100.0
All Age	GCSE English	420	170	41.7	240	58.3	420	100.0
All Age	GCSE Mathematics	330	170	52.7	160	47.3	330	100.0

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/618905/Education_and_Training_Overall_GCSE_Pass_Rates_and_Achievement_Rates_Tables_201516.xlsx

Centres of excellence for maths?

and English, and a 93.5 per cent pass-rate overall.

A spokesperson said that it too wanted to be considered as a centre of excellence, and described the plans seen as “a much-needed way to spread best practice around the sector”.

Richmond-upon-Thames College’s chief executive and principal, Robin Ghurbhurun, said his college would “certainly consider” becoming a centre of excellence.

“We welcome any commitment to increased funding and support for improving English and maths outcomes for students, although this must be holistic and beyond GCSE resits with an equally committed focus on delivering functional skills where it is best suited to the curriculum model and needs of the students,” he said.

RUTC was ranked fifth on FE Week’s table, with an A*-to-C pass-rate of 37.9 per cent and

total rate of 97.5 per cent.

The director of maths at sixth-place Derby College, Bronagh Quigley, said the college welcomed “any government initiative that looks to support improvements” but more details would be needed before her employer could comment further.

Derby had 36.6 per cent of its students achieve A* to C, and 91.2-per-cent rate overall.

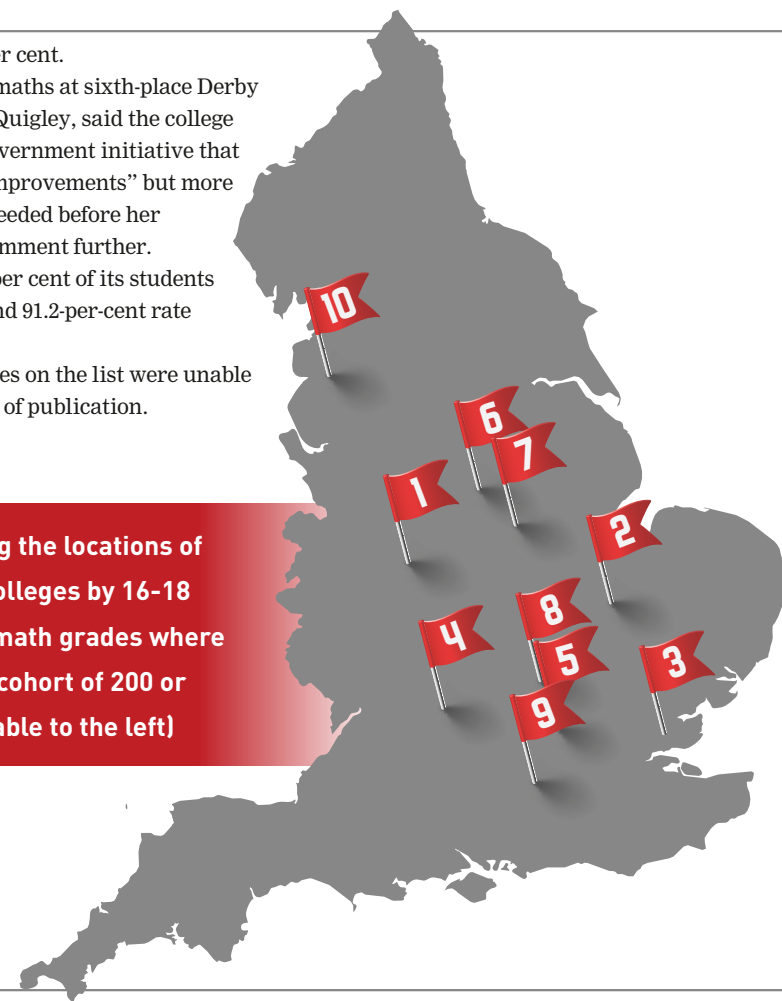
The other colleges on the list were unable to comment ahead of publication.

they have a cohort of 200 or more (2015/16 National Achievement Rate Data)

Pass Rate % Grades D to G	Aims Passed Grades D to G	Pass Rate % Passed	Total Aims Rate %	Total Pass
52.3	110	47.7	240	100.0
44.9	180	48.7	350	93.6
40.9	150	58.3	250	99.2
38.9	240	54.6	410	93.5
37.9	170	59.6	280	97.5
36.6	320	54.6	540	91.2
36.1	180	55.9	290	92.0
36.1	180	59.9	280	95.9
34.3	190	61.1	290	95.4
33.8	260	59.4	410	93.2

and_Training_Overall_GCSE_Pass_Rates_and_Achievement_Rates_Tables_201516.xlsx

Map showing the locations of the top 10 colleges by 16-18 A*-C GCSE math grades where they have a cohort of 200 or more (see table to the left)



Colleges need to motivate GCSE resit students, say researchers

JUDE BURKE
@JUDEBURKE77

Colleges need to do more to motivate GCSE maths and English resit students, government research has found.

“Motivation is low for many students,” notes a new report, adding: “Providers almost invariably state that motivating students to learn English and mathematics is a major challenge.”

CFE Research was commissioned by the Department for Education to look into effective English and maths teaching for 16- to 18-year-olds resitting these subjects at FE and sixth-form colleges.

Researchers claim that “for those who did not achieve the accepted standard of a GCSE grade C previously, this apparent ‘failure’ can lead to contrasting attitudes and different levels of motivation to re-engage with learning the subjects”.

“Providers often need to cultivate a positive mental attitude among students to increase motivation and confidence to retake their English and mathematics qualifications,” they write.

Since 2014, all learners aged 16 to 18 without at least a C, or now a four, in both English and maths at GCSE have had to keep the subjects on as part of their study programmes.

In 2015 the policy was tightened so that learners with a grade D at 16 must resit the GCSE rather than an alternative qualification, such as functional skills.

The research claims the policy is “demotivating for some students as they are being asked to continue with a qualification that they perceive they have ‘failed’”.

In fact, it states that “motivating students in English and mathematics lessons is a central feature of further education teaching”.

Strategies adopted by colleges to encourage learners’ interest in the subjects include an “adult-to-adult relationship”, making use of the “different environment compared to schools in an attempt to change sometimes deep-rooted attitudes”, and “trying different methods” to “develop subject understanding”.

“Colleges also appear to operate more effectively when curriculum managers and teachers in other subjects value English and mathematics teaching,” it states.

It also questioned the “blanket policy” of forcing all D-grade learners to resit “regardless of their knowledge of English or mathematics fundamentals”, which is “problematic” for some learners.

“There were many examples given as evidence of students who lacked some primary school level knowledge on some topics, even for students with a D grade,” researchers write.

Other issues raised in the report, which is based on data, interviews and lesson observations from 45 FE colleges and SFCs, include the high numbers of learners with “additional support needs” such as dyslexia, autism or mental health issues for whom “additional resources and support are required”.

“Providers with large numbers of ESOL [English for speakers of other languages] students can struggle to provide the additional support that they require,” it finds.

Travel poses an additional challenge for colleges “in coastal or rural settings”.

The GCSE resit policy has proved controversial since it was first introduced.

After last year’s GCSE results – the first since the policy was tightened – showed large number of learners aged 17 and older had failed to improve their grades in resits, many in the sector demanded the government scrap the policy.

Last week’s budget included £8.5 million to pilot innovative approaches to improving GCSE maths resit outcomes.

Effective practice in the delivery and teaching of English and Mathematics to 16-18 year olds

November 2017

John Highton, Rachael Archer, Diane Dalby, Sarah Robinson, Guy Birkin, Alex Stutz, Rob Smith, Vicky Duckworth



Department
for Education

EDITORIAL

A bounce
back worth
reporting

Three weeks ago we reported that by the end of the last academic year, college performance had dipped to its lowest level, as measured by Ofsted

The proportion of the nation's 188 colleges graded 'good' or 'outstanding' languished on 69 per cent, over 10 percentage points below other provider types.

How quickly things have changed: seven colleges have already moved up to a grade two in recent weeks.

The impact is sizable, not only reversing the decline but boosting performance of the sector by three points to 72 per cent, the highest it has been for two years.

The chief inspector is currently putting the finishing touches to her first annual report and its accompanying speech.

Even though this recent upturn is technically too late to be part of a report about last year, I do still hope it is acknowledged.

And FE Week will be watching the inspection trend over coming months closely, hopeful for students and staff that performance keeps getting better.

Nick Linford, Editor
news@feweek.co.uk

 SKILLSNATION
TWEETS:

Stephen Evans @Stephen_EvansUK

Really good Skills Summit today. Great to hear passion from @JustineGreening to close opportunity gap. And commitment from @cbicarolyn & employers to work together

David Hughes @AoCDavidH

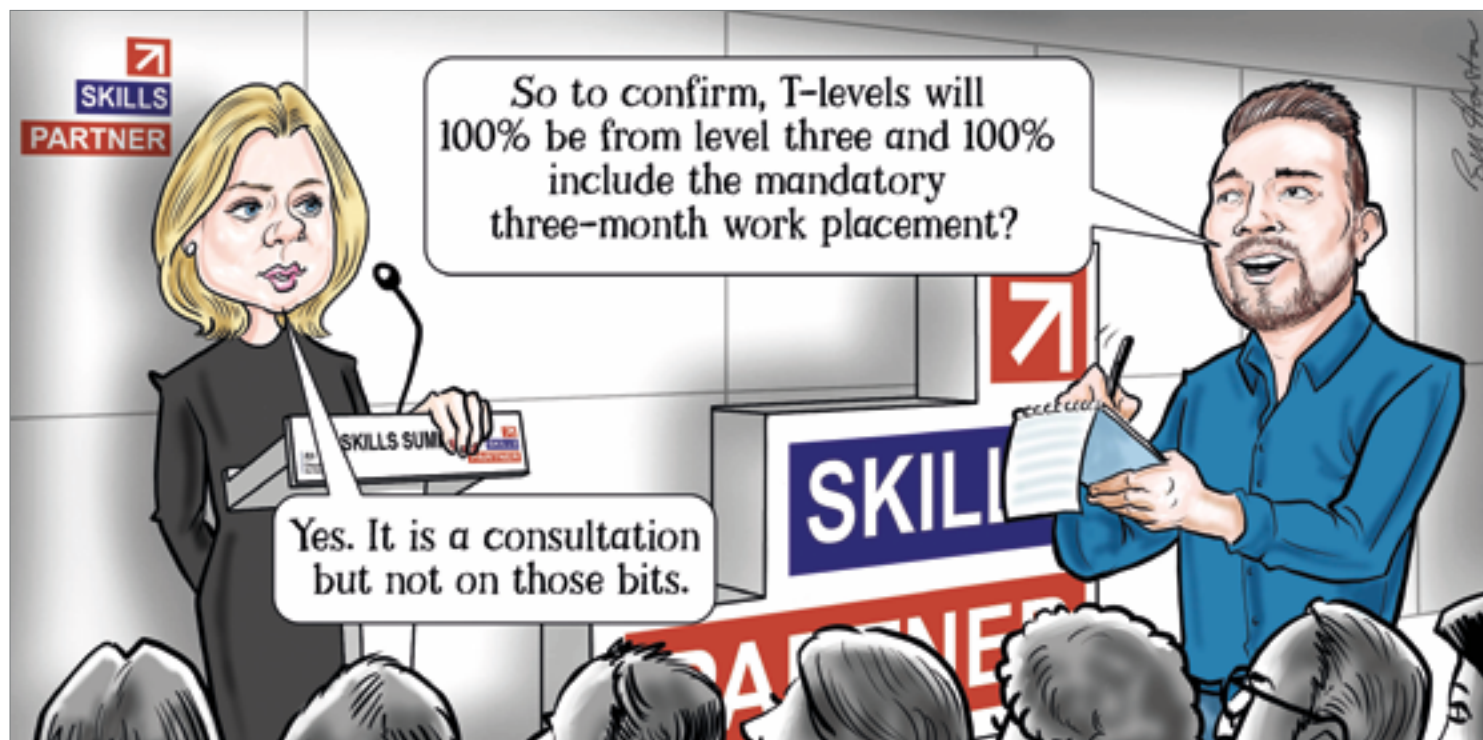
Packed out meeting room @educationgovuk for Skills Summit. Important day in helping to get investment right in colleges & skills #SkillsNation

Justine Greening @JustineGreening

Delighted to be hosting Skills Summit at @educationgovuk today. We need to invest in developing our homegrown talent so British business has the skills it needs & so that young people can get the opportunities they want #SkillsNation

Kathleen Henehan @kathleenhenehan

Between the Budget, Industrial Strategy, and Skills Summit, skills shortages and retraining have (rightly) received lots of attention. But if skills are important for productivity (and they are), we can't forget about those already in work



It's final: Three-month placements are here to stay

BILLY CAMDEN
@BILLYCAMDEN

FROM FRONT

The education secretary has ruled out T-levels at level two and will not budge on mandatory three-month work placements, no matter what emerges from a new public consultation.

Justine Greening used her speech at the Skills Summit in London last week to unveil the long-awaited T-levels consultation, urging businesses and training providers to share their views on how the new "gold standard" qualifications should be designed for the "skills revolution".

The much-anticipated consultation, which has been delayed for over a year, has been launched in the midst of mounting concern and confusion regarding the government's current design of T-levels, which are due to be taken on a limited basis from 2020.

The sector has been up in arms about how viable it will be for every T-level to include a mandatory 45-day minimum work placement. Senior figures in FE are worried that young people in rural areas will lose access to many subjects, and are dubious that thousands of businesses can be persuaded to join in.

It has also been unclear whether T-levels would strictly be level three – which is equivalent to A-level – and above qualifications.

Ms Greening, however, was absolutely clear when she discussed the qualifications with FE Week: T-levels will not be at level two and the mandatory work placement is here to stay.

"We are consulting, but we expect T-levels to be at level three, and we do expect a three-month work placement that is high-quality to be mandatory," she insisted, before taking an even stronger stance.

"When I say we need to bite the bullet and make this work, because in the past it hasn't, it is because of these sorts of compromises that shouldn't be made," she said.

"So no, I'm afraid it has to require proper on-the-job training. That is something that absolutely has to take place."

The consultation will ascertain where "we put level four and five to make sure there is a ladder beyond T-levels for people to progress on to".

When pressed by FE Week to confirm for certain that T-levels will start from level three and three-month work placements will stay mandatory, no matter what comes out of the consultation, Ms Greening said: "Yes. It is a consultation but not on those bits."

The Association of Colleges has been lobbying to overturn the government's stance on the work placement.

Its boss David Hughes used an interview with FE Week last month to plead with the Department for Education not to "punish" young people by making it mandatory, but it

appears his wishes have gone unheard.

Responding to Ms Greening's comments, he restated his disappointment.

"As I've said before, forcing everyone into a work placement means you limit people's choices to what they can attend on a local basis," he said.

"Through our response to the consultation, we will be asking for the DfE to look closer at this and how we can make it work better for all young people in every labour market."

The AELP has previously urged the government not to forget level two qualifications during the reforms to technical education, insisting they are vital to social mobility.

Although Ms Greening ruled out T-levels beneath level three, the consultation has left the door open for a new qualification at level two as a standalone achievement, whether it's via an apprenticeship or in the classroom.

"This welcome consultation gives us the opportunity to say that there should be a formal level two qualification with its own recognition however it is packaged," said AELP's boss Mark Dawe.

He insisted that the government must "stand firm" on the amount of work experience.

The T-levels consultation will run for 10 weeks, closing on February 8, 2018. You can submit your views by visiting goo.gl/3gzmCM.

COMMENTS

AAC Apprenticeship Awards launched by FE Week and AELP

This is a really good idea for our sector. If I may make a suggestion to make the nomination process streamlined and easy as smaller providers don't have the infrastructure to wade through bump. Perhaps accept digital recordings?

I may just enter if only to get the chance to get close to Mr Halfon so that I can personally appraise him of his performance as our former minister.

Matt Garvey

Government research finds colleges must do more to motivate GCSE resit students

Lo it came to pass...

They were told when the policy was introduced that the issue of motivating those young people who had failed GCSE with exactly the same qualification would prove to be impossible. However, here we are, years later, reading a report that simply confirms what professionals said when the policy was being formulated. They never learn do they?

LRoding

Management apprenticeships debate rages

Seems like lots of people are hitching their cart to the 'Productivity' buzz word bandwagon. The measures for productivity can be interpreted in many different ways and I'd wager that many people don't even scratch the surface of understanding how credible or relevant they are. Strikes me that in many areas, there is a big gulf between decision making and deep understanding of causality and consequence, to the point where it appears experimental. Is it any wonder you get policies pulling in different directions?

Lurch



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Job Reference: 46/INT/11/17

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The College is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

All appointments will be subject to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check and satisfactory references.

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

The **closing date** for applications is **9.00 a.m. on 15 December 2017**

To apply please send a completed CV and accompanying letter to recruitment@macclesfield.ac.uk quoting which area you are applying for.

Closing date for applications: 15 December 2017

Contact Details: recruitment@macclesfield.ac.uk





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Our mission is to transform lives through excellent teaching and learning delivered in our four Female Colleges in breath-taking locations across in Saudi Arabia including: Al Madinah, Al Jouf, Ar'ar and Al Qurayat.

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- Vocational Innovation Manager (Al Qurayat College, with responsibility for developing innovative curriculum for our vocational students)
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By strategically developing relationships with key funding organisations and stakeholders in both Wales and England, you will work as a collaborator and innovator, securing future growth for the College whilst planning and monitoring performance across college to ensure a quality service meets the needs of employers

and our learners.

With previous experience of managing sizeable WBL contracts, the successful candidate will possess outstanding performance management and communication skills to drive provision and hit targets - whilst never compromising on quality

The post holder will utilise Labour Market Intelligence to ensure that the College understands and responds to employers' skills needs, both now and in the future. Gower College Swansea is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young people and expects all staff to share this commitment. Appointments are subject to an enhanced DBS.

Closing date: 5pm on Wednesday 6th December 2017

Please apply on line at <https://www.gcs.ac.uk/jobs> or contact the Human Resources Department on Tel: **(01792) 284248** for an application form.

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FE Week

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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 of R&D,
the Learning & Work Institute



Hitting the targets, missing the point

While apprenticeship starts have risen for ethnic minorities and those with learning difficulties, much of their progress has been through reduced opportunities for others, laments Fiona Aldridge

Last week's figures showing a decline in the number of apprenticeship starts continue to make headlines, both in and beyond the sector. As the front page of FE Week illustrated, average monthly starts are currently 17 per cent lower than needed for the government to meet its commitment to three million apprenticeship starts by 2020.

Opinion is divided as to whether this is a temporary blip caused by the levy, or something more serious. But certainly if numbers do not recover soon, the government will quickly fall behind.

At Learning and Work Institute, our work on apprenticeships has focused on two key issues: quality and access. While supportive of the government's ambitions for growth, we have continually argued that apprenticeships must be of high quality if they are to bring genuine skills improvements and productivity benefits. Like all other forms of education and training, they should be accessible for all who can benefit.

This is not currently the case – there are significant inequalities in access to apprenticeships by household income, ethnicity, gender, disability and caring responsibilities. Equality of access is not just a “nice-to-have”. This under-representation reinforces inequality, restricts opportunities and limits the talent pool available to employers.

L&W has been working closely with the government to address inequalities in access, particularly with its commitments to increase black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) participation by 20 per cent, to reach 11.9 per cent by 2020, and to increase the proportion of apprentices with learning difficulties and disabilities by 20 per cent, to reach 11.9 per cent by 2020.

So the apprenticeship starts figures published last week are particularly interesting. The data shows a small increase in BAME starts since 2015/16 – around 1,500 or three per cent. In the context of an overall decline in numbers however, this increase is set against 18,230 fewer white starts, a four-per-cent decrease from the previous year. While it is good that ethnic minorities are getting a fairer share of the opportunities, much of the progress has been through reduced

opportunities for others.

In a similar vein, in 2016/17 the proportion of apprentices declaring a learning difficulty or disability (LDD) has increased from 9.9 per cent to 10.3 per cent, an apparently positive move. The actual number of starts however has fallen by 170, with the percentage increase deriving from the 16,1780 fewer starts by those without LDD. Again, while it is positive news that those with learning difficulties and disabilities are gaining greater access to the opportunities on offer, this should not mask the fact that there have been far fewer actual opportunities.

“**There are significant inequalities in access to apprenticeships by household income, ethnicity, gender and disability**

The demographic data throws up other important patterns. Despite an overall decline in opportunities, more 25- to 59-year-olds started an apprenticeship than in the previous year, at the expense of a much more severe decline for younger adults.

It is too early to tell the extent to which these patterns are temporary, or a sign of things to come. While I am pleased to see that ethnic minorities and those with learning difficulties are better represented within the apprenticeship start data, it must be of concern that this sits alongside fewer opportunities for the young, for white applicants and for men.

This week's ‘state of the nation’ report from the Social Mobility Commission warned that “the UK is in the grip of a self-reinforcing spiral of ever growing division” and suggested that unless we collaborate to ensure opportunity for all, then apprenticeships risk damaging rather than enhancing social mobility.

It is critical therefore that we work together to ensure that apprenticeships provide high quality opportunities for all who could benefit – younger and older, BAME and white, with or without learning disabilities, younger and older, men and women. Or else we yet again risk hitting our targets and missing the point.

PROFESSOR EWART KEEP

Director of SKOPE,
Oxford University



Industrial strategy: What matters is what's missing

Given the challenges the UK's society and economy now faces, the industrial strategy is a rather small, faltering step, according to Professor Ewart Keep

The industrial strategy, launched on a day when the UK media was obsessing about the engagement of the man fifth in line to the throne, did not appear trailing clouds of glory. In the event, this was probably just as well.

Since the financial crisis of 2008, a vaguely defined “industrial strategy” has been back in fashion at a rhetorical if not a practical level and, following New Labour and the Coalition government's efforts, the current Conservative administration has been putting its own particular, minimalistic stamp on this policy area.

In presentational terms, this new strategy is a retro affair: style substitutes for substance, recalling the glossy productions of Tony Blair's days. Content-wise, much of it turns out to be very familiar indeed. In the recent past we had “eight great technologies”; now we have “four grand challenges” – AI and data, clean power, transport (mystifying labelled “mobility”), and the ageing society.

A lot of space is devoted to R&D and innovation. We now aspire to become the world's most innovative economy, but as long as we cling to the outdated “science and science only” model of innovation, our chances are exceedingly slender. Workplace or employee innovation in process and product remain entirely absent in official thinking, which puts us a long way behind many of our competitors, who many years ago realised that incremental improvements were at least as important as the next big breakthrough.

The skills and employment section is an odd mixture of analysis and policy. The strategy is at pains to endlessly repeat how enviable our flexible labour market is, but while we have been very successful at creating a lot of jobs, many of them are low-wage, low-productivity openings propped up by the tax credit system and a crackdown on benefits. How socially and economically sustainable much of this employment will be in the long run is a moot point. It is certainly hard to imagine many Scandinavian workers, or even employers, wanting to copy our model.

The skills measures are an utterly predictable blast from the past: more STEM, extra money for maths teaching,

apprenticeship and T-levels, a small sum for some pilot work on FE staff development, another run at adult skills and retraining.

It is also deeply disappointing to see the hoary trope of average wage premiums to degrees still being trotted out, long after longitudinal educational outcomes data showed how utterly misleading this average figure is (25 per cent of all graduates earn less than £20,000 a decade after graduating).

One warning sign is that, with the exception of the maths teaching policy, the sums of money available to back up these good intentions are often vanishingly small. Radical departures from the traditional policy menu are absent, and the implicit start and finish point is the supply side, with the happy assumption that demand for skill and its effective utilisation in the workplace can be left to market forces and luck.

“**The sums of money to back up the good intentions are vanishingly small**

As ever, what is missing is what matters. The earlier green paper on industrial strategy was mainly focused on 10 per cent of the manufacturing workforce, or one per cent of the overall UK workforce. The latest version of the industrial strategy is only a little broader. The only chink of light is the promise that a review of productivity and growth in SMEs will be undertaken.

The first four emerging sector deals confirmed in the Industrial Strategy cover AI, construction, automotive and the life sciences, but more are expected to follow. In some sectors at least, these may form the template for more joined-up thinking and action on job quality, inclusive growth, productivity, skills and new forms of innovation.

Given the challenges the UK now faces, the industrial strategy represents a small and rather faltering step. At some point, rather more radical thinking may need to be entertained.

EXPERTS

The crude imposition of Prevent in colleges has created a with-us-or-against-us mentality, running roughshod over the British value of tolerance, argues Rania Hafez

At the beginning of the academic year as my second-year students were streaming in, I noticed one of the lads sporting a slightly bushier beard, and found myself wondering whether it was a hipster beard or a radicalised beard. Needless to say, the young man in question was Asian Muslim. That is how pervasive the Prevent agenda has become, reducing a teacher (and a Muslim one at that) to racially profiling students and questioning the meaning of their facial hair!

“**The whole concept is educationally bankrupt**”

While it is indisputable that the UK and mainland Europe face an ongoing terrorist threat from groups and individuals who self-identify as Muslim, the response to that threat as exemplified by the Prevent policy, a key component of CONTEST, the government's counter-terrorism strategy, has been counterproductive and particularly damaging to education. Let me outline why.

Firstly Prevent makes a categorical error



**RANIA
HAFEZ**

Programme leader for MA education,
the University of Greenwich

After headscarves, will Ofsted target big, bushy beards next?

in assuming that there is a conveyor-belt process that leads from “moderate” religiosity to murderous radicalisation. In fact, neither bushy beards nor burqas are a precursor to terrorist outrages. This fundamental fault has branded an entire faith and its followers as susceptible to extremism, and made teachers responsible for spotting some rather elusive signs. And herein lies the second problem: how are we to define that extremism? Face furniture and sartorial preferences clearly are the wrong way to go.

The government defines extremism as “vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs”. Yet as any moral philosopher will tell you, values are not geographically bound nor

defined by a national legal identity such as being “British”.

The values under question are not absolute: democracy and the rule of law are mutable concepts, open to different perspectives which can at times be contradictory. Take a student who points out in class that opposing unjust laws is a moral imperative and a democratic duty. Under the guidelines she may very well find herself falling foul of this policy and branded an extremist. The whole concept is educationally incoherent.

The trouble with Prevent is that it will only prevent what education should be encouraging: critical engagement with difficult, even controversial ideas, in an atmosphere that promotes that most fundamental of educational values, freedom of thought and expression. As a sector we have

bought into a flawed policy that is jeopardising our mission and role as educators. And we cannot claim that we did so unwittingly.

The crude imposition and policing of Prevent and British values in schools and colleges have created a binary situation, saying either “you are with us or against us”, totally oblivious to the irony of the fourth British value, “tolerance of different faiths and beliefs”. We are complicit as a nation in problematising a whole faith community and pathologising actions that are simply an expression of religious observance. We are asked to spy on our Muslim students who are deemed latent victims of radicalisation in need of constant surveillance. And witness the recent Ofsted edict requiring inspectors to question primary school girls who wear a headscarf. It may very well be bushy beards next!

The impact of the Prevent policy on education and on us as educationalists is grave. Prevent has helped legitimise a wider Islamophobic discourse, and our uncritical compliance has made us party to that discourse. That is quite serious indictment for a sector and a profession whose vocation is nurturing critical objective enquiry and promoting equity and justice.

More importantly though, we are failing in upholding and safeguarding education's sacred purpose and its foundational principles: freedom of thought, freedom of expression, and the unfettered pursuit of knowledge. These are our society's principal weapons in confronting and defeating extremist ideas, wherever they may come from.

FE Week aelp

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★ Nominations close 17:00 on Monday 8 Jan.

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**AAC
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For more information visit
www.feweekaac.com/aac-awards/

CAMPUS ROUND-UP *with Samantha King*



Golden boy: Billy Birchmore



Credit: Simon Wilkinson

The (watery) road to the Paralympics

London South East Colleges student Billy Birchmore has won eight gold medals at the Downs Syndrome International Swimming Organisation European Championships in Paris.

Following his success, Birchmore, who is a student on the college's Introduction to Work programme, will represent Great Britain at the DSISO World Championships in Canada –

which could give him the chance to compete at the 2020 Paralympics in Tokyo.

The 21-year-old began swimming aged 13, and is currently the world record-holder for the fastest 100m backstroke by a man with Downs syndrome, with a time of 1.15.70.

Birchmore has received support from the college to pursue his interest in sport, and the SEN team wrote him a personalised timetable

allowing him one day per week working in sport, so he can get closer towards his dream of becoming a swimming coach.

“For now, it’s back to concentrating on my college work. I would like to become a swimming coach at a leisure centre one day and that’s what I need to focus on long-term” he said. “I’m very proud of what I’ve achieved so far and just want to keep winning. It gives me such a good feeling.”

Unleashing Leadership

Free FE leadership training available

A new research study on leadership in FE is offering the first 400 organisations who take part free leadership training.

The Unleashing Leadership project, sponsored by the Further Education Trust for Leadership, will explore how leadership currently functions in the FE sector, and the conscious biases and preferences that shape how it is thought about, developed and practiced.

Participants will be asked to select 30 to 80 individuals they think will most benefit from leadership development, who will then fill out an online questionnaire and take part in a qualitative research interview and focus group.

“In our research we are starting at the beginning. This means doing a baseline study of where leadership currently is situated in the FE sector,” said the project’s lead, Simon Western. “This study has been planned to deliver research for the FE sector while giving back to the individuals and colleges who partake in it. We hope it will stimulate learning and change at individual, college and at sector level.”

To find out more and how to get involved, visit:

<http://fetl.org.uk/unleashing-leadership/>

Colleges lean in on female boards

Colleges in the south-east and the midlands have been hosting workshops aimed at women from FE and business, in a bid to increase female representation on boards.

The four workshops – run by the Women’s Leadership Network and funded by the Education and Training Foundation – attracted around 70 delegates to sessions at West London College and Fircroft College in Birmingham.

Pauline Odulinski, WLN’s managing director, told delegates that “equality and diversity are stalling because people are tired of the conversation”, and the focus on policies and targets is making matters “dry”.

Sessions encompassed the roles of governors and non-executive directors, tips for efficient

board meetings, what skills are required and how to take the steps to join a board.

Part of the workshop focused on the lack of women in audit and finance committees, and how board members don’t necessarily need a background in finance or accounting to actively contribute.

“Delegates left the workshops with a clear understanding of how their current skills and experience could bring value to a board,” said Ms Odulinski.

“Several delegates asked to be matched straight away with colleges seeking board members, and 97 per cent said they are now interested in joining the board of an organisation.”



A special moo-ment

International moo-vers and shakers

Twenty-one international students have met cows for the first time at Askham Bryan College as they learned about the UK farming industry.

The group was made up of students aged 13 to 18, who all study a cookery course at ESF Island School in Hong Kong. The visit to the college was part of a culinary and cultural tour of Yorkshire, so they could learn more about farming and food production.

Chantelle Astley, the college’s recently appointed farm manager, led the tour, which gave the students a look at ABC’s dairy and

beef units, and its 280 hectares of farmland.

“Many had never seen cows or sheep before and were full of questions about everything to do with farming,” she said. “They particularly loved feeding the calves and were surprised at the size and scale of the farm and indeed the size of the cows! It was great to be able to explain what’s involved in agriculture and to share their enthusiasm.”

The college currently has a 240-strong milking herd of Holstein and Holstein-cross cows, as well as 300 ewes.



Former UCAS CEO Mary Curnock Cook in discussion with delegates

New airport college takes flight

Construction is now underway on a new £11 million technical college based at Stansted Airport, which will create around 500 new further education places in Essex, reports Samantha King.

aptly named Stansted Airport College due to its location, it will open in September 2018 and is being funded by Stansted Airport, Harlow College, Essex and Uttlesford councils and the South East LEP.

"We know that small, standalone institutions aren't always financially viable. It is in effect a campus of Harlow College but its brand is Stansted Airport College," explained Karen Spencer, principal and CEO of Harlow College, which has put around half a million pounds into the project.

The new college, which has been in the pipeline for the last three years, will offer qualifications that support the airport industry and the services that wrap around it, from aeronautical engineering and logistics, to retail, business, hospitality and customer services.

"A lot of young people assume an airport is just cabin crew and pilots, and there's



Claire Perry MP



significantly more to it as an organisation," Ms Spencer added.

A number of employers have already shown interest in the college, including Ryanair, Novotel, Hampton by Hilton and Stansted Airport – which has around 100 job vacancies at any given time – all keeping an eye out for talented graduates.

"We have employers who have committed to supporting things like work placements, visits and professional talks to students.

They're also committing to provide guaranteed interviews for jobs or apprenticeships," Ms



Spencer said. "It's sort of a sponsorship of the centre that says 'actually, we're prepared to take young people who studied at this airport college into roles in our organisations'."

The college's construction phase was officially launched by the minister for climate change and industry, Claire Perry, who coincided her visit with the launch of



Celebrating the launch

the government's industrial strategy.

"The new college here at Stansted is a prime example of our industrial strategy in action," Ms Perry explained. "Public and private sector working together to improve the skills of young people and delivering a pipeline of talent that will boost the local economy."

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



Iain Wolloff

Principal, Newbury College

Start date February 2018

Previous job

Deputy principal, Farnborough College of Technology

Interesting fact

Iain, who began his career in child protection, holds a first-class degree in social science, as well as postgraduate degrees in politics, teaching and management.



Peter Kennedy

Principal, Franklin College

Start date February 2018

Previous job

Deputy principal, Huddersfield New College

Interesting fact

Peter has recently developed a passion for running and enjoys putting on his trainers and escaping to the countryside.



Lucy Edge

Chair designate, Truro and Penwith College

Start date January 2018

Previous job

Founder and general manager, Avanti Communications Spacecraft Operations Centre

Interesting fact

Outside of work, Lucy is a keen athlete.



Helen Camilleri

Business development project manager, the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London

Start date October 2017

Previous job

Progression programmes adviser, John Lewis Partnership

Interesting fact

Helen's favourite food is seafood and garlic with white wine.



Sir Charlie Mayfield

Non-executive chairman, QA Group

Start date November 2017

Previous job

Chairman, the John Lewis Partnership (ongoing)

Interesting fact

Sir Charlie began his career as an officer in the army, and went on to become marketing manager for Lucozade.

Movers & Shakers

...

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

ncfe. | **cache**

The route to success

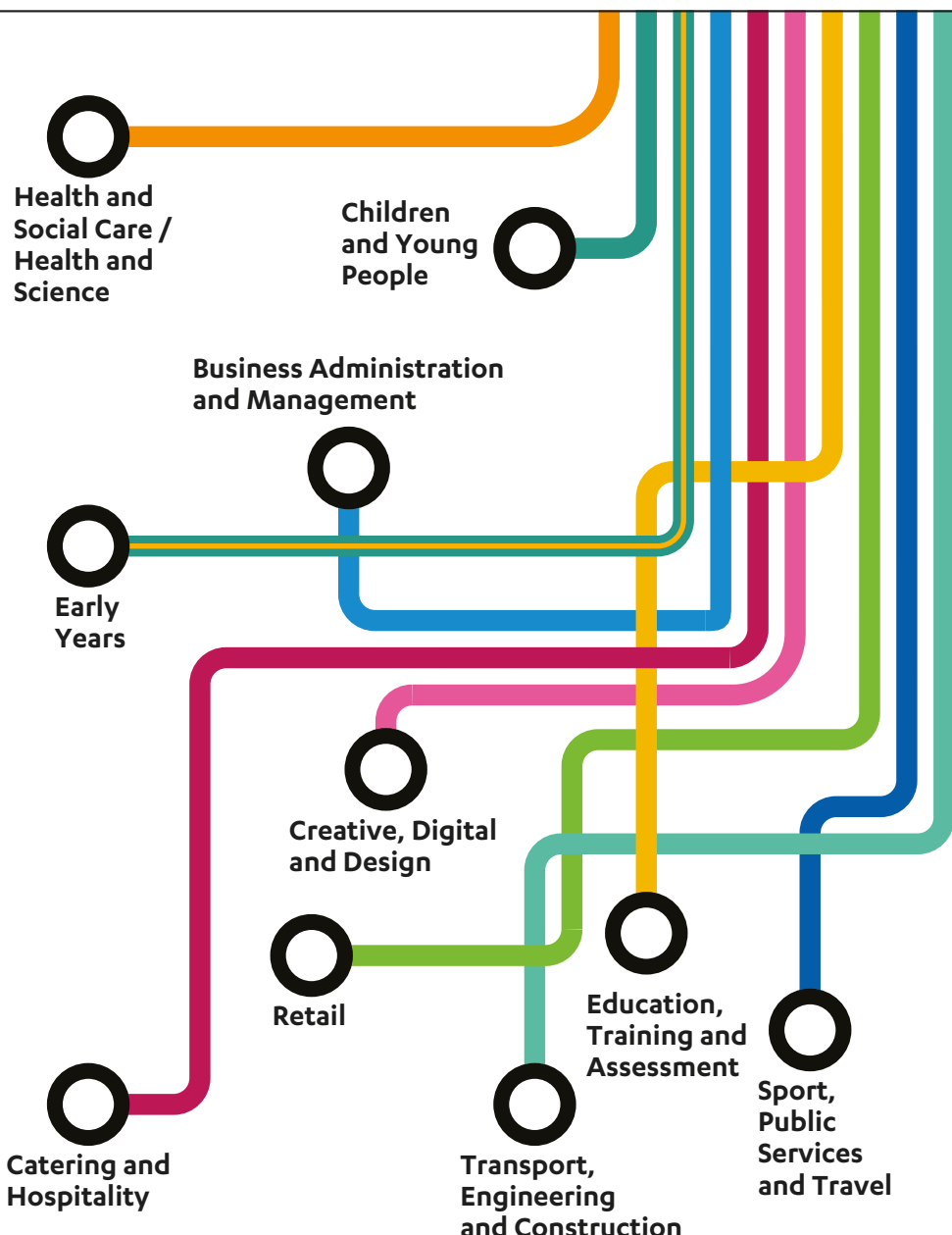
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FE Week Sudoku challenge

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

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

Difficulty: **EASY**

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

Difficulty: **MEDIUM**

Solutions: Next edition

Last Week's solutions

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

Difficulty: **EASY**

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

Difficulty: **MEDIUM**

Spot the difference

To WIN an FE Week mug



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