

FE Week

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FOR 16-18 CASH**

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**MARSDEN ON 2017
& LOOKING TO 2018**

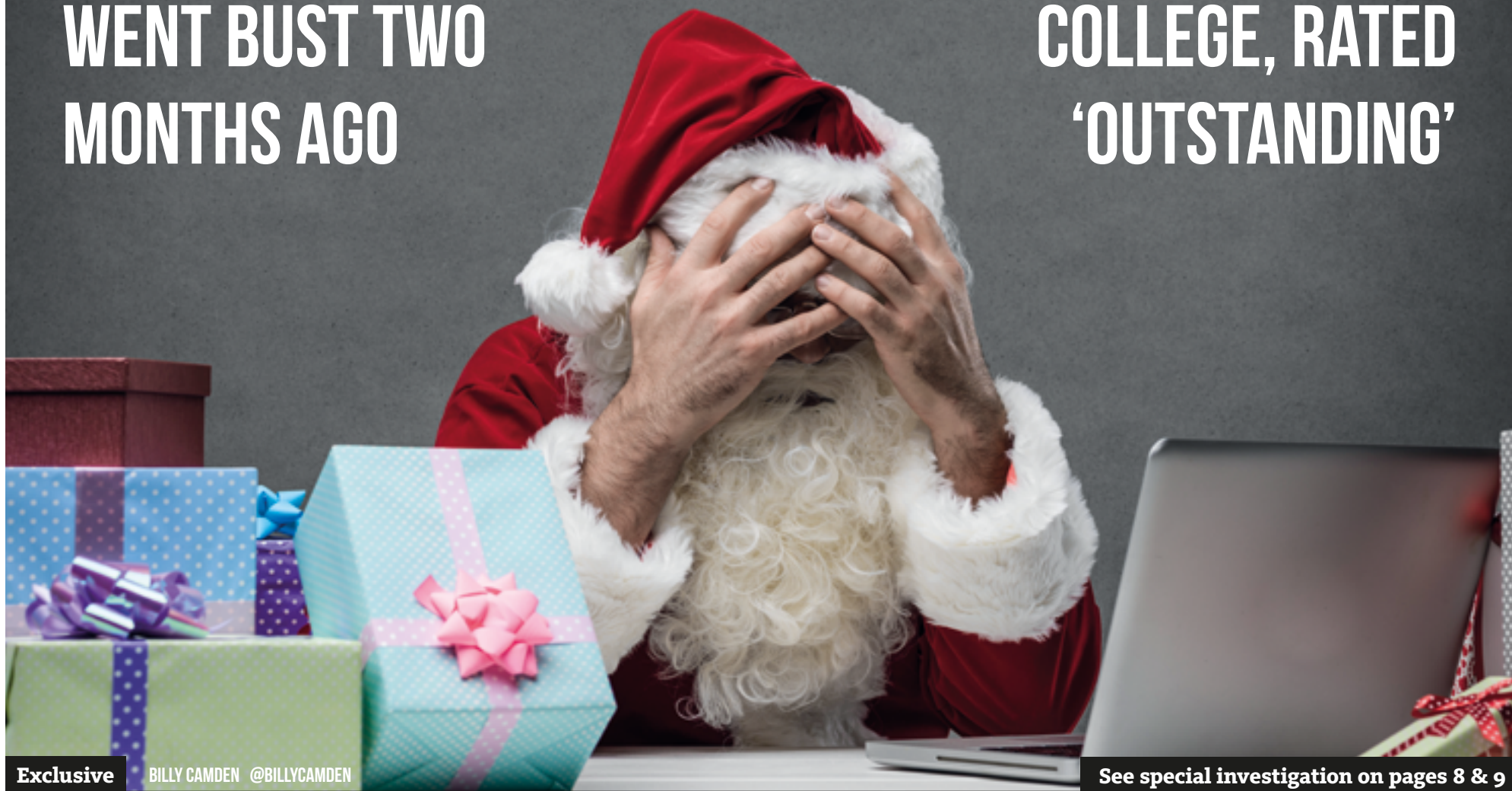
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NON-LEVY TENDER SHOCKER

**WINNER: FIRM THAT
WENT BUST TWO
MONTHS AGO**

**LOSER: EXETER
COLLEGE, RATED
'OUTSTANDING'**



Exclusive

BILLY CAMDEN @BILLYCAMDEN

See special investigation on pages 8 & 9

FE Week aelp



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NEWS

‘Extremely disappointed’ college complains about 14 to 16 Ofsted rating

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EXCLUSIVE

A college has complained about the grade three Ofsted gave its 14-to-16 provision, and claims inspectors have not recognised the particular challenges involved with teaching at this age.

South Devon College’s overall grade also dropped from ‘outstanding’ to ‘good’ after its recent inspection.

The college claimed its full-time 14-to-16 provision is “highly personalised with vocational options beyond what is traditionally offered in many schools”.

“We are extremely disappointed that Ofsted was unable to recognise the innovative curriculum that we offer, the exceptional feedback we receive from parents, and the excellent GCSE results which our pupils achieve,” a spokesperson said.

“The government’s new Progress 8 score measures the overall progress of pupils between the end of primary school at age 11 and the end of year 11 at age 16. Unfortunately, the report does not recognise either the fantastic progress which our pupils make in the two-year period from 14 to 16, or their progress to excellent destinations in A-levels, vocational courses, and grammar school sixth forms.”

The Association of Colleges told FE Week that it is in talks with Ofsted and the Department for Education on how colleges are judged for their 14-to-16 provision, to make sure they are not assessed on the same terms as schools.

Progress 8 is designed to measure how students have advanced from the end of primary school to key stage four (14 to 16), and it first took effect for provider accountability in June 2016.

The report on South Devon College warned that its expectations are not always high enough for 14- to 16-year-olds.

“Staff expectations of what learners can achieve in some academic subjects, including English, mathematics and science, are too low,” inspectors wrote.

“Staff are too ready to use learners’ prior difficulties or negative experiences at other schools as a reason for underachievement. Many learners who join the school are of high ability and, even allowing for previous underachievement, are not pushed to achieve their potential.”

There were 150 full-time 14-to-16 learners at the college’s “high school” at the time of the inspection, of whom 79 were in year 10 and 71 in year 11. A further 255 were part-time learners, many “electively home educated”.

A spokesperson for the inspectorate would not comment directly on the complaint.

“Ofsted does not confirm or comment on any complaints we receive,” he said. “That said, we take all concerns seriously and consider them as quickly as possible.”

Examples of feedback from parents included such statements as “her confidence and grades have grown in huge amounts since joining”, “never did I imagine she could have increased her scores this much”, and “he has made fabulous progress, without a doubt the best decision ever made”.

College	Last Ofsted visit	14-16 grade
Hull College	Nov-15	2
Leeds City College	Feb-16	2
Middlesbrough College	Sep-16	2
Grimsby Institute	May-17	1
Hugh Baird College	Feb-15	2
St Helens College	Apr-17	3
East Durham College	Feb-14	N/A
Tyne Coast College	Dec-15	N/A
John Leggott College	Mar-14	N/A
Northumberland College	May-17	N/A
South and City College Birmingham	Nov-15	N/A
Bromley College (now London South East Colleges)	May-15	N/A
Newbury College	May-17	N/A
South Devon College	Dec-17	3
Tower Hamlets College (now New City College)	Apr-15	N/A
West Thames College	Mar-14	2
John Ruskin College	Oct-17	N/A
Cambridge Regional College	Oct-16	N/A
East Kent College	Jan-17	2

Colleges with permission to offer 14 to 16 provision and their latest Ofsted grade (if given) for this provision

Slow take-up on provision for younger learners

Colleges have been permitted to teach 14- to 16-year-olds full-time for the past four years, but relatively few do.

Just seven were involved in 2013/14, and that figure had only grown to 19 granted permission by October this year.

These include just three of the seven 14-to-16 pioneers: Hull College Group, Middlesbrough College and Leeds City College.

Professor Alison Wolf recommended that colleges be allowed to take on young people full-time from the age of 14, as part of her influential report into further education, published in March 2011.

She urged the government to “make explicit the legal right of colleges to enrol students under 16 and ensure that funding procedures make this practically possible”.

She also recommended that colleges taking on 14- to 16-year olds be “subject to the same performance monitoring regime (including performance indicators) as schools”.

That puts her at odds with the Association of Colleges, which told FE Week it was working with the government to ensure that “Ofsted reporting on 14-to-16 training provision is not judged against a school-based curriculum”.

But it’s hard to gauge how big an issue this is, as the numbers involved are so small: just nine colleges have received an inspection grade for their 14-to-16 provision.

Caterine Cezen, AoC’s senior policy manager, said that colleges’ 14-to-16 programmes “focus on core skills and a vocational and technical offer”.

“They provide outstanding progress from a starting point and lead to positive and sustained post-16 progression,” she said.

A Department for Education spokesperson said “colleges have the expertise and capacity to offer high-quality vocational options” for learners in that age bracket.

“It down to each individual provider to decide what provision and curriculum they offer.”



NEWS

College that dodged Ofsted told to ditch grade one

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS
@PIPPA_AK

EXCLUSIVE

A college that Ofsted last visited 11 years ago, and which dodged an inspection in 2016 after a merger, has finally been told to stop referring to itself as ‘outstanding’.

Bridgwater College received the top grade back in November 2006, its last full inspection.

But in June 2016, amid a significant fall in A-level standards, it merged with Somerset College of Arts and Technology, itself rated ‘good’, to form Bridgwater and Taunton College.

According to inspectorate’s handbook, a merged college may avoid inspection for up to three years but “will not carry forward any inspection grades from predecessor colleges” and “will have no inspection grade until after the first full inspection”.

The merged college had nevertheless continued to advertise itself as ‘outstanding’ and use Ofsted’s approved logo until FE Week got in touch.

Ofsted said it would be writing to the new college about the logo, and confirmed that as it “has not been inspected yet... it has no rating”.

Its performance has recently dropped in certain areas: in 2015/16, its 16-to-18 achievement rate at level three was 6.8 percentage points lower than the average for a GFE college, and at AS level, it was 9.4 percentage points lower than average.

It fared little better between 2014/15 and 2015/16, when its 16-to-18 achievement rate at level three fell 6.3 percentage points and 9.1 percentage points at AS.

A spokeswoman described the use of the logo and other references to ‘outstanding’ grades as “an oversight”, but at the time of going to press, its prospectus for 2018/19 still suggested its courses were graded ‘outstanding’.

“Our college routinely gets rated as ‘outstanding’ by Ofsted, with our provision in a variety of areas being highlighted for its quality,” it read. “We think that’s a record to be proud of.”

The college however has no plans to change its prospectus, as “we do not state that we are rated ‘outstanding’”.

“A new website will be published in January which will better reflect the new college and our ethos,” she added.

The college’s most recent Progress 8 results show it comes in below average for its scores in A-levels, academic qualifications, applied general qualifications, and tech level points.

This would normally have triggered a full reinspection, but during the national development of the post-16 area review process Ofsted agreed to wait up to three years, and updated their policies accordingly.

Bridgwater and Taunton’s spokesperson said that over 22,000 students were enrolled to study at the college, and that “for a small subset of students, historical achievement

data, when combined, shows a dip”.

However, she insisted that achievement rates had increased in the first academic year after the merger, and expects this to be reflected in January’s progress scores.

She also pointed out that the college’s care standards for residential provision and nursery had both been graded ‘outstanding’ since the merger.

“We are confident in our self-assessment process and the accuracy of our grading, which reflect outcomes and overall student experience, and we continue to work within the parameters of Ofsted’s common inspection framework,” she said.

“We would judge the merger to have been successful for staff, students, our employers and the community we serve.”



‘Inadequate’ employer provider still on apprenticeship register

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EXCLUSIVE

FTSE 100 employer-provider has not been kicked off the register of apprenticeship training providers, even though Ofsted gave it a grade four nearly six months ago.

The Compass Group is still permitted to take on new apprentices in its capacity as a subcontractor, and has only stopped recruiting them on a voluntary basis.

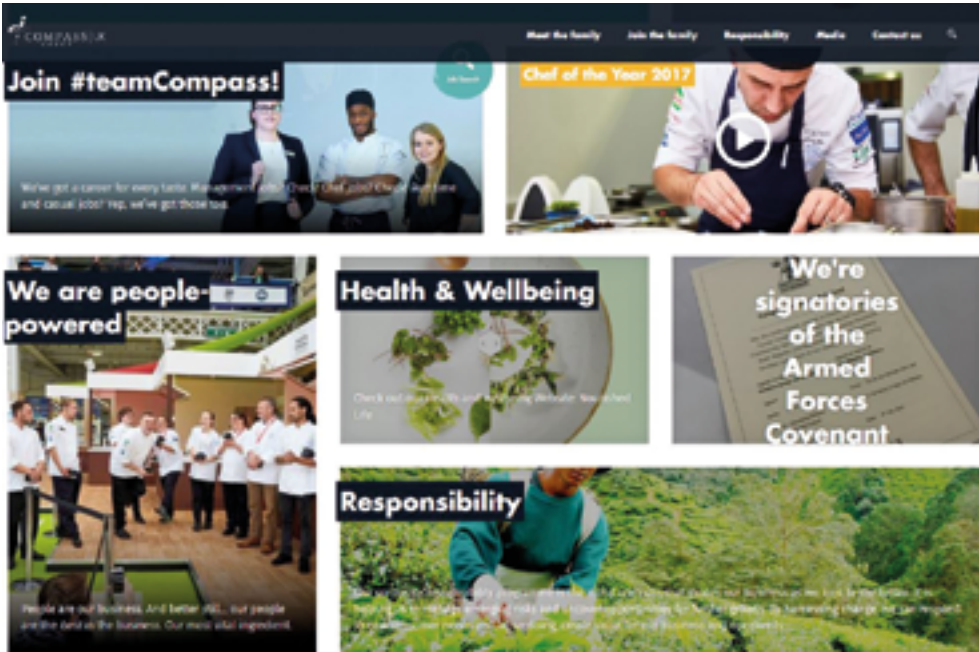
According to an Ofsted monitoring report, the group has “secured the services” of a new partner, Creative Learning Partnership, and is in the “advanced stages” of hiring two new subcontractors to deliver apprenticeships in hospitality and management.

Compass had 460 apprentices on its books at the time when Ofsted visited in June, but declined to clarify whether it planned to operate as a prime or subcontractor.

“The levy-funded apprenticeships we deliver are through preferred providers,” a spokesperson said.

“In line with the ESFA’s rules regarding apprenticeship delivery, the apprenticeships we offer to colleagues are provided through approved third-party providers.”

A spokesperson for the Department for Education said Compass is “no longer able to take on any new apprentices for direct



delivery” and that it would be removed from the register once it had been “issued a letter telling it that it’s going to be removed”.

“It doesn’t have permission to take on and be funded for new apprentices, but it is a large levy-paying employer so it has two different routes open to it,” she said.

“It can procure new apprentices through its levy fund, and it’s also still eligible to subcontract from existing register-approved providers with a value of up to £100,000.”

Compass would have been compelled to stop recruiting apprentices had it not agreed to do so voluntarily, she added.

The company provides contract catering and support services, employing around 60,000 people at 10,000 client sites across numerous sectors.

It was rated ‘good’ in November 2014, but the latest full inspection report warned that “few line managers are engaged in the apprenticeship programme” and too few

manage the subcontractor’s performance “rigorously enough” or have “sufficiently accurate or detailed awareness” of the quality of learning provided.

Learners made slow progress due to “operational restructuring, changes of assessors, poorly planned learning and a lack of time at work to devote to their apprenticeship”, and too many were left to teach themselves from workbooks.

Although the report accepted that UK directors had a “clear vision” for apprenticeships, it warned that they did not have a “clear understanding” of the performance of the programme and were not holding senior leaders to account for poor quality.

The company was allocated over £200,000 for 2017/18 for apprenticeships as of November. It was working with one subcontractor at the time of the monitoring visit; Jigsaw Training provided teaching, learning and assessment for apprentices in security services, hospitality and catering and administration.

The monitoring report said that Compass would now be focusing its “direct delivery” on providing apprenticeships in culinary programmes and chef leadership programmes.

It had also appointed, or were in the process of appointing, a new head of apprenticeships, a quality manager and an apprenticeship delivery manager.



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Ofsted annual report: Chief inspector

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Provision for 16- to 18-year-olds will “continue to struggle” unless the sector sees a boost in its base rate of funding, Ofsted’s chief inspector has warned again.

Amanda Spielman’s speech at the launch of the inspectorate’s annual report on December 13 reflects wider fears that the breadth and quality of the curriculum is being seriously undermined.

She built on her remarks to the education select committee in October, when she warned colleges catering to this age group are struggling to cope with dire financial restraints.

She told guests at the launch that she did not want her speech to become “the annual lecture for criticising the state of further education”, but insisted it would be “remiss” not to mention that the “sector continues to lag”.

“The government has recognised the problems in the sector and has begun a series of welcome initiatives investing in skills education,” she said. “However, I do believe that until base-rate funding is increased, the sector will continue to struggle.”

Despite mounting calls for more funding, the rate has been stuck at £4,000 since 2013.

The Support Our Sixth Formers campaign, which has received backing from many of FE’s major players, including the Sixth-Form Colleges Association and the Association of Colleges, alongside FE Week, has been pushing to increase it by at least

£200 per student.

The education select committee heard that colleges which had suffered with “disappointing outcomes” faced “the biggest funding challenge” on 16-to-18 provision.

The Ofsted report confirmed an eight-point fall on the previous year in the number of sixth-form colleges with a grade one or two, as FE Week predicted.

Until 2017, the proportion of SFCs receiving the top two grades had climbed every year since 2012. It rose from 72 per cent five years ago to an impressive 89 per cent in 2016.

But figures to September this year show that the proportion rated ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ had dropped to 81 per cent. 80 per cent of independent training providers received the top two grades.

The report also confirmed that 69 per cent of general FE colleges were rated ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ by August 31, amounting to an overall decline for the third year running. Seven general FE colleges subsequently managed to dig themselves out of failing grades in the early part 2017/18, but this success was not recognised in the report, which only covered inspections published in 2016/17.

Last year’s report, the fifth and final one delivered by former chief inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw, warned that the government’s maths and English compulsory GCSE resits policy, which has



placed huge added pressure on FE providers, was not working out.

This year Ms Spielman admitted that “this has not changed” and said that seven out of 10 colleges which improved to ‘good’ this year still had weak English and maths.

“While the policy’s intention to improve literacy and numeracy levels is well intentioned, the implementation of the policy is not having the desired impact,” the report stated.

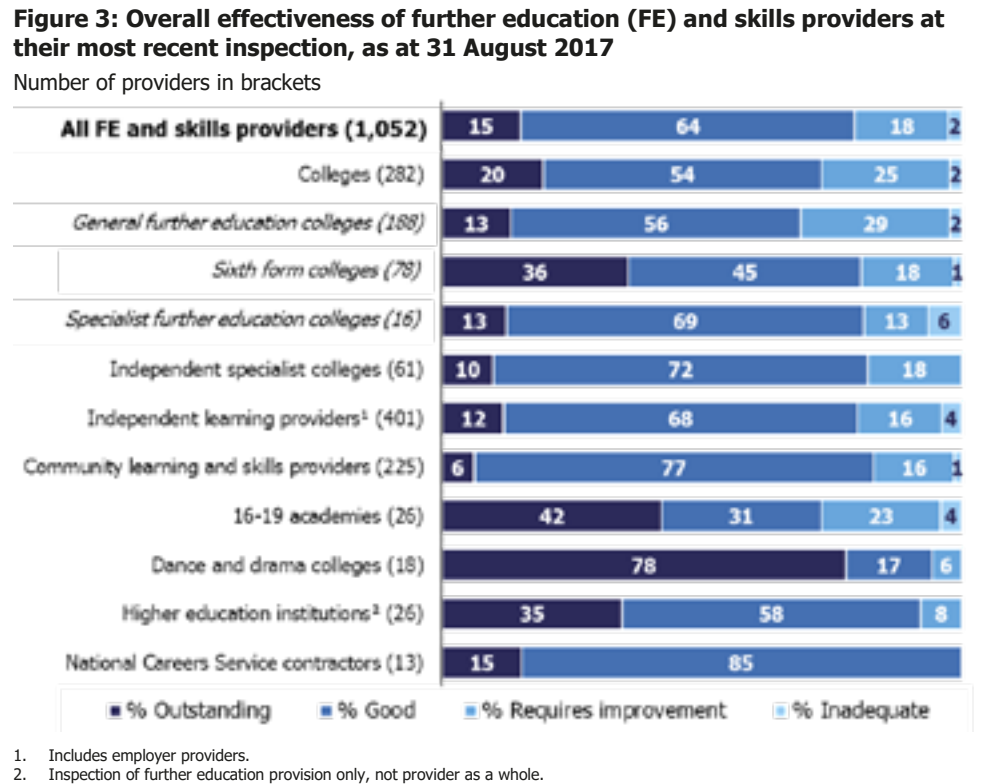
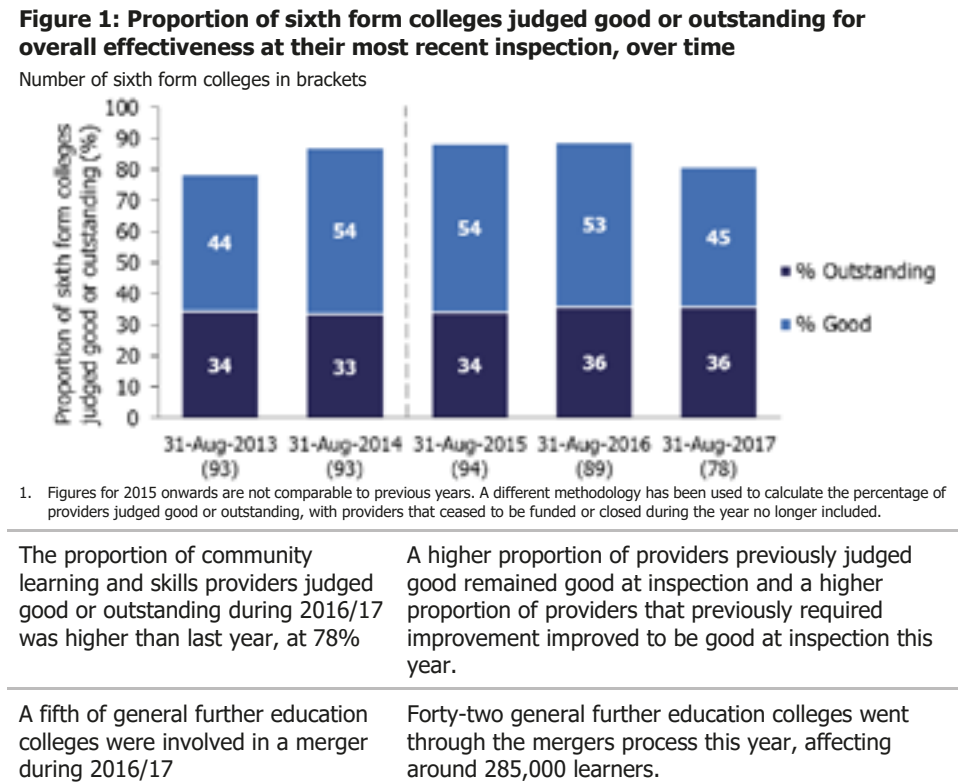
Ofsted also returned to the Learndirect affair, the giant provider that was rated ‘inadequate’ over the summer.

“This year, the case of Learndirect has shown that no provider is too big to fail. That raises questions for us and for government about failure in market regulation and whether incentives drive the right behaviour,” it said.

The inspectorate’s report into Learndirect appeared in August, in the wake of a failed legal attempt to quash it, and a gagging order which FE Week successfully overturned

Ofsted also explained that it intends to review how it inspects apprenticeships over the next year, including with subcontractors. At the select committee meeting in October, Ms Spielman said the lack of subcontractor inspections was something “we shouldn’t feel comfortable about”.

The ‘main findings’ for 2016/17: Inspection by numbers



r warns of 16-to-18 funding ‘struggle’

Concern young people will lose first rung route onto an apprenticeship

JUDE BURKE
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Fewer level two and three apprenticeships are in development by proportion, compared to higher and degree apprenticeships, which could have a “detrimental impact” on recruitment for 16- to 18-year-olds, Ofsted has warned.

The education watchdog raised the concern in its annual report, which was published this week.

“Most apprenticeships being delivered in 2016/17 were at levels two and three, yet over a third of the standards ready for delivery were at level four and above,” it said.

“If this trend continues, there will not be enough approved standards at levels two and three.

“This could have a detrimental impact on the recruitment of 16- to 18-year-olds into apprenticeships.”

Speaking to FE Week following the launch, Ofsted’s deputy director for FE and skills expanded on these concerns.

He admitted the watchdog was “worried” about the large number of higher-level standards being approved as “older



Paul Joyce

apprentices are likely to start those programmes”.

“We have seen a reduction in the number of apprenticeship starts, a reduction in the number of 16- to 18-year-old starts, and clearly we would want to see some level two and three standards approved, and for those numbers at level two and three and for 16 to 18s grow,” he said.

The Institute for Apprenticeships, which is responsible for approving new standards, defended its approach – which it said was led by employer groups.

“High-quality apprenticeships can help improve social mobility. It is important that apprenticeships provide opportunities for development for learners of all ages,” a spokesperson said.

But FE Week has discovered alarming figures that contradict the IfA’s claims – and confirm Ofsted’s fears.

Business administration was one of the most popular frameworks in 2016/17, with 43,800 starts at level two and three.

But although a replacement level three standard was approved for delivery in September, there are no plans for a level two standard – and in fact, a standard proposed at that level was

Business Admin framework	Level 2		Level 3	
Under 19 starts 2016/17	12,550	48%	4,470	25%
19-24 starts 2016/17	8,240	32%	6,820	38%
25+ starts 2016/17	5,110	20%	6,610	37%
Totals	25,900	17,900		

Standards currently approved for delivery in the business and administration route	Level
Public service operational delivery officer	3
Team leader / supervisor	3
HR Support	3
Business Administrator	3
Dental practice manager	4
Junior management consultant	4
Associate project manager	4
Operations / departmental manager	5
HR Consultant / Partner	5
Chartered manager degree apprenticeship	6

rejected by the Department for Education.

This is particularly concerning as almost half of the framework starts at level two in 2016/17 – 12,550 out of 25,900 – were by 16- to 18-year-olds, while at level three that proportion dropped to just 25 per cent of starts.

Tom Pearce, a talent services executive at Grant Thornton, led the development of the level three business administrator standard.

He told FE Week that the majority of the employers in the trailblazer group had wanted the level three standard as they needed apprentices who were “able to act autonomously”, meaning that “level two wasn’t appropriate”.

The group had also received “a steer” from the DfE, that “a prospective apprentice looking at doing level two could do level three, they could jump that level”.

A number of NHS trusts which had been

involved with the development of the level three standard, backed by Skills for Health, expressed an interest in developing a level two assistant business administration standard in 2016.

But that proposal was rejected by the DfE.

“While we recognise that business administration roles exist at that level, the training needed for full competence is not sufficient enough to justify an apprenticeship based on a standard at the lower level,” it said.

Skills CFA, the issuing authority for the business administration framework, confirmed that no date has been set for the framework switch-off at level two or three.

The IfA refused to comment directly on the lack of a level two standard in business administration, and reiterated that it would be up to employer groups to submit proposals at the level they think is most appropriate.

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Non-levy tender results lead

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FROM FRONT **EXCLUSIVE**

An organisation that went out of business two months ago has been awarded a contract in the non-levy tender – even while several high-profile colleges ranked ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ missed out.

PTM Group, which incorporated in May 2015 but has never held its own direct contract with the ESFA to deliver apprenticeships, last week became one of 714 providers given an allocation to train apprentices with small employers between January 2018 and March 2019.

There’s just one small problem: the Newcastle-based provider ceased trading on October 5, according to records published by Companies House.

Exeter College, on the other hand, which FE Week recently crowned the best college in the country for the second year running and is rated ‘outstanding’ by Ofsted, was denied a contract.

Another high-profile casualty of the process is Newcastle and Stafford Colleges Group, which has a successful track record of delivering apprenticeships and is rated ‘good’ by the country’s education inspectorate.

A spokesperson admitted that the group was “mystified” by the outcome and, like Exeter, is appealing the decision.

“Both the ESFA and the IfA need to get a grip on this matter very rapidly,” declared the shadow skills minister Gordon Marsden after he saw FE Week’s findings.

“We are hopeful that this will reach a positive conclusion

“This is further evidence of the lack of joined-up thinking and the state of disarray on apprenticeships in general and non-levy-payers in particular at the DfE.

“The stop-start approach that Anne Milton [the skills minister] endorsed is now complicated by the sorts of examples that are coming forward and which FE week has illustrated.”

PTM Group was run by directors Peter Tighe

and Jamie Paterson.

Mr Tighe is also the sole director at Northern Construction Training and Regeneration Community Interest Company, another provider which was funded during the tender, again without any direct, prior apprenticeships contract with the government.

Mr Paterson resigned as a director on November 29; neither he nor his erstwhile colleague would comment.

The Department for Education also refused to comment on how or why PTM Training had received a contract, nor what would happen to its funding considering the business is no longer running, because, a spokesperson said, the non-levy tender remains a “live procurement”.

The non-levy tender has tormented the sector all year, plagued with delays and an aborted first attempt.

FE Week analysis of the 714 providers that were successful in the procurement reveals that nearly a third (227) are on their first direct apprenticeships contract.

Exeter College, which has an 81-per-cent overall apprenticeship achievement rate, well above the national average of 67 per cent, told FE Week that it was “not satisfied” by the result and would appeal.

Karen Dobson, the chief executive of the Newcastle and Stafford Colleges Group, which has an apprenticeship achievement rate of 84 per cent, said she was “disappointed and mystified” at the outcome.

“Apprenticeships are an important and successful part of our operation,” she told FE Week.

“As you would expect, we have submitted an appeal. We are hopeful that this will reach a positive conclusion over the coming weeks, for NSCG and our many satisfied employer partners and apprentices.”

More than 10 colleges had non-levy allocations to use this year but were denied contracts in the procurement. The Association of Colleges is helping its members with their challenges and appeals.

Proven private providers which didn’t get contracts are also angry at the tender outcome.

Jamie Rail, the managing director of Focus Training Group, which is Ofsted rates as ‘good’ and which has delivered apprenticeships in the south-west for 20 years, said he “can’t believe” it had been the government’s intention “to lose good provision”.

He claimed that the procurement had been “more about how good you were at writing a bid” rather than the “quality of what you do”.

Providers that failed to secure funding vent their fury

Bid for £640,312

“We submitted a tender based on 15/16 accounts which covered a 10 month period. The ESFA unilaterally changed our turnover calculation to the value stated in our financial statements, and failed to take into account the additional two periods from the previous year when working out the ‘correct’ funding cap.

“They have clearly made an error in calculating our turnover which contradicts guidance given in the clarifications spreadsheet.”

Simon Bozzoli, Future LDN Ltd

Bid for £201,000

“I am very confused by this outcome and feel our local community will be greatly disadvantaged. This approach to apply a pro rata reduction to all tender responses in a large geographical area will give very spurious outcomes.

“This practice will encourage the applicant to submit inaccurate and inflated figures to remain in process which does not help anyone in the understanding of the true capacity of the apprenticeship delivery in the UK.”

Lee Hockaday, St Vincent College

Bid for £262,128

“Not very happy as you can imagine. Absolutely gutted. ESFA suggested our tender was less than £200,000 and our spreadsheet clearly states it was above. Compliance and quality was good. Been a successful training provider since 1982 and this will have very serious implications for us as a company. We are a niche provider and this will also have serious implications for our SME’s who are the bulk of our business.

Martyn Horabin, Lancaster Training Services Ltd

Bid for £284,000

“They challenged our cap calculation and detailed they felt that we had over calculated by £8,000 and that our contract value fell below the £1.5m threshold.”

Kirsty Gwynne, Abbeydale Vetlink Veterinary Training Lt

Bid for £302,022

“Having written an otherwise successful bid and requesting a realistic contract allocation in excess of the minimum threshold, to find out we have then been made unsuccessful based on a pro rata calculation taking us below the minimum threshold is devastating news.

“Had we been greedy/unrealistic in our request, we may well have received an allocation in line with our actual request.”

Stephen Briganti, North East Employment & Training Agency Ltd

Bid for £1,017,661

“We were only 2 per cent short of passing the 75 per cent award threshold. We are devastated. Our tender cap was not challenged by the ESFA.”

Nadine Allen, Yorkshire College of Beauty Ltd

to complaints and confusion

AELP furious at ‘Wild West’ procurement

The AELP wants the education secretary to review the “controversial” outcome of the non-levy tender before ‘good’ and ‘outstanding’ providers are “wiped out”.

The body’s boss Mark Dawe described the situation as a “Wild West of apprenticeship contracts and delivery”, after he suggested that many providers with ‘good’ or even ‘outstanding’ Ofsted grades could enter administration or be forced to cut experienced staff after they were denied contracts.

He wrote to Justine Greening and the ESFA on Monday, setting out two main concerns.

“We have heard from a small number of members which have not met the minimum scoring requirement, or where the scoring of questions does not make sense,” he said.

“And some who can’t work out why their maximum bid value has been adjusted. These members need to make sure that they have put in their concerns through the proper process through Bravo, making it very clear what they think has been done in error, ignored or misunderstood.”

He is far more concerned by the “vast number of providers who have passed the bidding criteria, often with full marks” but which due to the ESFA’s decision to pro-rata all bids in the same way, “have been pushed under the minimum contract level of £200,000”.

“We are hearing some started with a bid level of £750,000,” he explained. “A significant number of these members deliver way over the minimum contract level.

“It beggars belief that at a time when starts are reducing to 40 per cent of the level of the prior year, the government is willing to undermine a well-established, high-quality network of businesses through a badly defined tender process.”

The AELP wants every provider affected by the non-levy tender to get in touch with their local MP to take the battle to Parliament.



Affordability applied by age and region

Apprenticeship providers in London are the biggest losers from the non-levy tender, as FE Week analysis shows they were awarded on average just a third of the value of their bids.

In the results letters sent out by the ESFA on December 7, the agency explained how it decided the values each provider would receive.

“The awards for each individual budget were set through a pro-rata process: for each of the 18 budgets, the agency divided the total budget available by the total value of successful tenders to generate a pro rata percentage,” it said.

“The pro-rata percentages were then applied to the value of the successful tenders in the respective budget groupings. The value of the pro-rata awards at individual potential provider level was then combined to form a total contract award. Any pro-rata percentage that exceeded 100 per cent was capped at 100 per cent so that resulting awards did not exceed tender values.”

The 18 budget groupings were made up of England’s nine regions, and split

into two age ranges: 16 to 18, and 19 and over.

FE Week launched a survey immediately after the results were released, and providers began telling us their outcomes. We were able to work out the proportion of non-levy funding awarded by age and region (see map).

London has been worst hit: providers from the capital have only received a third of what they applied for.

At the other end of the scale, however, providers in the east of England were awarded nearly two thirds of their bids. The variations are the result of the ESFA’s attempts to manage demand across the country.

The second biggest loser was the west Midlands, followed by the south-east.

London apprenticeship providers immediately expressed their disappointment.

“As a successful college provider which has increased its apprenticeship delivery substantially over the past two years, delivering in a

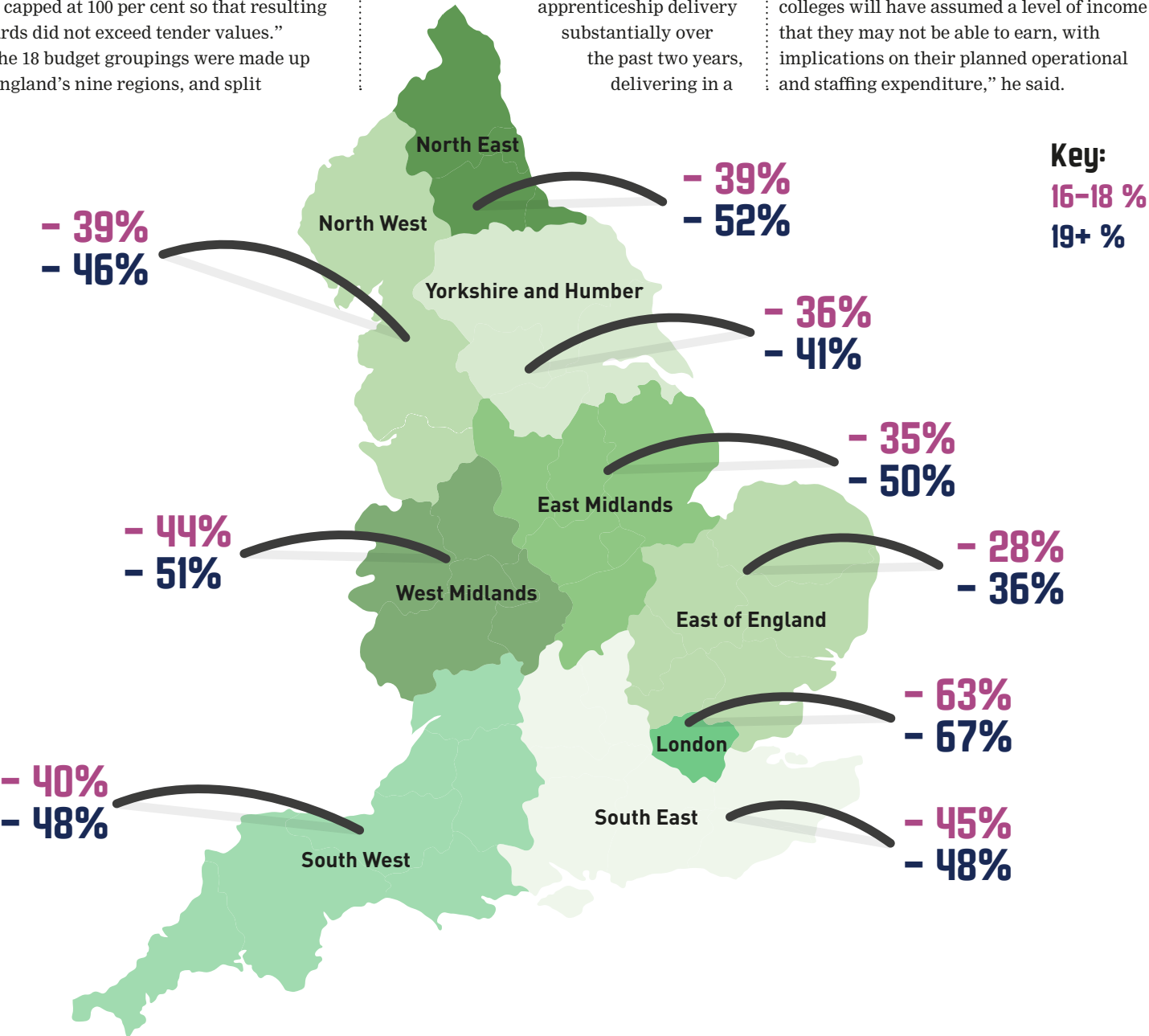
highly deprived part of London, this is an extremely low award,” said Stewart Cross, the director of information and integration at the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London.

His college bid for £1.5 million but was only awarded £569,413.

“About 90 per cent of our current delivery, like many in London, is to non-levy payers,” Mr Cross added. “We will run out of non-levy funding by April at our current rate and SMEs and learners in Tottenham and Enfield will suffer as a consequence.”

Gerry McDonald, the chief executive of New City College, told FE Week that he was “disappointed to receive a non-levy initial contract award of under 45 per cent of our bid”.

“We may submit a case for growth but it seems that the income is by no means guaranteed. Looking at the bigger picture, it is a concern for the sector that individual colleges will have assumed a level of income that they may not be able to earn, with implications on their planned operational and staffing expenditure,” he said.



Non-levy tender affordability reductions applied by age and region

NAO: Learndirect DID get minis

BILLY CAMDEN
@BILLYCAMDEN

The special treatment Learndirect received after its infamous grade four was waved through by an unnamed minister, even though the government’s former education funding chief took “personal responsibility” at the time, a new report by the National Audit Office has revealed.

England’s public spending watchdog this week published its much anticipated report into the circumstances surrounding the monitoring, inspection and funding at the nation’s biggest FE provider.

It has shown for the first time that the decision to continue funding Learndirect until July 31 next year was likely made by the Department for Education’s boss Justine Greening, even though ex-ESFA chief Peter Lauener publicly claimed the decision had been his alone.

The report found that between 2015 and August 2017, Ofsted awarded an ‘inadequate’ rating to 26 providers other than Learndirect. In 23 cases, the ESFA terminated their contracts with a notice period of three months or fewer. The other three cases involved four-

or six-month notice periods. In May this year, around six weeks after Ofsted’s visit to Learndirect, the ESFA concluded that continuing to fund the provider for 2017/18 would “best meet the interests of learners”, allowing the company to wind down and let learners “complete their courses with minimal disruption”.

This was because it believed that the provider’s size made it an “unusual case, to which special considerations should apply”.

The ESFA however “recognised” that such a decision would “require ministerial review”, which “would not be possible until after the general election”. Accordingly, “ESFA put a formal submission to the minister on July 4, 2017”, the report found.

This was the only time a minister has reviewed and approved an ESFA decision to continue funding a provider at grade four, the NAO found.

The DfE declined to comment directly on which minister took the final decision or when it was made. However, Anne Milton had only just been appointed as skills minister at the time of the submission, making it clear that the decision would have been taken by Ms Greening, the education secretary.

During a Public Accounts Committee

meeting in October, Mr Lauener said it had been his decision to continue funding Learndirect until next July, after Meg Hillier, the committee’s chair, asked him if the provider “was too big to fail”.

At the same meeting, Jonathan Slater, the DfE’s permanent secretary, denied that the Learndirect had been given special treatment.

But as the NAO has now confirmed, no other ‘inadequate’ training provider has ever been given close to a full year to run down its contracts.

“The NAO investigation into the monitoring, inspection and funding of Learndirect corroborates in grizzly detail all the concerns expressed by the Labour Party and others when Ofsted produced their verdict of inadequacy on the company’s apprenticeship activities,” said the shadow skills minister Gordon Marsden.

“It highlights the failure of this government to maintain proper oversight of a company given huge amounts of public money and underlines the growing systemic failure of this government’s marketised approach in higher and further education.”

“Our priority throughout has been the



Justine Greening

protection of learners and ensuring that they do not lose out – a point that has been acknowledged by the NAO,” said a DfE spokesperson.

“We set the contract wind-down period to July 2018, which will give learners the opportunity to complete their courses, and will continue to monitor performance on a monthly basis to ensure learners and other service users are not affected.

“This process has demonstrated that where providers do not meet the standards we expect, we will not hesitate to take action.”

Public Accounts Committee will hold hearing in January

The public accounts committee has scheduled a hearing to review the Learndirect saga on January 15, FE Week understands.

The meeting will dissect the findings of this week’s report from the National Audit Office, which was first requested by the PAC’s chair, Meg Hillier.

Witnesses to appear at the hearing will include Ofsted’s chief inspector Amanda Spielman, Learndirect boss Andy Palmer, the former ESFA chief Peter Lauener, and the Department for Education’s permanent secretary, Jonathan Slater.

It remains unclear whether the education secretary Justine Greening will be called, given the explosive revelation in the NAO report that the ESFA sought ministerial approval on extending Learndirect’s contracts.

The provider was allowed to retain its publicly funded skills contracts for almost a year – much more than the usual three-month termination period – even though it was given an ‘inadequate’ rating by Ofsted in a report published in August.

“The government backed itself into a corner by letting itself become dependent on Learndirect,” said Ms Hillier.

“At a time when many further education providers are struggling with funding restraint, it is disgraceful that the department should be continuing to spend millions of pounds of taxpayers’ money on an inadequate provider.

“I am concerned that it took Ofsted so long to investigate. It knew Learndirect was a risk from as early as spring 2015, but the inspection took two years to arrive.”

In a statement, Learndirect claimed the report gave “a balanced view” the decisions made by Ofsted and the ESFA “concerning monitoring, inspection and funding”.

“Since the inspection, Learndirect has worked closely with the ESFA and Ofsted to ensure that the provision being offered to learners and apprentices continues to improve,” it continued.

“Significant improvements have been recognised in the recent monitoring inspection undertaken by Ofsted in November 2017.

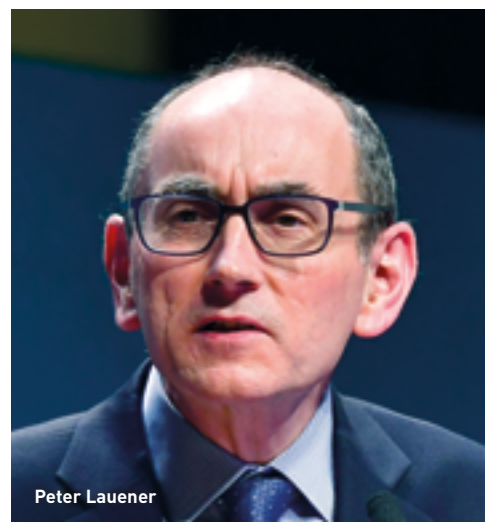
“This has been a particularly difficult time for the company and especially the many hundreds of Learndirect staff who are wholly committed to ensuring the best possible experience for their learners and apprentices.”



Meg Hillier



Jonathan Slater



Peter Lauener



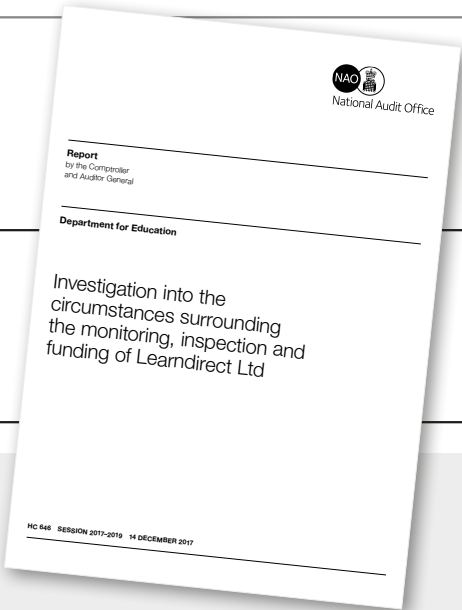
Andy Palmer



Amanda Spielman

Material special treatment

Six key findings from the investigation



Plans were aborted for full Ofsted inspections in 2015 and 2016

Ofsted identified “risks” with Learndirect’s delivery of apprenticeships and classroom-based teaching in 2015 but only gave it an “amber” rating at the time, which did not trigger an inspection.

This was changed to “red” in March 2016 and Ofsted said it would schedule a full inspection for the following November. This was however deferred while Learndirect was negotiating the sale of its apprenticeships business to another party (a sale which never actually went through).

Learndirect tried to defer its inspection again in March 2017 when it was moving its apprenticeship provision to Learndirect Apprenticeships Ltd, but Ofsted declined this request.

It made a tactical withdrawal from the AEB tender to secure funds

Learndirect originally bid for £85 million in this year’s AEB tender. But in mid-July, after the provider’s grade four, the ESFA asked Learndirect to “generate some 2017/18 AEB funding scenarios and their consequences”.

On July 25, Learndirect contacted the ESFA to withdraw its bid from the tender, believing that this course of action “offered the best prospect for receiving some AEB funding in 2017/18”.

It was aware that it would receive no funding at all if Ofsted were to publish its ‘inadequate’ rating.

Learndirect’s financial health rating has been ‘inadequate’ since 2015

The ESFA downgraded its financial health rating for Learndirect from ‘satisfactory’ to ‘inadequate’ in late 2015. The agency noted that the company’s 2014/15 accounts showed “high borrowing and low profitability relative to turnover”. The company then extended its accounting period, and did not file financial statements for the year-end 31 July 2016.

The company explained that it took this decision because of “uncertainties” caused by its Ofsted inspection. ESFA received “management” accounts instead of full accounts, which confirmed that the ‘inadequate’ rating was still “appropriate”.

The DfE’s communications team hid Learndirect’s notice of serious breach

Learndirect should have been included in the ESFA’s ‘notice of serious breach’ list in early April this year, but the DfE was aware that Ofsted’s planned ‘inadequate’ rating was being delayed while Learndirect pursued its complaint.

The DfE’s communications team subsequently asked for Learndirect to be omitted from the list, because it “did not want any information suggesting that the company was not meeting expectations to be in the public domain until Ofsted had made its final rating public”.

Learndirect has £95 million from the ESFA for 2017/18, £14 million for apprenticeships

The ESFA will hand Learndirect just shy of £95 million this year – £45 million from the Adult Education Budget, £31 million for European Social Fund projects, £14 million to complete the training of existing apprentices, and £4 million from Advanced Learner Loans.

This is the first time the provider’s apprenticeship allocation has been revealed, after the DfE repeatedly refused to release the figure.

Learndirect’s apprenticeship achievement rates stood at 74 per cent in 2011/12, but fell to 58 per cent in 2015/16 – four percentage points lower than the government’s minimum threshold.

Learndirect Home Office and STA contracts being put out to tender

Learndirect is likely to lose its other government contracts, including those currently held with the Home Office and Standards and Testing Agency, to deliver the Life in the UK test and professional skills tests respectively.

Both contracts, which will bring a combined income of £10.8 million to Learndirect this year, will be put out for tender next year. The Home Office contract was already due to run out in June, but the STA agreement was meant to run until 2019.

Learndirect Ltd’s income from its main government contracts

- Table Notes**
- Advanced Learner Loans help people aged 19 and over to undertake general and technical qualifications at levels 3, 4, 5 and 6. ESFA gives funding to providers which use this funding to issue loans to eligible learners.
 - Learndirect Ltd was allocated £47.1 million by ESFA as part of its European Social Fund 2014–2020 projects. In 2017/18 Learndirect Ltd is expecting to claim £31.1 million against its allocation. The Heads of Terms states that Learndirect Ltd’s European Social Fund contracts with ESFA will end in July 2018, and that learners will not be enrolled on courses that cannot be completed before 31 July 2018. Learndirect Ltd has told us that it is discussing with Local Enterprise Partnerships the possibility of funding after July 2018.
 - Learndirect Ltd has a number of contracts with DWP, but the Work Programme contract is the largest of these. Learndirect Ltd’s contract for the DWP Work Programme will run into 2018/19, but the company has informed us that it is taking a prudent approach to its forecast for this contract.
 - From 2018/19, all apprenticeships training will be undertaken by Learndirect Apprenticeships Ltd.
 - These contracts will be re-procured. Learndirect Ltd will be eligible to bid for them.
 - Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Funding source	Actual 2016/17 income (£m)	Expected 2017/18 income (£m)	Expected 2018/19 income (£m)
Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), for Adult Education Budget (AEB)	59.2	45	0
ESFA, for 16 to 18 apprenticeships	14	5.3	0
ESFA, for adult apprenticeships	23.8	9.1	0 ⁴
ESFA, for Advanced Learner Loans ¹	3.6	4.2	0
ESFA, for European Social Fund ²	5.3	31.1	See note 2
Home Office	6.4	6.3	See note 5
Department for Work & Pensions (DWP), for Work Programme	2.7	0.9	0 ³
Standards and Testing Agency	3.2	3.6	See note 5
Total	118.2	105.5	Unknown Source: NAO report

”

EDITORIAL



Non-levy
tender
recount?

Nobody could have predicted that the ESFA would accidentally award non-levy apprenticeship funding to a company that went bust months ago.

Although the DfE is tight-lipped and presumably red-faced, there must surely be an independent investigation into how this slipped through the due diligence process.

Conversely, that some high-quality colleges and training providers will see their funding stop from January is nonsensical.

The ESFA will no doubt say its bid evaluation team simply scored the applications on the basis of the 10,000 words they included.

That the result is a fail for grade one Exeter College and others like it is most likely because a small part of the submission they had written wasn't deemed to answer the question well enough.

But as a result, over 98 per cent of employers, those not paying the levy, can't continue to work with these colleges and providers.

There will always be winners and losers in any competition, but as our investigation has laid bare, a recount shouldn't be ruled out.

Nick Linford, Editor

news@feweek.co.uk

OFSTED ANNUAL
REPORT TWEETS:

Sam Twiselton

@samtwiselton

Some really important messages - assessments and tests should serve not drive the curriculum
[@amanda_spielman](#) [#OfstedAR17](#)

Angela Rayner

@AngelaRayner

FE sector unlikely to improve unless base rate funding is increased says HMCI. We agree and Labour will invest in FE [#OfstedAR17](#)

Shane Chowen

@shanechowen

Pleased to see Ofsted chief slam inadequate post 16 funding, but can't find evidence backing HMCI's quote about college sports and performing arts students having no "line of sight" to employment. [#OfstedAR17](#)

Anna Trethewey

@annatreth

'the case of learndirect limited has shown that no provider is too big to fail'. Glad this has been highlighted. [#OfstedAR17](#)

Ian Pryce CBE

@ipryce

Has Ofsted just judged our funding inadequate? Recognition that you can't sustain high quality on the cheap is welcome if long overdue



New boss pushes for ‘faster and better’ IfA

JUDE BURKE

@JUDEBURKE77

The Institute of Apprenticeships will make its processes and policies “faster and better” in 2018, under the new regime of former military man Sir Gerry Berragan.

It launched its assault on government red tape in a statement on Monday, just two weeks after the former army adjutant general took over as chief executive.

Among the improvements the institute promises are “faster standards development” and “revised funding calculations” – two bones of contention for the employer groups developing standards and the providers wanting to deliver them.

“We’ve always recognised some of the systems, policies and processes we inherited needed improving,” it said.

“Institute staff have been listening, consulting and planning improvements to make the process faster and better.”

The institute is “working hard to shorten the process” of developing standards.

From the New Year, it said, “trailblazer groups will be able to access intensive two-day workshops to complete the writing of standards or assessment plans from start to finish” which will save “about a third of the usual time”.

It also plans work with the groups so that

“standards and EPA plans can be submitted and approved in parallel, saving about six weeks from the end-to-end process”.

Furthermore, it committed to “developing a quicker and more transparent system for making funding band recommendations” aligned to the new approvals process, “to cut out unnecessary stages and make sure new apprenticeships are ready as quickly as possible”.

FE Week has previously reported on the frustration felt by various trailblazer groups at the delays to getting standards approved for delivery.

Keith Donnelly, who chairs the group working on the level two carpentry and joinery standard, which is still in development, is one such malcontent.

He complained to FE Week in July about the “inordinately long time” it was taking to get the standard ready for delivery – which is now close to four years.

He has now welcomed the IfA’s new measures.

“Anything that can speed up the approval process for standards will be most welcome by employer groups across the country,” he told FE Week.

Other trailblazer groups have discussed the difficulties they have had in agreeing funding bands for their standards, which have added lengthy delays to the approval procedure.

It’s understood these hold-ups are the result of processes established by the IfA itself in April, when it introduced a funding board to secure “value for money”.

Other improvements due to be brought in next year include a new policy to clarify when qualifications can be included in apprenticeships, because current policy had “led to some unpredictable results”.

The IfA’s overriding principle is that “apprenticeship standards assume that the apprenticeship itself is the qualification”, a statement with which Mark Dawe, the AELP’s chief executive, took issue.

“This seems to be a very strange choice of language and change of position from before,” he said.

“We believe that successful apprentices deserve more than assumptions, namely a proper qualification which benefits them in the employment market.”

Sir Gerry’s appointment as IfA boss was announced in November, after a six-month long recruitment process.

He served as a career soldier for 37 years was initially appointed as an IfA board member in January.

He took over on November 27, replacing former interim chief executive Peter Lauener, who had been about to retire, but who has instead taken up a temporary position in charge of the Student Loans Company.

COMMENTS			
Skills to be at the heart of social mobility plan	Special interview: Minister speaks to FE Week about careers strategy	‘Social mobility’ means nothing without financial support for FE	Consultation launched on closure of 18th studio school
I am all for recycling but the number of times DfE re_ announces things that have already been announced multiple times is getting ridiculous. They must think we all have the memory of goldfish	Read the headline and assumed it was about her path to No. 10! But I read on... More of the same then. For all the promise of it not just being another tired old cliché – she did manage to squeeze in the party line of social mobility and people being free to fulfil their dreams. When you try to protect everything, you protect nothing.	If you live in a democracy then social inequality is inevitable. Some people will ‘move up’ and some will ‘move down’. FE can be a valuable tool in helping people to improve their lot, but so long as colleges are obsessed with their budgets to the exclusion of all else – unable to give time to a student that doesn’t yield a ‘return’ – then they are as useless to their students as their schools were before them.	The idea of applying academic theory to practical, vocational skills is in itself sound. In the ITP sector we do it all the time, and did so long before the introduction of Studio Schools, and UTC’s. Instead of investing in alternative schools that clearly struggle, here’s an idea, invest the money in our sector. We’re pretty good at this stuff!!
G Callaghan	Lurch	Nigel Barratt	Noel Johnson



The Oxford Partnership LLC, based in Saudi Arabia brings together three exceptionally reputable UK Education Partners, Activate Learning, Moulton College and GEMs Education to deliver high quality education in Vocational Colleges across four locations in Saudi.

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Our current roles for the coming Semester starting in January 2018 include:

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- Director of Quality (based in the Northern Province with responsibility for all Colleges)
- Vocational Innovation Manager (Al Qurayat College, with responsibility for developing innovative curriculum for our vocational students)
- Academic Directors (roles in all Colleges, with experience in Quality, English and Vocational Education)
- Curriculum Managers - (roles in our Northern Colleges, with experience in Foundation and Vocational Education)
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- Vocational Assessors - All locations

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As an equal opportunities employer, the College welcomes applicants from all sections of the community. Application packs can be obtained by visiting our website **www.derwentside.ac.uk** Alternatively, email **HR@derwentside.ac.uk** or telephone (01207) 585963 to request a pack.

**For an informal discussion regarding the role, please contact Karen Redhead,
Principal and Chief Executive (01207) 585940.**

Closing date for applications: Friday 5th January 2018





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Should you wish to apply for the role, please visit: <http://apm-uk.co.uk/join-our-team/current-vacancies/> for full details and how to apply.

Closing Date: 2nd January 2018

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EXPERTS

GORDON
MARSDEN

Shadow skills minister

Less money, more problems: How the skills agenda failed

The government has had a few good ideas this year, admits Gordon Marsden, but it seems determined not to pay for any of them to actually happen

As we count down to the end of 2017, we can reflect on how different the skills landscape is today from 12 months ago. The Institute for Apprenticeships is now operational – finally – with a permanent chief executive. They'll need him, given the big ask when the IfA takes on technical education in April, on top of the challenges the apprenticeship levy will set him in the New Year. While the government has begun trying to rectify some of its past mistakes, far more needs still to be done.

Apprenticeship starts for 2016/17 tell some of the story. As a local MP, I worry that in Blackpool starts for under 19s are down 21 per cent on last year. Overall figures nationally are down 509,400 to 491,300. This is not just a towns issue – though it is crucial that government pays more attention to the particular issues faced by non-metropolitan areas, particularly post-Brexit. Young people are being deprived of valuable opportunities by government's short-sightedness. Its continuing failure to support non-levy-paying employers, on which Mark Dawe and AELP have spoken out, has left far too many providers in limbo.

From when we first laid down the original proposals for the Institute, through the TFE bill and the levy's introduction, we have always said that ministers must take more time to listen to stakeholders. Many concerns both Labour and the sector at large once expressed have come to pass. The government must act now on the need for more flexibility in the use of the levy. Ministers won't be forgiven if we have a repeat of the Learning Loans fiasco – where lack of take-up forced the Treasury to claw back hundreds of millions of pounds that should have gone to FE.

In order to consolidate a winning strategy on apprenticeships we need more focus on progress and successful completions, not just on starts – especially as average monthly starts are 17 per cent lower than needed to hit the target. Concerns, not least from AELP, that management apprenticeships would soar in popularity when the levy came in, combined with the Sutton Trust's 'Better apprenticeships' report, which found that two thirds of apprenticeships merely rebadge existing training, have increased fears about gaming the system. These are concerns I've consistently raised myself, that quality and

progression would be overlooked in a race to the three million starts.

If we really want to expand quality and quantity, as we do need to do, our call loud and clear in 2018 is for effective traineeships to help deliver economic potential and social mobility. A once-promising idea has fallen foul of the government's failure to promote them effectively. The latest figures showing only one in five trainees progress to apprenticeships are testament to this failure. That is why we will be working with AELP and other stakeholders in January, hosting a parliamentary event to discuss the crucial role traineeships could play in moving forward.

“
Our call in 2018 is for effective traineeships to help deliver economic potential and social mobility

We also now finally have a careers strategy. After many unfulfilled promises we have the bones of something to work with. Again however, as I have already told FE Week, the promises are not yet enabled either with enough money or the capacity to deliver them. Ministers have not got adequate resources to make this work.

In areas where major gains in reskilling and retraining could be made, the DfE has been far too timid. The fact that the Union Learning Fund, a programme accepted as hugely successful, remains frozen at £12 million – with only last-minute pressure from us and others moving the Treasury to dispense small change to prevent a proposed 33-per-cent annual cut of £4 million – indicts the poverty of ambition that still hangs with this Tory government.

That is why we will be talking far more in 2018 about our National Education Service. The NES would address some of the long-standing lack of parity of esteem towards FE and a much fairer, more joined-up ecosystem to deliver life chances and social mobility. We will recognise the central role that FE, skills and apprenticeships can and must deliver for 21st century Britain.

CLAUDIA
HARRIS

CEO, the Careers and Enterprise Company

The careers strategy is here, and it's time to get ambitious

The Careers and Enterprise Company has had its role beefed up in the new careers strategy, but hasn't always had good press for what it's achieved with government funding so far. Claudia Harris responds

The careers strategy aims to help every young person, no matter what their background, to build a rewarding career. At the Careers and Enterprise Company we welcome it and look forward to helping implement it.

The strategy has two particularly important ideas. The first is its endorsement of the Gatsby benchmarks, which lay out a broad range of support to help transition young people into the world of work. They move us beyond debates on employer encounters or one-to-one career guidance in favour of a multifaceted approach. Our own focus was on employer engagement and workplace experiences; the strategy broadens this focus.

We will be working to ensure that young people have the best opportunity to develop their careers. This includes working with careers professionals and the wider careers sector, while continuing to ask employers to volunteer their time. We have always believed that personal guidance delivered by professionals is important and welcome the opportunity to actively support schools and colleges to develop the guidance they offer.

The second idea centres on local clusters of schools, colleges, ILPs and employers working together as networks. This approach is inevitably more difficult to implement than a single "project", but it is the best way to ensure young people receive input from a broad range of sources.

With the ongoing reforms to technical education we need to open young people's eyes to the full range of career opportunities, and ensure colleges and other providers of technical education engage from an early age. Our own research shows this is not currently happening in all schools, and the strategy makes addressing it a priority.

The CEC was set up over two years ago to focus on employer engagement with education. With this mandate we established a network of enterprise coordinators working with clusters of 20 schools and colleges to help connect them to local employers and service providers. Each institution is supported by a business volunteer whose role is to work with the senior team and facilitate engagement with local employers.

We are now collaborating with 38 local enterprise partnerships and working with 75 FE colleges and more than 2,000 schools. Last week we published an evaluation

which showed that the approach is working. Schools and colleges in our network are now reporting 50 per cent more employer encounters than when they started working with us. We have also funded a wide range of other organisations to scale up the best employer engagement programmes in the country, including WorldSkills and the Engineering Development Trust. So far, 250,000 young people have benefited from the first £5 million in funding.

The new strategy asks us to play a broader coordination role, using all the Gatsby benchmarks. These identify the three core pillars of good career guidance: (i) the importance of encounters – with the world of work, and with higher and further education (ii) the need for good information – about how the curriculum links to careers and the labour market; and (iii) the importance of helping a young person to develop a careers plan suited to their own passions and strengths.

“
With the ongoing reforms to technical education, we need to open young people's eyes to the full range of career opportunities

Building on what was learned from a successful pilot led by Gatsby in the north-east, the strategy establishes resource for 20 local career hubs to deliver against these benchmarks. This should be welcome news for those looking for an evidence-led, locally governed solution to careers.

The careers strategy sets out a new direction for careers provision in England. It correctly identifies the national need for multifaceted and programmatic careers guidance which takes place over the longer term. We look forward to working closely with educators, employers and careers providers to deliver outcomes that last for our economy and, most importantly, for our young people.

EXPERTS

Dear Dr Sue



Dr Sue Pember, director of policy and external relations at Hoxley, answers your questions on college governance, backed by her experience as principal of Canterbury College and in senior civil service posts in education and skills.

Q1: EXECUTIVE PAY

Academy governors and trustees have received a letter from the DfE asking them to justify high headteacher salaries. Are we subject to the same criteria for college principals?

Answer: **“ It might be prudent to consider it ”**

As yet, there has been no sign that the DfE wants to send out a similar letter to colleges. Colleges are independent of the government, while academies are part of the DfE. This is an important feature of a college’s legal status and why the DfE may not feel it is in a position to offer such direct advice. However, the sentiments in the letter about justifying salary levels and the need to benchmark are as relevant to governors of colleges as they are for academies. We only have to look at the row going on in HE regarding vice-chancellor salaries to see how divisive it is to pay more than what the public thinks is appropriate. It might be prudent for your remuneration committee to consider the letter and make decisions in light of it.

Q2: MEETING STAFF

We are keen to be a proactive governing body but we feel the executive blocks us from getting too close to college staff. What can we do to be assured what senior staff tell us is true?

Answer: **“ You are not there to judge staff ”**

I am not sure what you mean about getting too close to college staff, but I am assuming that you want to be able to get information that helps to triangulate or correlate the data you receive at board meetings. It is important to trust your executive team and you need to work with them, so it will take time to restore this relationship. You need to be up-front about the issue and ask the executive to set up a series of staff meetings with the governors, and organise a set of learning walks. But remember you are not there to judge any member of staff, and concerns that are raised should be noted and given to the executive to resolve and report back to you.

Q3: COUNCIL RELATIONS

We will be in a devolved combined authority that has a skills deal, but they have not talked to us about their vision or recognised our role in setting strategy. When there is so little engagement, what should we do?

Answer: Your role as governors is clear: you have the statutory responsibility for determining the mission and vision, and ensuring a secure financial future for your college – that role has not been given to the combined authority. However, as the combined authority will have a commissioning role for a part of your adult budget, you and the executive team will need to build a relationship with them. So be proactive and arrange to meet them; write to them, explaining what you think the strategic issues are, how your college can help meet them, and what it would be useful for them to do to support you. But I think you will also need to be patient. These are new times with new teams of officers trying to get their head round a complex, integrated system that relies on several funding routes for financial stability.

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CAMPUS ROUND-UP

with Samantha King



Dashing all the way

Who needs reindeers anyway?

International business studies students have helped organise a local charity's annual Christmas-themed fundraiser as part of their employability scheme.

Bath College partnered with Dorothy House Hospice Care for their seventh annual Santa and Elf Run, giving students the chance to get real-life event management experience.

The event attracted 300 people dressed in suitably festive attire, who then tackled either a 2.5k or 5k fun run in the hospice's grounds.

The team of level three BTEC students handed out promotional flyers ahead of the event, marshalled, and ran activities for children and adults on the day, including a selfie tent.

The link-up was part of the college's employability initiative, its Academy of Business, which prepares students for working life by giving them access to work placements and industry professionals.

A number of local organisations have signed up to offer placements, company visits, student mentoring and business talks, including Dorothy House, which provides support for people with life-limiting illnesses.

"The college is delighted that the students gained practical work experience while supporting a great local charity," said Lucy Beattie, an employability advisor at Bath College.

Blackpool donkeys' big day out

Farriery apprentices have had a lesson in caring for donkeys' feet during Myerscough College's annual Donkey Day.

Experts from the Donkey Sanctuary in Devon joined the hoof-care students for a workshop on how to trim donkeys' feet, which differ greatly from horses in the way they grow, before letting them loose on visiting donkeys from the neighbouring town of Blackpool.

The senior farrier from the sanctuary, Colin Goldsworthy, delivered the workshop to the learners accompanied by veterinary surgeon Jo Goliszek, and the local sanctuary coordinator Pam Moon.

"It's an important skill for them to learn, as donkeys' heels grow three times faster than their toes, so their feet have to be trimmed differently to horses," Mr Goldsworthy said.

"The students are keen to learn and it's very rewarding to see them enjoying it so much. I'm pleased that they've learned plenty from the day."

It is the twelfth year running that Mr Goldsworthy has given talks on trimming donkeys' feet to Myerscough students.

"We always get a warm welcome here. We're looking forward to our next visit," he added.



Mule-tide greetings: the farriers get a lesson in donkey feet

Too shy to dance? Try dancing!



Finding their feet: the reluctant dancers

Lytham Sixth-Form College students have tackled their phobia of dancing during a segment on reluctant dancers on national radio.

Presenters on the BBC Radio 5 Live discussed whether men are too embarrassed to dance with a group of male sixth-formers at the ballroom of Blackpool Tower.

The students were given dancing tips from professionals and received advice on overcoming their shyness on the dancefloor by Dr Peter Lovatt, a psychology researcher who studies the effects of dancing on wellbeing.

"For me, it's a personal thing where you're putting yourself out there to be judged when you don't have to," said 18-year-old Ben Wilkinson during a discussion with presenters Nihal Arthanayake and Sarah Brett, as well as Dr Peter Lovatt and Taekwondo Olympian Lutalo Muhammad, who won *Strictly Come Dancing* for Children in Need.

"The producers specifically wanted students who aren't keen on dancing, and I think many people can empathise with that feeling," added Matthew Barr, the college's associate head. "It was an interesting debate and I think the students involved really enjoyed setting aside those awkward feelings and learning techniques which might help them."



Ms Cotton and her fire crew with principal Sam Parrett and students

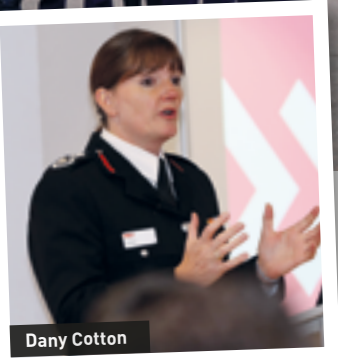
The bonfire of the prejudices

London's first-ever female fire commissioner has tackled gender stereotypes during a talk to learners at London South East Colleges.

Dany Cotton, who began her career with London Fire Brigade in 1988, spoke about her experiences in the fire service to students at the college's Bromley Campus, including being called to the Clapham Junction train crash the same year she joined the service, and the Grenfell tower disaster, which happened just six months into her role as commissioner.

Ms Cotton also covered the theme of women in leadership and management, dispelling myths that certain professions and sectors are male-oriented.

"Research has shown that women have been put off a career in the fire service because it is seen as a job for men. This is simply not true," she said. "It is a job that can be performed by either sex as long as you have the physical and mental strength to handle the training and the dangers that the job brings. These are not qualities that are held solely by one gender."



Dany Cotton

Shropshire Santas learn to sign



A college has run a workshop to help people working as seasonal Santas and elves understand children with communication difficulties when they visit grottos over the festive season, reports Samantha King.

This year, Santas and elves across Shropshire could attend a 2.5 hour Makaton workshop hosted at the Derwen College in Oswestry, to help break down communication barriers between children, Saint Nick and his helpers.

Makaton is a language programme that uses signs and symbols to help people communicate, and is designed to support spoken language by providing visual clues. It is commonly used by people who have no speech, or unclear and limited speech.

The Get Santa Signing workshop was run by the college's head of speech and language therapy Julie Hawkins, who is also the senior Makaton tutor, along with fellow practitioner James Worthington. "This is the first year that Derwen College



Santa and Julie Hawkins practice Makaton

has run a Christmas Makaton workshop," Ms Hawkins said. "We believe that by learning a few simple signs, every Santa and elf can communicate effectively with all children, ensuring that the grotto experience is truly special for children with learning difficulties and disabilities."

Costing £10 a head, the workshop covered a range of Christmas-themed signs and symbols, as well as teaching participants the signs to

Shakin Stevens' Merry Christmas Everyone, which they performed at the end of the session.

A total of 16 Santas and elves staff took part in the workshop, with attendees including teachers from local schools, college staff and workers from a nearby charity, Hope House children's hospice.

The money collected from the event will go back into the college to support students with learning and communication difficulties.

"The workshop was great fun and offered a



A good sign: in the grotto

bit of extra help for grotto staff, making sure that Father Christmas is never lost for words," Ms Hawkins added. "We hope to do it again next year."

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



Ian Lomas
CEO, Greater Merseyside Learning Providers Federation

Start date November 2017

Previous job
Development director, Community Concepts Ltd

Interesting fact
Ian is a fan of both Manchester City and Wales Rugby Union, which he feels qualifies him as a born optimist par excellence.



Debbie Gardiner
Executive chair, Qube Learning

Start date December 2017

Previous job
CEO, Qube Learning

Interesting fact
In 2015 Debbie was appointed as a campaigns ambassador for Cancer Research UK's south-west Bedfordshire constituency.



Lowell Williams
CEO, Dudley College

Start date December 2017

Previous job
Principal, Dudley College

Interesting fact
Lowell loves musicals and had several starring roles when he was at school.



Kit Davies
Interim CEO, Hart Learning Group

Start date December 2017

Previous job
Principal, North Hertfordshire College

Interesting fact
Kit an accomplished French horn player and adrenaline junkie, who practices extreme sports in his spare time.



Neil Thomas
Principal, Dudley College

Start date December 2017

Previous job
Vice-principal, Dudley College

Interesting fact
Neil loves taking part in extreme challenges for charity such as super bungee-jumping, and plans to abseil down the college's Evolve building next year to support the student union.

Movers & Shakers

...

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

FE Week aelp

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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

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

Difficulty:
EASY

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

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Solutions:
Next edition

Last Week's solutions

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

Difficulty:
EASY

8	5	3	2	4	1	6	9	7
9	4	2	6	5	7	8	1	3
1	7	6	9	8	3	2	4	5
5	6	9	4	7	2	1	3	8
2	3	4	8	1	5	9	7	6
7	8	1	3	6	9	4	5	2
6	9	7	5	2	4	3	8	1
4	2	5	1	3	8	7	6	9
3	1	8	7	9	6	5	2	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: Rob Wegg - Hull College