

FE Week

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➤ Over half of the 17,000 apprentices at the nation's largest provider failed last year

Exclusive **BILLY CAMDEN** @BILLYCAMDEN

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NEWS

Top providers turn to MPs for non-levy relief

BILLY GAMDEN
@BILLYGAMDEN

EXCLUSIVE

Top training providers and colleges still denied non-levy contracts are turning to influential MPs in an effort to squeeze the cash they need from the government.

Exeter College, which FE Week rates as the best college in the country, and Hull's HYA Training both appealed the ESFA's decision not to fund their apprenticeships with smaller employers before Christmas.

These appeals were swiftly denied – even though the two providers are respectively rated grade one and two by Ofsted.

Determined not to give up, Exeter College has now turned to its influential local MP Ben Bradshaw, a former culture, media and sport secretary and shadow deputy prime minister, to take the battle to Whitehall.

HYA Training is meanwhile liaising with its own MP, Emma Hardy, who sits on the education select committee.

Mr Bradshaw has already written to Anne Milton about the damage the decision will cause if it is not overturned.

"It is inexplicable to me that the top-performing college in England, with an excellent record on delivering apprenticeships, has lost out in this way," he told FE Week.

"Both Exeter College and local employers

are aghast. I have written and spoken to the minister and officials in her department and at the ESFA to impress on them the importance of finding a solution to this problem and warned them that otherwise the provision of apprenticeships in the Exeter area will be seriously affected."

Exeter College has an 81-per-cent overall apprenticeship achievement rate, well above the national average of 67 per cent.

"We are currently exploring all available options to resolve the present situation," said a spokesperson.

Another high-profile organisation denied a contract in the non-levy tender was children's charity Barnardo's.

The provider is rated 'good' and has 30 years' experience in delivering apprenticeships to the UK's most vulnerable young people.

It appealed the decision before Christmas but Ms Milton stuck to her guns.

A spokesperson for the charity said it would continue to support vulnerable young people into apprenticeships with smaller non-levy employers by becoming a subcontractor to other organisations, "albeit with reduced funding".

Patrik Knowles, the managing director of HYA, has sought legal advice, complaining that the non-levy tender was unfair and represented more of a lottery than a procurement process.



Ben Bradshaw

His provider, like Barnardo's, passed the score criteria but fell below the £200,000 threshold the ESFA uses to apply its pro-rata methodology – a rule which applicants did not know about until the tender results were released.

This "lack of clarity only left everyone second-guessing", Mr Knowles wrote in an article in last week's FE Week.

Ms Hardy said the entire system of apprenticeship funding needs to be more transparent, and wants powers to be devolved to allow local commissioning.

Newcastle and Stafford Colleges Group, another 'good' provider denied a non-levy contract, is still in the midst of its appeal, and is "hugely encouraged" by the level of support



Emma Hardy

it has garnered from its local MPs.

The college's chief executive, Karen Dobson, said she remains "hopeful" that a "satisfactory outcome will be reached in due course".

The much-delayed procurement process has tormented the sector all year and ended up causing huge controversy when results were released in December.

One of the most frustrating cases was revealed by FE Week when we found one organisation that had ceased trading in October was awarded a contract in the procurement.

A total of 714 providers were given allocations to use between January 2018 and March 2019, but 227, nearly a third, are on their first direct apprenticeships contract.



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NEWS

Ofsted visits huge grade 3 college amid slide in achievement rates

JUDE BURKE
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EXCLUSIVE

A huge college rocked by a string of senior leadership departures that's currently rated 'requires improvement' by Ofsted has been revisited amid portents that standards could be slipping further.

Sheffield College lost its chief executive in November and its governing body chair in January, after both resigned with immediate effect.

Its latest accounts, dated December 18, reveal an ongoing decline in achievement rates – particularly among 16- to 18-year-olds.

However, the college denied there was any connection between these upheavals and Ofsted's visit.

"The timing is as expected, falling with 24 months of the college's last inspection, according to Ofsted's common inspection framework," a spokesperson told FE Week.

She added that it would be "inappropriate" to speculate on the outcome before inspectors had completed their report.

An Ofsted spokesperson confirmed the visit was part of its usual inspection schedule.

Sheffield college was rated 'requires

improvement' overall – down from its previous 'good' grade – after its previous inspection almost exactly two years ago.

According to the new accounts, the college's self-assessment concludes that it remains at grade three, but the same document also revealed a slide in its education and training achievement rates – down from 77.4 per cent in 2015/16 to 76.3 per cent.

Among 16- to 18-year-olds that proportion fell even further, from 75.2 per cent last year to a worryingly low 73.6 per cent this year.

Minutes from an October board meeting reveal that this fall came as a surprise to college leaders.

A year-on-year improvement of 2.5 percentage points had been forecast, but this was later downgraded to a "flat position or small decline".

And a 13-point drop in the proportion of adults achieving a functional skills qualification was "completely unexpected".

The minutes note that the college's "approach to tracking and risk-rating student engagement" had been "inspected and commended" by a consultant Ofsted inspector, but that this "did not seem to have informed more accurate learner achievement forecasting".



Angela Foulkes

The college was also subject to a "diagnostic assessment" from the FE commissioner in November – one of a small number of pilot assessments carried out by Richard Atkins and his team.

These are two-day visits to colleges at risk of failing – particularly those with multiple grade threes – to identify areas for improvement before they hit rock bottom.

Principal Angela Foulkes confirmed that the college had "agreed to take part" in the assessment, but that it "has not triggered formal intervention".

Earlier this month, its chair Richard Wright stepped down after almost four and a half years, according to local media reports.

His departure came just two months after chief executive Paul Corcoran resigned with

immediate effect, two and a half years after he was appointed.

Ms Foulkes, who only took the job in June, is acting chief executive until a permanent replacement for Mr Corcoran is found.

She replaced former principal Heather Smith, who retired last summer after two years in charge.

Mr Corcoran and his senior team launched a consultation over the summer on controversial proposals for a staffing shake-up, prompting complaints among employees about the way the restructure was being handled.

Forty senior leadership, managerial, business support and administrative posts were to be cut, as part of drive by the college to invest in frontline teaching.

Over half of Learndirect's apprentices failed last year

BILLY CAMDEN
@BILLYCAMDEN

FROM FRONT

EXCLUSIVE

More than half of the 17,000 apprentices due to complete their course with Learndirect last year failed, as its achievement rate slumped a further 8.6 percentage points, FE Week can reveal.

These latest figures now mean that nearly 25,000 learners have failed to successfully complete their apprenticeship at the nation's biggest FE provider over the last four years – during which time it was given over £150 million to deliver these qualifications.

The ESFA shared its provisional data for individual providers in 2016/17 last week, revealing that Learndirect had accomplished its worst ever overall achievement rate for apprenticeships.

Back in November, following its first monitoring visit since Learndirect's infamous grade four, Ofsted announced that its rates had fallen below the 57.8 per cent dip recorded in 2015/16, but that the actual figure would not be available to the public until as late as June.

FE Week has now seen the data and can reveal that during the last academic year, Learndirect's cohort of 17,033 apprentices had an overall achievement rate of just 49.2 per cent. In other words, more than half failed to attain their qualification.

This is significantly below the ESFA's

minimum threshold of 62 per cent and raises yet more concerns about the quality of training its apprentices are receiving.

The timescale of the 2016/17 figures shows that even after Learndirect's damning inspection in March, when concerns about its delivery were first raised, it didn't sharpen up quickly and continued to fail the majority of its trainees.

Its achievement rate has dropped considerably over the last four years (see table), and since 2013/14, Learndirect has trained 58,283 apprentices but 24,712 of them failed to achieve their qualifications.

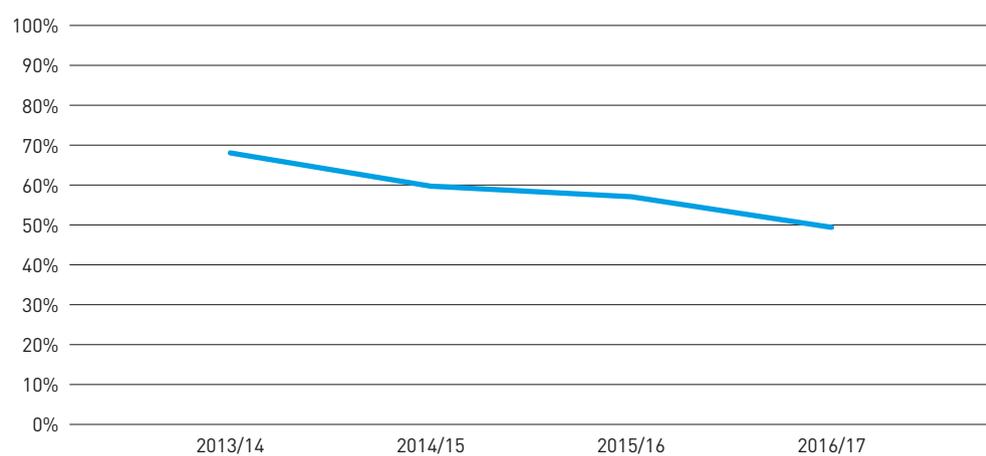
During that time, it was given £153 million by the ESFA to deliver apprenticeships, according to the National Audit Office. It will get an additional £14 million to deliver the qualifications in 2017/18.

During the full inspection in March, Ofsted inspectors slammed managers for allowing around a third of apprentices to "not receive their entitlement to off-the-job learning" and miss out on "the skills they require to progress to the next step in their career".

Its monitoring visit report from November said it still "remains unclear" what off-the-job training had taken place at the provider.

It added that senior leaders had overseen the "phased introduction" of a new policy to clarify how assessors are expected to plan and record apprentices' off-the-job training, but this did not start until two months after the

Learndirect Ltd apprenticeship achievement rate



* Provisional figures seen by FE Week

grade four.

Almost half of apprentices were "identified currently as being behind target, and a further fifth are at risk of falling behind target", Ofsted found.

The monitoring visit did have some more positive news about the current delivery of apprenticeships, however.

"Since the inspection, the proportion of apprentices leaving their programmes early has reduced, and the number of apprentices on unauthorised breaks in learning, which was a major contributing factor to the poor overall achievement rates in 2016/17, has declined significantly," inspectors wrote.

"As a result, the proportion of apprentices completing their qualifications is beginning to

increase, but from a very low base."

There is, however, no evidence of this improvement for courses that ended by July 2017.

Learndirect has been under the microscope ever since the 'inadequate' report appeared in August, and the government subsequently singled it out for special treatment by allowing it to retain its contracts for almost a year – much more than the usual three-month termination period.

It was subject to an NAO investigation and then a Public Accounts Committee hearing, and the report of the latter is expected in the spring.

Learndirect declined to comment on its apprenticeship achievement rates.

NEWS

UTC enrages neighbours by 'poaching' students

ALIX ROBERTSON
@ALIXROBERTSON4

A university technical college in Cheshire has been accused of poaching students from local schools in the middle of the year, in the latest embarrassing blow to the struggling programme.

The pupils were due to join UTC Warrington as normal in September, but it invited them to move over this month, winding up neighbouring heads and potentially forcing them to return per-pupil funding to the government.

The skills minister Anne Milton has herself acknowledged that "concerns have been raised" about whether the UTC's actions are "in breach of the admissions code".

"We are taking this seriously and are in discussions with the UTC, the local authority and representatives from local schools," she said in response to a written parliamentary question from Helen Jones, the MP Warrington North.

UTCs, technical institutions for 14- to 19-year-olds, were launched in 2010, and have struggled with recruiting sufficient numbers of students at 14, as many children don't like to leave schools they have usually attended since they were 11.

They're often seen as unwelcome

competition in the FE sector, which typically recruits from 16, and eight have been forced to close so far.

Almost every UTC missed its recruitment targets in 2016-17, and 39 are having to return a combined debt of over £11 million to the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

UTC funding is allocated based on estimated student numbers, so if their actual enrolment is lower than predicted they have to repay the excess money.

The schools which have

lost pupils to UTC Warrington could also now be asked to return money to the government, as their funding is also directly related to the number of pupils they teach.

The UTC has been scolded by for its "unwise decision" by one of its own founding members, Steven Broomhead, who is also chief executive of Warrington borough council.

"Members" are effectively the owners of a UTC, involved in setting it up and responsible for important decisions, but Mr Broomhead did not mention his

involvement.

"The council was very disappointed by the unwise decision of the UTC and are unimpressed by its educational principles," he said. "We have met with the UTC to discuss the matter and in particular how, in future, our young people's interests could be better served by developing good relationships between schools and the UTC." Ms Jones told *The Warrington Guardian* that she found it "astonishing" that the UTC had recruited the pupils early "without approval from the Department for Education".

"The actions of the UTC have damaged many schools and will lead to yet further cuts in their budgets," the MP said.

She has subsequently tabled questions to the government, asking it to compensate the schools that have lost money.

In response, Nadhim Zahawi, a junior minister at the DfE, wrote a letter on January 19, saying "no schools will lose funding in the current academic year for those year 9 pupils who have made an early transfer to Warrington University Technical College.

"The department is aware that concerns have been raised about the UTC's actions and is discussing them with the UTC, the local authority and representatives from local schools."

The UTC declined to comment.



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These QADAP Packs support the recent report by the Ofsted Deputy Director, FE and Skills, which includes:

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&

The substance of what students are learning matters just as much, if not more than, how good a grade they get in any exam or assessment ..

”

Source: 'Dissemination of the Ofsted HMCI Inspectors Annual Report 2017 Further Education & Skills, at AELP Conference December 2017'

NEWS

Hinds: Carillion apprentices will all be saved

BILLY CAMDEN
@BILLYCAMDEN

The new education secretary will ensure that every apprentice affected by the collapse of outsourcing giant Carillion will be able to complete their training, he has claimed.

Damian Hinds has responded to a letter from Robert Halfon, the chair of the education select committee, who asked him to guarantee that no learner would lose out, after the UK's largest employer of construction apprentices closed down.

"Following Carillion entering compulsory liquidation, we have implemented contingency plans to protect learners," Mr Hinds wrote.

"The Construction Industry Training Board has been identified as the best placed alternative provider for the training of Carillion apprentices.

"We will continue to work closely with the CITB to support apprentices to remain in existing placements or to find new employment with other local organisations, so they can complete their training."

As the construction industry's skills body, he said the CITB "should be able to maximise" every possible opportunity to secure



Damian Hinds

new employment for Carillion apprentices in construction.

If apprentices in the wider Carillion supply chain in England are affected, the ESFA has "well established processes to

support them find alternative placements".

Carillion went into liquidation on January 15, leaving the future of around 1,400 trainees, mostly 16- to 18-year-olds, uncertain.

Since then, FE providers started rallying behind the CITB to help those affected by opening their doors.

The first batch of Carillion apprentices are understood to have been placed with new employers this week.

Mr Hinds' commitment will be music to the ears for many former apprentices, who feel they have been left in the dark since the collapse.

Liz Green, the mother of one former Carillion trainee, told FE Week last week that the whole situation "has been handled badly from the start".

Her son, Alex, had six months left of his level two construction apprenticeship before he was told about the collapse on January 15 when he got home from his placement in Birmingham.

"I think it's disgraceful," Ms Green said last week. "The staff and apprentices have been kept in the dark."

Mr Hinds claimed this week that all apprentices and other learners have now been contacted to "reassure them and advise them on next steps for the transfer to CITB".

The CITB's centres are "geographically situated within what is anticipated to be a reasonable travel time for the apprentices, and critically they have the capacity and capability to take on displaced apprentices and study programme learners".

The CITB is also supporting any 16-to-19 study programme learners affected.

Carillion was the second biggest construction firm in the UK. Its apprentices learned at its training division, Carillion Training Services, primarily in bricklaying, carpentry and joinery.

It held a £6.5 million ESFA contract last year and was rated 'requires improvement' by Ofsted in December 2016.

Affected apprentices can contact the CITB on carillion.apprenticeshipsupport@citb.co.uk or 0344 994 4010.



PAYWIRE

Interserve denies 5,000+ apprentices will go the way of Carillion

Even as the fallout from Carillion's collapse engrossed the nation, another outsourcing giant which trains over 5,000 apprentices also had financial concerns highlighted.

Interserve, an international support services and construction group which runs a large UK training provider called Interserve Learning and Employment Ltd, employs over 80,000 staff worldwide and has an annual turnover of £3 billion.

But in September, the FTSE 250 contractor admitted that its annual profits were likely to halve after a £195 million loss from an energy-to-waste contract. A second profit warning followed in October.

Fears about its financial health grew deeper after its rival Carillion suddenly went into liquidation in January, especially when a report by the Financial Times claimed that the Cabinet Office had established a special team of officials to closely monitor the situation.

The government moved swiftly to reassure people that Interserve will not be the next Carillion, but many fear the fall of another huge organisation with fingers in so many pies.

Interserve topped the list of the government's strategic suppliers in 2017, according to data provider Tussell, winning

£938 million of work across a range of areas including health, education and defence.

Interserve Learning and Employment was formerly called ESG and was bought from finance firm Ares Capital in a cash deal worth £25 million in December 2014.

It is rated 'good' by Ofsted and currently teaches over 5,000 apprentices. It was given £19 million from the ESFA in 2016/17 to deliver apprenticeships, as well as £2 million from the adult education budget.

The provider has around 700 employees and boasts that it is "one of the UK's largest private sector providers of training and employment services".

It also provides vocational training in three FE colleges in Saudi Arabia under the UK's Colleges of Excellence programme and claims it supports over 65,000 people a year into work or training.

A spokesperson for the firm refused to speculate about what would happen to its learners if it collapsed, and claimed it is in no danger of doing so.

Recently announced government contracts include five-year facility management contracts for the Department for Work and Pensions (£227 million) and the Department for

Transport (£190 million).

Other wins include a £500 million construction framework for Manchester city council, and a £140 million facilities management contract extension with the BBC.

Interserve confessed to net debts of about £513 million at the end of 2017, but in a trading update on January 10, its expected operating profit in 2018 was better than forecasted.

"Earlier this month we announced that we expect our 2017 performance to be in line with expectations outlined in October and that our transformation plan is expected to deliver £40-£50 million benefit by 2020," a spokesperson said.

"This remains the case and we expect our 2018 operating profit to be ahead of current market expectations and we continue to have constructive discussions with lenders over longer-term funding.

"We are keeping the Cabinet Office closely appraised of our progress as would be expected."

A Cabinet Office spokesperson added: "We monitor the financial health of all of our strategic suppliers, including Interserve. We do not believe that any of our strategic suppliers are in a comparable position to Carillion."

NEWS

ESFA loophole allows brokerage to continue

PAUL OFFORD
@PAULOFFORD

EXCLUSIVE

Taking fees for brokering apprenticeship funding is acceptable, according to correspondence from the Skills Funding Agency – as long as payments aren't made directly from government funding.

The government recently promised to crack down on brokering, which can see subcontractors charged up to five per cent of their total contract funding in commission to be matched with a prime.

The AELP now wants this loophole fixed for good, to “ensure the need for brokerage is eliminated”.

Funding rules were changed last year to prevent brokering, and state that “funds in an employer's digital account or government-employer co-investment must not be used for... specific services not related to the delivery and administration of the apprenticeship”.

But the director of a Yorkshire-based firm that openly offers a “subcontracting and brokerage service” on its website has denied any wrongdoing, and has correspondence from the body that became the Education and Skills Funding Agency to prove it.

Daniel Scargill, the boss of Diamond Advisory Services, was told that “the service you provide is not fundable under the funding rules – however, any employer/provider can pay you for your service, just not using government funds”.

The message, seen by FE Week, also indicates that profits from funding can still be “indirectly” spent on his brokerage services, though “they cannot be used and included as part of an apprenticeships funding value”.

Mr Scargill claimed while the funding allocation system “is not a perfect one”, his company was “helping to perfect it”.

“It is both fantasy and fallacy to imagine that if brokering was banned, the funds previously paid in commission would find their way into learning,” he added.

AELP boss Mark Dawe was not at all happy to discover the existence of this guidance.

“Anything that takes funding away from frontline has to be assessed for value for money. Sadly the clunky funding system and disastrous procurement exercises mean for many quality providers, they have to find a prime contract partner,” he said.

“This will always lead to a potential market for intermediaries. We are working closely with the ESFA to try and ensure the need for brokerage is eliminated.”

Question: What evidence does the provider need to show to prove that they have not used government funds to pay for our brokerage service if fees have been paid out of their training bank account?

Answer: Evidence of a separate invoice is sufficient... you can argue that indirectly the profits from funding can be spend on your services, just they cannot be used and included as part of an apprenticeships funding value...The service you provide is not fundable under the funding rules - however, any employer/provider can pay you for your service, just not using government funds.

Kind Regards
Skills Funding Agency Business Operations Service Centre

SFA written advice to broker

Diamond Advisory Services was previously known as the Funding Brokers, but its name was changed a year ago.

FE Week reported on the Funding Brokers in April 2016, during an investigation that found brokers were typically charging subcontractors up to five per cent of their government cash for matching them to a prime provider.

The firm had posted an advert which said “we have been providing this service for over three years, securing in excess of £100 million in the process for our clients”.

“Diamond Advisory Services offers a diverse range of services to a similarly diverse clientele,” Mr Scargill said this week. “As such, a decision was taken regarding the company name that the Funding Brokers was inappropriately narrow in what it conveyed.”

Quattro Consultancy, which offers on its website to match prime contractors “looking to work with training providers on a subcontracting or associate basis”, also denies that moves to cut down on brokerage have had

a meaningful effect.

“The key change to the rules is that ‘from May 1, 2017, no government money can be used to pay brokers' fees’,” the firm which did not comment this week, said on its website. “Will this affect our clients? Well we don't think so.”

This loophole is not the first example of weak enforcement. It was reported last year that the NHS and Nottingham city council were continuing to charge what amounted to brokerage fees for allowing providers access to apprenticeship contracts.

The Department for Education clarified its approach to brokerage this week.

“Any government funding provided for apprenticeships must be spent on apprenticeship training and assessment only,” a spokesperson said.

But third-party brokers appear to be in the clear, as it was stressed the ESFA would “only investigate organisations with which it has a contractual relationship”, referring employers or providers.

Charity dinner scandal forces DfE board member out

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS
@PIPPA_AK

David Meller, the co-chair of the disgraced Presidents Club charity dinner that shut down amid allegations of sexual harassment by guests, has stood down as chair of the apprenticeship delivery board.

He has also resigned from his role as a non-executive board member for the Department for Education.

Anne Milton, who has responsibility for the DfE board, made the announcement in Parliament.

The skills and apprenticeships minister, told the House of “allegations of inappropriate and lewd behaviour” at the dinner which she found “quite extraordinary”.

“The government expects board members to adhere to the code of conduct for board members of public bodies,” she said. “This quite clearly states that they should adhere to the seven principles of public life.”

“David Meller is stepping down as non-executive member for the DfE and the Apprenticeship Delivery Board, and I know my right honourable friend the secretary of state is absolutely clear that this is the right thing to do,” Milton added.

She also insisted that “this event was absolutely nothing to do with the DfE”.

“Women have the right to feel safe wherever they work, and allegations of this type of behaviour are completely unacceptable,” she added.

Angela Rayner, the shadow education secretary, told MPs that Meller “should not have any other roles in education”.

The lens is now turning to Nadhim Zahawi, the newly appointed children's minister, who is also understood to have attended the dinner, but who claims to have

left early.

A story by the Financial Times revealed allegations of “groping, sexual harassment and propositioning” of women hired as hostesses for the charity dinner, which took place at London's Dorchester Hotel on January 18.

Meller joined the DfE as a non-executive board member in June 2013.

His appointment as chair of the apprenticeship delivery board, which

guides the government on how to expand the programme, was announced in July 2015.

He also set up the Meller Educational Trust, which runs four schools and The Watford UTC, and served as chair of the National Apprenticeship Ambassador Network. He was made a CBE in the new year's honours list.

He is understood to be taking a “leave of absence” from the trust he chairs in the wake of the scandal.

The trust condemned the allegations of inappropriate behaviour of guests at the men-only dinner, and said Meller's leave of absence would happen “with immediate effect”.

However, it was unclear at the time of going to press whether Meller remained a member of the trust, as he was still listed on the chain's website as a member, trustee and its chair.

“The trust is absolutely committed to equality of opportunity and respect for all members of society,” said a spokesperson for the Meller Educational Trust. “We are appalled to hear reports of what happened at the Presidents Club dinner.”

“We, as trustees, wish to express our sympathy to those women who have been so badly treated. David Meller is taking leave of absence as a trustee with immediate effect. The trustees will continue to support the academies within the trust.”



David Meller

Three million apprenticeship starts

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS
@PIPPA_AK

The government's ambition to reach three million apprenticeship starts by 2020 is slipping further out of its grasp as we hit the halfway point, according to exclusive FE Week analysis of the latest statistics.

The number of starts in the 30 months since May 2015 has just hit 1,234,000, the latest monthly starts data shows, leaving us 266,000 (18 per cent) under one-and-a-half million, which is half of the eventual three-million target.

Another leading sector figure has now told the government to scrap the target entirely.

The head of the Association of Colleges, David Hughes, wrote on Twitter that it was the "wrong target" and claimed that a "brave government would abandon it now and replace with a target about job outcomes".

In another tweet, he suggested that such disappointing results were a "great chance to abandon starts target and focus on access, quality, outcomes and building capacity and capability to deliver that".

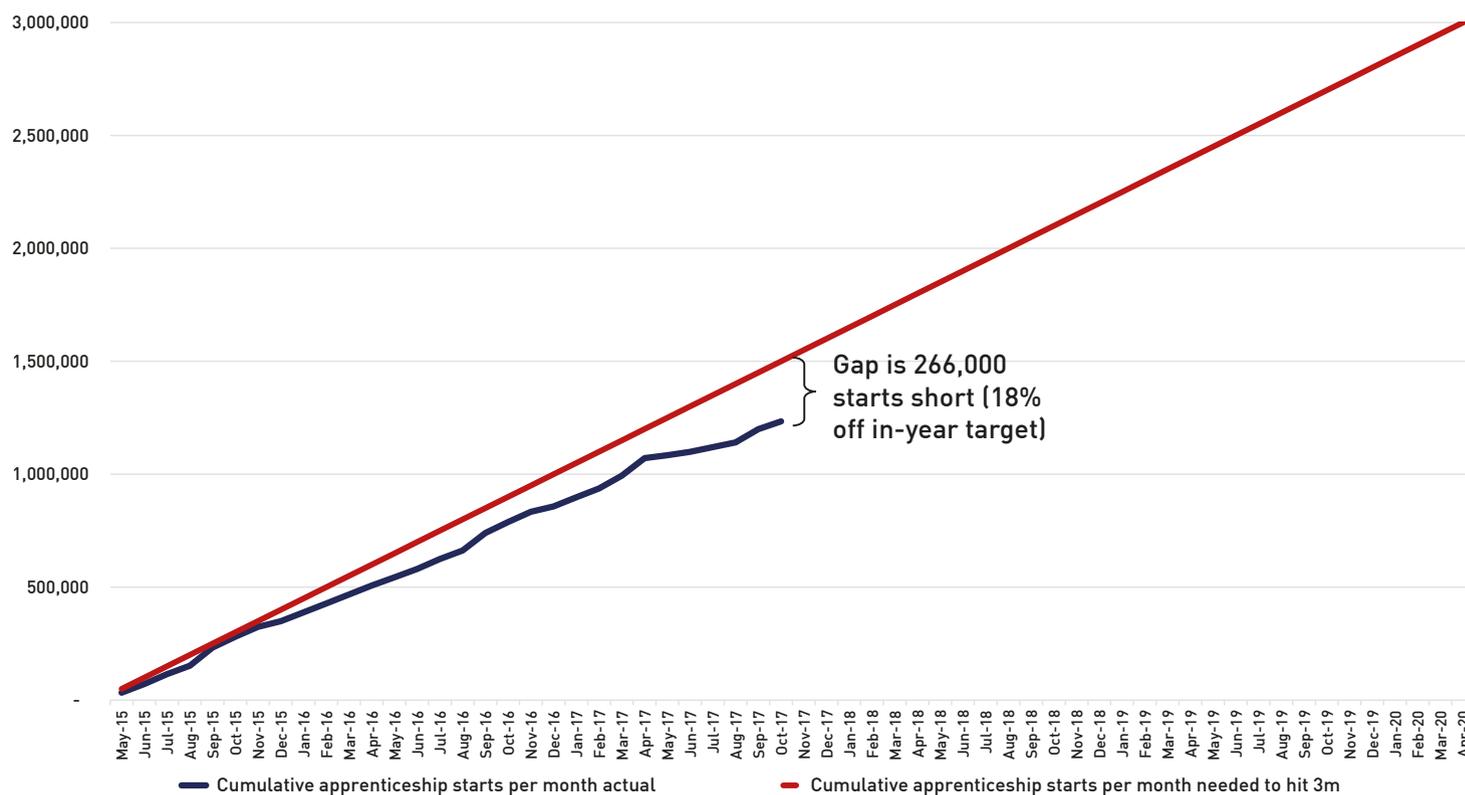
The Department for Education won't be drawn on whether it is considering either abandoning or changing the target.

The Learning and Work Institute's chief executive, Stephen Evans, also believes warned that the Department for Education is "measuring the wrong thing", and warned that it risks "both missing the target and missing the point".

"It's based on starts not completions, and doesn't look at quality or access. We need to look more broadly at the learning and skills system for young people as a whole," he said.

"Our research shows a rise in the proportion of young people spending at least six months not in education, employment or training and an increasing disconnect with the official claimant count."

Monthly progress to 3m starts target as at the end of October 2017



The government first introduced its flagship target in 2015, and repeated it in last year's election manifesto.

In order to hit the target, the country would have had to add an average of at least 50,000 apprenticeship starts per month, a threshold only beaten in three of the last 30 months.

Today's provisional figures revealed a 26-per-cent drop in apprenticeship starts in the first quarter of 2017 compared to the same time period last year. Total apprenticeship starts fell 41 per cent in the six months since May – when the levy was introduced – in comparison with the same period the previous year.

"Today's drop in apprenticeship starts remains alarming and proves again that the

apprenticeship levy isn't yet working for businesses, apprentices and the economy," said Neil Carberry, the CBI's managing director of people policy.

"A fresh approach is needed to make skills reforms work. The CBI will continue in its calls to government to evolve the apprenticeship levy into a flexible skills levy, so firms can fund training for their people whatever the form of high-quality course they do. And policymakers must collaborate more closely with businesses and learning providers to design a stable national framework for skills."

Seamus Nevin, the head of policy at the Institute of Directors echoed these concerns.

"Today's figures are a warning for the government, as it becomes increasingly

unlikely that it will meet its three million new starters target," he said. "The levy is the right idea, but the system is ripe for reform."

The apprenticeships minister Anne Milton admitted that last year had been "a period of significant change" and that "it will take time for employers to adjust".

"But we must not lose sight of why we introduced our reforms in the first place – to put quality at the heart of this programme, and putting control in the hands of employers," she said.

"It is right that they are taking their time to plan ahead, with two years to spend their levy funds, and maximise the opportunities an apprenticeship can bring for both the learner and employer. Feedback we've had shows employers are doing exactly that."

Explained: The four key apprenticeship percentage falls

-41%

The 111,111 fall in apprenticeship starts in the first six months since the apprenticeship levy was introduced (May to October)

-26%

The 41,200 fall in apprenticeship starts in the first quarter of 2017/18 based on provisional data (August to October)

-59%

The 69,800 fall in apprenticeship starts in the last quarter of 2016/17 based on final data (May to July)

-18%

The 266,000 gap between starts as at the end of October 2017 and the 1.5m to be on course to achieve three million

ts target slips further out of reach

Sector leaders have their say over 'wake up call'



David Hughes
Chief executive of the Association of Colleges

The three million apprenticeship target is unhelpful and I would urge the government to move quickly to a more sophisticated measure which relates to what the programme is all about. That would best be judged by the number of job outcomes, progression in work and improved productivity.

The dangers of having a target based on how many people start an apprenticeship have been discussed many times in the last few years and include a lack of focus on access, quality, progression, outcomes and productivity.



Stephen Evans
The Learning and Work Institute's chief executive

The Department for Education is measuring the wrong thing, and it risks both missing the target and missing the point.

It's based on starts not completions, and doesn't look at quality or access. We need to look more broadly at the learning and skills system for young people as a whole.

Our research shows a rise in the proportion of young people spending at least six months not in education, employment or training and an increasing disconnect with the official claimant count.



Neil Carberry
The CBI's managing director of people policy

Today's drop in apprenticeship starts remains alarming and proves again that the apprenticeship levy isn't yet working for businesses, apprentices or the economy.

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Anne Milton
Minister for apprenticeships and skills

The last year has been a period of significant change, it will take time for employers to adjust.

But we must not lose sight of why we introduced our reforms in the first place – to put quality at the heart of this programme, and putting control in the hands of employers.

It is right that they are taking their time to plan ahead, with two years to spend their levy funds, and maximise the opportunities an apprenticeship can bring for both the learner and employer. Feedback we've had shows employers are doing exactly that.



Mark Dawe
The Association of Employment and Learning Providers' chief executive

Ministers should be really concerned about the social mobility agenda after data revealed a continued drop in starts for both young people and at lower levels and called for cuts to the sector to be reversed.

The government has got to look again at the incentives for recruiting young people and make sure that there are apprenticeship opportunities available across the country.

This means that employers shouldn't be charged for taking on 16- to 24-year-old apprentices and they should be given more flexibility in how they train them.



Verity Davidge
EEF's head of education and skills policy

The figures should be a wake-up call to the government that the apprenticeship levy and wider reforms aren't working. We need a "radical rethink".

The fact that the drop isn't as huge as the previous quarter is by no means a cause for celebration, as the numbers are a snapshot of the time when most apprentices begin. The only ray of hope we can find is the increase in the number of higher apprenticeships.

The government must listen to business concerns and ensure the levy delivers the demand-led system that was promised to employers.

Comparing apprenticeship starts before and after introduction of the levy (6 months, May to October)

Level	Age	May 2016 - October 2016 (Q4 final and Q1 provisional)	May 2017 - October 2017 (Q4 final and Q1 provisional)	Shift	Shift
Intermediate	Under 19	50,900	35,300	-15,600	-31%
	19-24	41,400	21,400	-20,000	-48%
	25+	59,300	20,800	-38,500	-65%
	Total	151,800	77,400	-74,400	-49%
Advanced	Under 19	27,300	22,900	-4,400	-16%
	19-24	33,400	22,900	-10,500	-31%
	25+	44,800	23,700	-21,100	-47%
	Total	105,400	69,600	-35,800	-34%
Higher/Degree	Under 19	1,300	1,800	500	38%
	19-24	3,700	4,900	1,200	32%
	25+	11,200	8,500	-2,700	-24%
	Total	16,200	15,300	-900	-6%
All Apprenticeships	Under 19	79,600	59,900	-19,700	-25%
	19-24	78,600	49,300	-29,300	-37%
	25+	115,300	53,100	-62,200	-54%
	Total	273,400	162,400	-111,000	-41%

NEWS

Cornwall College gets £3.5m to help cashflow problems

JUDE BURKE
@JUDEBURKE77

The cash-strapped college Cornwall College Group has received £3.5 million in emergency funding.

The group received exceptional financial support in December after it ended the year with £2.25 million less in the bank than planned – and ahead of an application to the restructuring facility.

“The group’s highest and most significant risk is currently managing the cashflow and controlling costs,” warned the college’s accounts for 2016/17.

“A new request for £3.5 million of short-term exceptional financial support has been made with the Education and Skills Funding Agency to cover cashflow requirements during the 2017/18 financial year, which was approved on December 11, 2017.”

The college is in the process of applying to the restructuring facility, which is designed to support colleges to implement post-area review changes they can’t afford to pay for themselves – even though it has no plans to merge.

That application “will not be concluded until the final term of the 2017/18 academic year”.

“Once agreed, this facility has the capacity to reset the group’s balance sheet by improving its working capital and in doing so accelerate its financial recovery,” the document said.

The grade two-rated group – which includes Cornwall College, Duchy College, Bicton College and Falmouth Marine School – ended the year with just £760,000 in the bank, according to the accounts – almost £2.25 million less than the £3 million that had been forecast.

The shortfall was blamed on a combination of property sales that raised less than was predicted, and staff redundancy costs.

But the college’s operating deficit was just £35,000 for 2016/17, compared with over £4 million the previous year.

Raoul Humphreys, principal and chief executive of the Cornwall College Group, said the institution’s “financial position is recovering, with a turnaround to our operating position and a cash flow surplus”.

The £3.5 million EFS – which the college will “pay back by the end of this financial year” – was to fill a “working capital gap in the spring, a challenge for many FE colleges”.

Lauener pledges salary to student hardship fund

BILLY CAMDEN
@BILLYCAMDEN

EXCLUSIVE

Peter Lauener will donate the £25,000 salary he will earn as chair of one of the UK’s largest college groups to a student hardship fund.

Apparently one of the busiest men in FE, the former boss of the ESFA and the Institute for Apprenticeships, who currently leads the Student Loans Company, bagged himself yet another job last week, this time as chair of NCG.

Taking up the position in the spring, he’ll replace Jamie Martin, who has held the role for 11 years.

The post is not remunerated, but Mr Lauener will earn a salary as he will also cover Intraining, NCG’s national independent training provider, which is a wholly owned subsidiary.

The former civil servant has however asked that the money is paid directly to a student hardship fund, a spokesperson for the group told FE Week.

He retired from his government roles in November last year, but became interim chief executive at the Student Loans Company after the sudden departure of Steve Lamey, and will stay in post until a permanent replacement is found.



Peter Lauener (left) with NCG chief executive Joe Docherty

“I am looking forward to taking up this new role at NCG and getting to know the different colleges and organisations in the group,” said the new chair.

“There is nothing more important than developing the skills of all our people and NCG has a critical role in supporting learners, businesses and communities.”

In his spare time, Mr Lauener is also the official delegate for Worldskills UK, and was a major force behind in the IfA last year as its first chief executive.

Before taking the reins at the ESFA, he helped implement the Youth Training Scheme, worked for the Manpower Services Commission in the 1980s, and set up the Training and Enterprise Councils in the 1990s.

“Peter has played a leading role in the shaping of education and training in the UK for some years now,” said Joe Docherty, NCG’s chief executive.

“He has steered a course for the Skills Funding Agency and the Education Funding Agency through a period of great political and economic change, and consequently made a positive impact on the education and training of people across the country.”

His predecessor Mr Martin is the managing partner of law firm Ward Hadaway.

During his 11 years as chair he oversaw NCG’s expansion, and leaves it as one of the biggest college groups in the country.

The group now comprises Carlisle College, Kidderminster College, Lewisham Southwark College, Newcastle College, Newcastle Sixth Form College, and West Lancashire College. It also runs two training providers: Rathbone Training and Intraining.

Mr Martin said it had been a “great experience” to have been involved with NCG’s “expansion and growing success” and to have “seen the difference which it has made and continues to make to the career prospects and the lives of thousands of people not just in the north-east, but across the country too”.

Mr Lauener will start on March 1, 2018.

Baker Clause off to a stumbling start

ALIX ROBERTSON
@ALIXROBERTSON4

Just two of the 10 largest multi-academy trusts in England have fully complied with their new legal duty to allow training providers and colleges the chance to speak to pupils about technical qualifications and apprenticeships.

The Baker Clause, an amendment to the Technical and Further Education Act, came into force on January 2, and requires all schools to publish a policy statement on their websites.

A Schools Week investigation found that most large trusts have however failed to meet that duty.

In fact, of the 10 trusts investigated, only The Kemnal Academies Trust (TKAT) and Delta Academies Trust responded with a copy of their statements and proof they had published them on their schools’ websites.

Plymouth CAST had a document ready, but admitted it was only available from its trust homepage; the others were either in the process of formulating the documents or declined to respond to our requests.

Lord Baker, the former education secretary who forced the new law through, has written to the government demanding action.

Under the rules, every school is obliged to give training providers access to every pupil between years 8 and 13, so they can find out about non-academic routes.

According to the Department for Education’s statutory guidance, schools needed to have published “a policy statement setting out their arrangements for provider access”, which “should be made available on the school website”.

This must explain how to arrange access, which premises or facilities can be used, and the grounds for granting or refusing requests.

When Lord Baker prodded the changes in February last year he acknowledged the move was likely to be “met with great hostility in every school in the country”.

Nevertheless, he told Schools Week this had been a “very, very poor start”.

“I am going to write to [academies minister] Lord Agnew about it. It’s really a matter for the government to chase them up,” he said, though he admitted he was “not surprised”.

“We know that many schools will try to resist this, but it’s very important that it should be implemented more rigorously.”

Robert Halfon, a former skills minister who now chairs the parliamentary education committee, has also pledged to write to Agnew, and said trusts “must get their act together”.

“Parliament has legislated for this requirement for a very good reason – it’s vital that more is done to promote technical education,” he said.

“I shall be writing to the minister to establish what efforts the Department for Education has made to ensure academies publish these policy statements, and what actions it intends to undertake to ensure academies up their game and comply with the law.”

The DfE did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

Academy trust	Number of schools*	Access policy	Published on school websites
Ark Schools	30	No	No
Academies Enterprise Trust	59	No	No
David Ross Education Trust	30	No	No
Harris Federation	33	None provided	Available on one school website
The Kemnal Academies Trust	43	Yes	Yes
Oasis Community Learning	46	No	No
Plymouth CAST	35	Yes	No
Ormiston Academies Trust	32	None provided	No
Delta Academies Trust	40	Yes	Yes
United Learning	47	None provided	No

*Data according to Department for Education open academies and academy projects December 2017 statistics

Source: Table shows which of the 10 largest multi-academy trusts in England have fully complied with the Baker Clause

NEWS

First area reviews were mishandled, DfE funded researchers conclude

JUDE BURKE
@JUDEBURKE77

The way the government handled the first wave of the area reviews has been slammed by new research on behalf of the Department for Education.

Most of those who took part “considered their involvement in the first wave of the process as a challenge”, consultancy firm CFE found.

Major obstacles included a “lack of lead in time to understand the policy” or prepare for it, and “underdevelopment of the guidance”.

There was initially too narrow a scope of providers, especially because school sixth-forms weren’t included, and there was too much focus on finance above all else.

“Many interviewees said it was unfortunate and sometimes frustrating that the needs of learners and local businesses were not considered in the same level of detail as financial issues,” the report said.

The area reviews of post-16 education and training were announced by the former Department for Business, Innovation and Skills in July 2015, and kicked off in September that year, concluding in March 2017.

The process was intended to lead to “fewer, often larger, more resilient and efficient providers”.

Early predictions claimed up to 80 mergers would result, just 58 were proposed – of which 35 have gone through, according to the FE commissioner Richard Atkins, who oversaw the final reviews.

He told the Commons education committee this week the reviews weren’t an “unmitigated success”, but claimed that “on balance they had a number of successful elements”.

These included “bringing colleges, local authorities and local enterprise partnerships together”. He also highlighted the benefits of “holding colleges to account in terms of looking at their data and sharing their data”.

The research focused on the experiences of people involved in two of the first-wave

Evaluation of the area review process Birmingham & Solihull and Tees Valley

January 2018

Commissioned by CFE Research

reviews: Birmingham and Solihull, and Tees Valley, which were the first two to finish in March and May 2016 respectively.

Many of the difficulties cited have been reported extensively by FE Week.

We covered the long delays to the early reviews, and the initial timeframe of three to four months that even the government representatives involved in the process acknowledged had been optimistic.

Participants in the Tees Valley review, which was jointly chaired by Sir David Collins, the FE commissioner at the time, and Gill Alexander, Hartlepool council’s chief executive, complained that “the two individuals had different ambitions for the review”.

This echoed deep divisions in the Greater Manchester area review – not included in this report – between the colleges and combined

local authority, leading to lengthy delays.

The research sheds some light on why so many recommended mergers, including all three of those proposed in Tees Valley, have subsequently fallen through.

“The extent to which the options were appraised in both areas was relatively light touch, with the emphasis being on pragmatic partnerships between colleges to merge rather than a detailed analysis of the data to suggest which merger options would be best based on the evidence base,” the report said.

However, it didn’t look at the outcomes and impacts of the reviews as “at the time the evaluation took place it was too soon to measure these”.

But the report did note that “only a few respondents agreed that the changes recommended would have happened without the area review process being undertaken”.

AELP demands action as traineeship starts tumble

PAUL OFFORD
@PAULOFFORD

Traineeship starts have fallen again in the first quarter of this academic year, and concerns are growing anew that the slump will prove terminal without a fresh injection of government support.

The latest data for August, September and October 2017, published last week, shows there were 6,800 traineeship starts in those three months, a decrease of 6.5 per cent from the 7,300 over the same period the previous year.

Of these, 5,500 were under 19 and 1,300 were aged 19 to 24, compared with 5,300 and 2,000 respectively in quarter one of 2016/17.

The figures emerged two days after the Association of Employment and Learning Providers hosted a parliamentary debate on the future of traineeships with the shadow skills minister Gordon Marsden.

Panel members, including AELP’s chair Martin Dunford and its chief executive Mark Dawe, said traineeships enjoyed huge support in the FE sector when they launched in 2013, but confidence in their long-term future was waning amid a lack of recent public backing from the government.

Traineeship starts fell 16 per cent from 24,100 for the whole of 2015/16, to 20,300 throughout 2016/17.

The most dramatic fall was among 19- to 24-year-olds, dropping by almost a third over the same period from 9,400 to 6,400.

Traineeship Starts by Age

	Age	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18 (Quarter 1)
Total Traineeships	Under 19	7,000	11,600	14,700	13,900	5,500
	19-24	3,400	7,800	9,400	6,400	1,300
	Total	10,400	19,400	24,100	20,300	6,800

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships-january-2018>

Mr Dawe lamented that the “cold hand of government” was destroying what had been a “promising training programme”, and claimed “there is huge latent demand for traineeships that is not being utilised”.

“There is a problem with the Education and Skills Funding Agency not having the processes in place to ensure the traineeships gets the funding it needs, and that progress properly monitored, along with a lack of promotion,” he said.

“The government is so consumed by T-levels and apprenticeships now, the danger is that traineeships don’t get a look-in.”

Mr Marsden harked back to New Labour’s 1997 general election commitment to focus on “education, education, education”, but said the emphasis for traineeships should now be on promoting “progression, progression, progression”.

He was referring to confusion over how the scheme is perceived, and lack of clarity over

how the government reports which learners progress to jobs or other training such as apprenticeships.

Traineeships were launched in 2013 as part of the government’s drive to help the low-skilled unemployed below the age of 25 onto apprenticeships.

But their remit was set more broadly, so that they could also help learners onto a job or find other full-time education.

They are supposed to provide “essential work preparation training, English, maths and work experience needed to secure an apprenticeship or employment”, according to government guidance.

Many believe that this wider remit caused confusion over the purpose of the programme.

Mr Dunford insisted this week that “it was a good thing that traineeships were kept flexible” as “it’s a good programme”, and wants more government promotion for the scheme.

By aiming to take on young cast the net wider, people interested in a wider range of outcomes than just apprenticeships, traineeships could and ultimately produce “more progressions to apprenticeships”.

Debbie Gardiner, the chief executive of Qube Learning, agreed during the debate that there was a problem with perception.

“We understand that traineeships are about getting young people into work and training,” she said, by using a “short” window of opportunity to help them.

But too often employers are concerned that the lack of pay for learners they take on with traineeships can damage company brands.

Mr Marsden closed on an optimistic note: “We all forget how difficult it is to get the message across with relatively new initiatives like this. The key thing it needs is sheer bloody mindedness with regards to pushing ahead and promoting it.”

Mr Dawe agreed: “Let’s keep on fighting.”

PROFILE



Photo taken at the Institute for Apprenticeships headquarters in

CATH MURRAY
@CATHMURRAY_

The new boss of the Institute for Apprenticeships is not giving anything away. After 37 years in the military, Sir Gerry Berragan seems more comfortable dealing in facts than stories about his life.

But this might be just the kind of discipline the organisation needs, after a year under a caretaker chief executive and a list of gripes from employers and providers as long as the Bayeux Tapestry.

To this end, the institute's first official publication, issued shortly after Sir Gerry's appointment in November, was a stroke of genius. The simple two-pager, 'Faster and Better' was all substance and no style, and promised to rationalise processes and accelerate decisions.

In short, if the IfA is aiming to project a new front of efficiency, it's working. All that's left now is to deliver. It has promised a fuller explanation of the new process in early

February, designed, Sir Gerry avows, to "reduce the time and the pain that trailblazers go through in developing these things. Because I understand that they're all busy people and they've got day jobs too."

The new boss's understanding extends beyond empathising with employers, into the world of technical education. Less than a decade ago he was in charge of training for the entire army, which is "probably one of the biggest providers of apprenticeships in the country".

During his three years as the army's director of recruiting and training, he oversaw the plan to map all its internal training onto what he calls "civilian standards" such as NVQs or BTECs. As framework apprenticeships came in, they took a similar approach, so by "maybe seven years ago, about 85 per cent of people who joined the army as soldiers were on apprenticeships."

These are the kind of facts the former adjutant-general is willing to share. But asking Sir Gerry about his own life feels a bit like trying to solve one of those puzzles on the Crystal Maze. There's a list of details, both personal and professional,

that he has decided he's willing to divulge, but you don't know what they are, or in which part of his 60-year life history they lie.

A service child himself – he's a fourth-generation serviceman – he grew up all over the world, in so many places he claims he can't remember exactly where and when. "I enjoyed my time in Malaya but I was probably between six and nine, I think," he says, while Germany and Hong Kong were also in the mix.

So were there any places that left a particularly strong impression on him when travelling the world as a military kid? "Not really, no."

He's similarly tight-lipped about what inspired him to join up, but admits that his itinerant childhood no doubt influenced his personality: "I do think that life gave you a degree of resilience, because you were moving, you were making new friends, you were sort of self-reliant from quite a young age."

He applied to Sandhurst at 19, shortly after completing his A-levels. And while he denies that was a childhood ambition, he did know university wasn't for him – he was too keen to

Introducing

SIR GERRY BERRAGAN

Chief executive, Institute for Apprenticeships

“get out there and do something and have some adventures”. So after trying his hand at “all sorts of odd jobs,” he decided civilian life was too boring and joined up in 1979.

The difference between a non-graduate who decides to apply to the officer track, as he did, and one who joins the ranks is “a lot to do with willingness and preparedness to take responsibility. So if you go in as an officer you’re basically saying, ‘I want to take on responsibility. I want to lead people.’”

This statement of purpose seems an apt description of a man who has held command appointments in the army at pretty much every level all the way up to adjutant-general – which is only one rung from the top.

Having chosen a leadership path, that was indeed what he got: by 22 he was already training troops of 30 recruits, tasked with turning them from “civilians into soldiers” over about three months.

“That was tremendous fun, really seeing the transformation in those guys,” he recalls. “When they came through the door they wouldn’t look you in the eye, they’d shuffle their feet,

they had their hands in pockets, and by the end they talked to anyone, they were confident – they just had an aura about them.”

Some of the recruits had no qualifications from school, and he found it satisfying to watch them grow in confidence as they passed their army exams. The experience obviously marked him, and remains part of why he has a passion for his current role.

“I think sometimes youngsters don’t see the point of some of the education they get at school, whereas with vocational it’s got a reason and it leads to something tangible. And I think that’s why that’s always stuck with me,” he says.

Ten years later he passed the competitive staff college exams and was put onto an army fast-track, leading initially to a posting in the first Gulf War as a brigade chief of staff.

Over the next couple of decades, he moved up the ranks in postings across the UK and worldwide, including in Germany, Canada and Kenya, until, on returning from Baghdad at the end of 2007, he was handed what he describes as “a huge job” as director of recruiting and training. He attempts to provide

an idea of the scale of the task. There were about 25,000 people working for him, and that was just the staff, on something like 30 sites, spread around the country.

While Sir Gerry’s personal area of expertise was gunnery, army training isn’t just about preparing troops for combat. Construction engineers, for example, receive basic training and combat engineer training before going on to become bricklayers, plasterers, plumbers, electricians, or even air-conditioning engineers.

The army is often required to build camps that are effectively entire towns, he explains, pointing to the famous Camp Bastion in Afghanistan.

“Back in 2005 it didn’t exist – it was a blank piece of desert, 20 miles from the nearest town. And within three years it was a town the size of Basingstoke with two hospitals, an international airport that was almost as busy as somewhere like Gatwick,” he recalls. “It had catering facilities, it had accommodation, it had drainage, it had water supplies, it had electricity supplies, you name it.”

“ I want to take on responsibility. I want to lead people”

After three years Sir Gerry became director of personnel, before rising 18 months later to the rank of adjutant-general, responsible for everything from recruiting and training to personnel, career management, the Sandhurst officer academy, and even schools for service children.

“In effect I had my own local education authority spread around Brunei, Germany and the Falklands,” he quips.

And then at the end of 2015, after 37 years’ service, he decided it was time to retire from the military, but insists he “never stopped enjoying it”.

After such a storied career, some might decide it was time to tend the allotment, but Sir Gerry soon began looking around “to see what things I could usefully do with my background and what could I contribute”. That’s when he saw the advert for the board at the Institute for Apprenticeships.

His experience made him a natural fit, but he was the only person from a public sector background on the board – most are employers, with a couple from FE and one from an independent training provider. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, he has high praise for the IfA’s governance body: “I think it is fantastically diverse and really cohesive board. I was amazed at how they were all very accomplished in their own fields, and I think they’ve been a good sort of governance mechanism for the Institute as it has developed.”

After six months on the board, his decision to move from governor to chief executive wasn’t a given; in fact, he insists he wasn’t looking for a full-time job, and it wasn’t until

the board’s recruitment committee had been through two unsuccessful rounds that he decided to put himself forward.

So what flicked the switch? He describes a working dinner with the chair, the former Barclays chief executive Antony Jenkins, and fellow board member Dame Fiona Kendrick, who chairs Nestle UK, during which it began to dawn on Sir Gerry that he might be the person for this role.

The three were meeting in their capacity as the board’s strategy group, and Mr Jenkins was relating their trouble finding a suitable candidate. “That was a frustration,” explains Sir Gerry, “because we knew Peter [Lauener] was going to retire at the end of the year, there was a bit of an imperative to get someone in place.”

The group’s conversation turned to other matters, but an idea had begun to form in Sir Gerry’s head. Over the course of the two-hour meal, he mulled it over quietly, and then “at the end I said ‘look, you know, if it helps then I’ll throw my hat in the ring’. And that’s why I am where I am,” he concludes, matter-of-factly.

A “mini recruitment phase” followed, “to make sure everyone was happy”, including interviews with the chair and one of the other panel members, and also with skills minister Anne Milton, after which he was offered the job.

The somewhat unconventional way in which he was selected – without competing directly against other candidates – meant that he has been appointed only for a two-year period.

But in contrast to the IfA’s previous chief executive, Sir Gerry doesn’t see himself as a caretaker boss.

“I think two years is quite a long time,” he declares. “I think you can do quite a lot in two years.”

Mr Lauener, he points out, was appointed additionally to his role at the head of the Education and Skills Funding Agency, and “he was basically trying to do both jobs for most of that year”. His successor, however, has “no other distractions”. “I’m on this full time,” he insists, though he’s equivocal on what happens after two years, when he would have to reapply: “Let’s see when that comes.”

Mr Lauener’s deputy, Michael Keoghan, who was in charge of much of the day-to-day running of the institute, has since left to pursue his “dream job” as chief economic advisor for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. But the handover has been positive: “Luckily, we’ve had the best part of two months together and he’s been giving me a lot of really helpful, constructive advice.”

They won’t be hiring another deputy, in favour of a chief operating officer, whose appointment should leave the new boss more time in the field.

“At the moment I’m prioritising where I speak and who I go and see on the basis that I really need to be around here quite a lot of the time,” he explains. “Once I’ve got a chief operating officer in place I can get out more.”

Employers, providers and colleges alike will no doubt be looking forward to that phase. For now, by all appearances at least, the IfA appears to be in steady hands.

EDITORIAL



What now for the levy reforms?

Apprenticeship take-up since the introduction of the levy last May continues to slide, but whether this represents a longer-term problem is debatable.

The CBI calls it “alarming”, which, given it represents employers, will be uncomfortable for the government.

But if big employers are simply in the planning phase, as the skills minister suggests, the CBI has only got itself to blame.

It successfully lobbied to let levy credit sit unused in accounts for a full two years, longer than the government had originally planned.

Is it any wonder then that employers are in no rush to spend it?

Writing my editorial last October, after the first dramatic fall in apprenticeship starts were revealed, I predicted this was a temporary fall.

Anecdotal evidence is that many large employers, particularly in the public sector, are gearing up for huge recruitment in April, the start of their financial year.

These figures that won't be made public for at least another seven months.

But as I've also said before, the problem isn't likely to be quantity or even quality, it's whether employer decisions are aligned to government priorities.

So keep an eye on 16- to 18-year-old starts, down 20 per cent between May and October.

Parents' negative perceptions of apprenticeships aren't the problem, something the skills minister has also said this week.

The problem for 16- to 18-year-olds will be employers lacking sufficient incentives to create vacancies for them.

Nick Linford, Editor
news@feweek.co.uk

APPRENTICESHIP STARTS TWEETS:

Michael Steel @theMichaelSteel

Spare a thought for all the training staff made redundant through the drop in numbers. Lots of talent lost from the sector.

Mick Fletcher @OldDitch

You can either put employers in charge or have government targets and priorities for outcomes but you can't have both at the same time.

James Ainsworth @jamesmainsworth

The response appears to be “well, at least it's not 60% like the quarter before” - no thought of the impact on young people who have missed out.

Andrew J Powell @AndrewJPowell

The Govt. strategy is completely wrong. It is a 'push' strategy into a predominantly millennial environment who want progress/progression quickly. Why spend 12 to 24 months on an apprenticeship with no guaranteed job outcome & potentially no qualifications to show for it?

Marion Marsland @TICACHiefExec

It's simple. We have no funding. Lots of employers. Quality programme. Lots of candidates. NO FUNDING.



FE commissioner: 'funding is unfair'

JUDE BURKE
@JUDEBURKE77

Funding for FE is “unfair”, and “sparse” resources are partly to blame for falling standards, the FE commissioner has told MPs.

Richard Atkins, who intervenes at failing colleges on behalf of the Department for Education, made the astonishing admission at a Commons education select committee hearing last week.

“If you asked me about the distribution in the UK between the funding that is given to further education and higher education, I would say that was unfair,” he told MPs.

He was replying to a question on the fairness of FE funding from committee member Thelma Walker, after he had described it as “complex and sparse” and said it “could be improved”.

Earlier in the session he claimed that funding pressures could also be behind the fall in colleges receiving the highest grades from Ofsted.

“I think the sector has been through a very difficult time with Ofsted and with financial stability,” he said.

While the “main factor” at colleges where he intervenes was “governance and leadership”, funding cuts were among the factors that had

“challenged colleges more generally”.

These included cuts in adult funding, and the “fact that the 16-to-18 funding rate hasn't gone up since 2010”.

Gordon Marsden, the shadow skills minister, said Mr Atkins was “at the sharp edge of what's going on in colleges”.

“That he should come out with those comments speaks volumes about the way government cuts and funding decisions are hitting hard,” he said.

David Hughes, the AoC's chief executive, told FE Week he was “pleased that the FE commissioner felt able to articulate what we all know is true”.

“It backs up the warning by the chief inspector late last year that the funding is inadequate,” he added.

During her speech at the launch of Ofsted's annual report, chief inspector Amanda Spielman said the “sector will continue to struggle” without an increase in the base rate of funding for 16- to 18-year-olds.

But a campaign supported by a range of organisations including the SFCA, the AoC and FE Week, demanding an increase in the base rate, recently failed after the DfE ruled out an increase in funding for this age group.

Other topics covered during Tuesday's session included subcontracting, and the £600 million college restructuring facility.

“I don't think all subcontracting per se is wrong,” Mr Atkins told MPs, though he is concerned where colleges use it a lot, “particularly when there isn't really a core theme or purpose to it”.

The FE commissioner dodged concerns from committee chair Robert Halfon that the restructuring fund – which is designed to support colleges to implement post-area review changes they can't afford to pay for themselves – is being used to prop up failing colleges.

Instead he said that 17 out of 35 area review-recommended mergers had “benefitted from restructuring funds”.

Nor did he directly answer Mr Halfon's questions on the lack of transparency surrounding the fund.

“I don't have responsibility for allocating those funds,” the FE commissioner said, acknowledging that “openness and transparency is really important in running any organisation”.

A DfE spokesperson said it would be “investing an extra half-a-billion pounds a year in England's technical education system” once T-levels are “up and running”.

“We have also protected the base rate of funding for all 16- to 19-year-old students until 2020 to make sure every young person has access to the education or training they deserve.”

COMMENTS

Apprenticeship starts continue to fall sharply six months after introduction of the levy

It continues to be frustrating when the levy is headlined as the issue, when the reality on the ground for many are the rule changes, introduction of apprentice standards that are not attractive to sector employers/learners and of course significant employer fee contributions and cost associated with 20 per cent time off. When you throw in the mix government agencies of various sorts that are not fit for purpose, then we are all left with a mess.

Just Saying

FE commissioner Richard Atkins: 'Funding for FE is unfair'

“We have protected the base rate of funding for all 16- to 19-year-old students until 2020 to make sure every young person has access to the education or training they deserve.” The DfE doesn't think 16- to 19-year-olds deserve a high-quality, well-funded education. It thinks our 16- to 19-year-olds deserve to be educated in less-than-good colleges and without adequate resources.

Well at least we know where it stands.

Marc

Former ESFA boss Peter Lauener to chair NCG

I think NCG has made a prudent choice and a top appointment in Peter Lauener, he will clearly have significant insight into the apprenticeship levy, in addition to any significant changes on the horizon in FE. Lately the FE sector has been spread with stories of unfair procurement, Ofsted resourcing issues and the Learndirect debacle. On occasion I believe the sector lacks the fundamental commercial and strategic expertise.

Lucus Elliot



Finance & Payroll Manager

Department:
Shared Services/Finance
Report to:
Managing Director /Financial Director
Manager:
Managing Director
Salary:
Negotiable

Job Role

Main point of contact for Directors regarding all aspects of budgeting, ensuring that management accounts and related information are readily available for audit. Main Duties involve managing pay roll administration, financial processing and ESFA accounting and Financial Audits. Contributing to SAR, QIP and Ofsted preparation/Inspection.

Key Performance Indicators

- Timely payments of Payroll & Invoices
- Queries on payroll
- Monthly reports identifying areas at risk for SLT
- Managing CPD
- Time Management
- Prioritising Workload

Qualifications/Experience

Professional Finance Qualification at Degree level, minimum of 2 years in FE sector financial role and knowledge of Maytas and/or similar systems.

Quality and Compliance Manager

Department:
Quality
Report to:
Managing Director/Training Director
Manager:
Managing Director
Salary:
Negotiable

Job Role

To ensure PTS LTD meets the relevant quality standards of the necessary/required standards demanded by Professional Bodies, Funders, ESFA, Ofsted and Learners. To ensure contract compliance is managed and rigorous. Contributing to SAR, QIP and Ofsted preparation/Inspection.

Key Performance Indicators

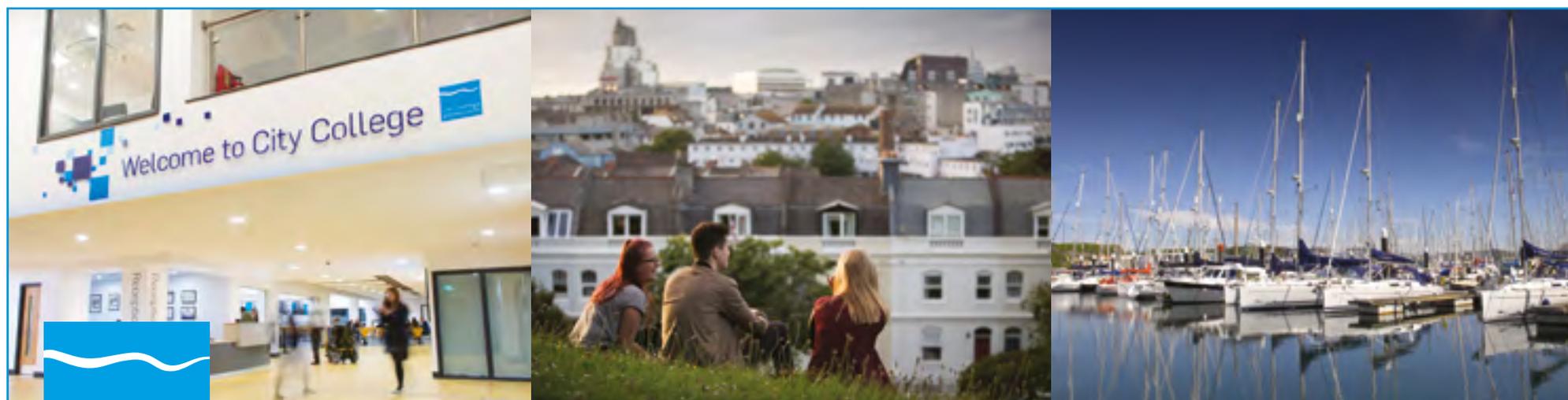
- Gaining new standards/awards to be identified/agreed by SLT
- Maintain/ Renewal of current standards/awards
- Production of audit reports with action plans
- Prioritising workloads
- Manage your own self- development /Continuous Professional Development which includes webinars.

Qualifications/Experience

Degree Level in relevant subject area, minimum of 2 years working in the FE sector in a similar role and knowledge/experience of Maytas/etrack or similar systems.

Please send CV's to
Andreaw@ptstrainingacademy.co.uk
or ring **07943215845** for further information.

<http://www.ptstrainingacademy.co.uk>



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plymouth

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Our next Chief Executive and Principal will drive and deliver strong outcomes across all aspects of the organisation whilst using their expert ambassadorial and stakeholder relationship skills to position the college to excel locally and regionally.

We have appointed FE Associates to support us in this significant appointment.

Interested parties are encouraged to contact Samantha.Bunn@fea.co.uk for an initial conversation.

Further details can be obtained from our microsite: <https://plymouthleadership.fea.co.uk>

Closing date: Wednesday 21st February 2018 at noon.

Interview dates: Monday 5th and Tuesday 6th March 2018.



Principal



Salary: circa £90,000 per annum, dependent on experience

Our mission at Scarborough Sixth Form College is to provide an excellent service to our community, based in Scarborough, but drawing from students along the Yorkshire Coast and into the hinterland toward York and Hull.

The College has a very strong reputation in its community, and you will find at the College a very talented and hard-working staff team, who are very proud of our deserved reputation, and determined to build on this. At the heart of the College's success are staff who are committed to the highest standards of professional practice in order to provide the best experience for students. The ethos of the College - honest and self-critical, but supportive - is very precious to us.

At the last short inspection by Ofsted in 2016 we were confirmed as Good, but were on the cusp of Outstanding. There are numerous challenges and opportunities as we face the future, but our ambition to be outstanding, and to be excellent in all we do, is paramount.

We are looking for an ambitious and determined person to lead the College, moving it forward to become one of the best. Already with substantial experience of management and senior leadership in education, you will have the skills and ambition to lead the College to excellence, through development and drive of the College team, and sustain its strong financial health in challenging times.

With a high level of data fluency, good planning and communication skills, the key to success will be your ability to work with, and motivate, a diverse range of people

toward clear aims through actions for improvement. You will have a very clear vision and sense of strategic purpose underpinning the evolution of the College, but you will also be able to respond effectively to a variety of day-to-day operational issues.

Above all, what matters to us is the quality of the student experience, good teaching and effective support that underpins this. You will have a passion for the education of our students, and the commitment to raise both their aspirations and achievement. Our new Principal will provide strong leadership for our College in challenging times and be the right person to lead the College to the next stage in its development.

To help you make the right decision we also offer you the opportunity to find out more about the College from Marcus, the current Principal. He can be contacted by phone **01723 365032** or by email m.towse@s6f.org.uk.

For any application queries, please contact **Beth Jones** on **01723 380726**.

Closing date: 10 am on Wednesday 31 January 2018

Interviews: Monday 26 and Tuesday 27 February 2018



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All job offers are subject to receipt of satisfactory references.





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tua £120K

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Mae'r Coleg yn gwasanaethu dros 12,000 o ddysgwyr a, thra bod ei brif gampws yn Hwlfordd, mae'r Coleg yn gweithredu ledled De Orllewin a De Ddwyrain Cymru, fel prif ddarparwr consortiwm dysgu seiliedig ar waith sy'n cynnwys 5 coleg arall yng Nghymru. Me'r Coleg yn ceisio datblygu'r ddarpariaeth hon ymhellach mewn ymateb i gyfeiriad Llywodraeth Cymru. Mae'r Coleg yn brif gyfrannwr i ddiwygio addysgol yn Sir Benfro ac agorodd Ganolfan Lefel A gwerth £7.0 miliwn ym mis Medi 2017.

Mae gan y Coleg statws categori A yn ariannol, mae ganddo drosiant o £26.0 miliwn ac mae ganddo bolisiâu buddsoddi cryf. Gyda dros 500 o staff, mae buddsoddiad i ddatblygu diwylliant 'uchelgeisiol' wedi bod wrth wraidd gweithgaredd y Coleg yn y blynyddoedd diwethaf ac ar hyn o bryd mae gan y Coleg y cyfraddau llwyddiant uchaf o'r colegau Addysg Bellach cyffredinol yng Nghymru.

Yn uwch arweinydd profedig ac uchelgeisiol o'r sector Addysg a Sgiliau, rydych yn barod i arwain y Coleg trwy ei bennod nesaf. Bydd gennych brofiad rheoli perthynas, rhwydweithio a sgiliau datblygu masnachol yn ogystal â hanes profedig mewn cydweithio. Yn gyfnewid, mae'r Coleg yn cynnig pecyn cyflog cystadleuol. Disgwylir i ymgeiswyr ymrwymo i'r iaith Gymraeg a'r diwylliant Cymreig.

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For further information and an application pack visit protocol.co.uk/pembrokeshire

Closing date: 9am on Monday 12th February 2018. The interview process will be held on 21st and 22nd March 2018.

www.protocol.co.uk/pembrokeshire | pembrokeshire@protocol.co.uk | David Beynon: 07970 042 334 | Ian Sackree: 07795 271 559

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S/he will deputise for the Assistant Principal in managing the Study Programmes and will manage two learning areas.

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Undertake analytical and programming tasks for the development and support of the college's databases and information systems. You will have experience of writing complex SQL queries, functions and procedures. You will also have experience of creating reports and data feeds.

You must be committed to equality and diversity, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of our learners and have a flexible attitude to work.



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The role will require external and internal liaison and communication to ensure that all apprenticeships and skills related contracts are compliant with required regulation and funding rules. This will include working with University Registry, internal and (where required) external legal advisers, Finance, Quality, Academic Partnership, Marketing and Communications teams as well as Faculties. It will also include working with employers and other main providers and/or sub-contracted providers and/or apprentice assessment organisations.

If you have any specific questions on this job please contact Darryll Bravenboer-Director of Apprenticeships and Skills on (020) 8411 5479.

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- **Ongoing investment in you** - everything you need to stay at the leading edge of the industry.

In short, we can offer you a career environment that few other organisations can match. As long as you have the right technical qualifications and experience, including proven ability to support and mentor apprentices, you will discover the kind of personal and professional growth you've been looking for.

JTL is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young people and expects all its employees to share this commitment.

We welcome applicants from all sections of the community. Please note: an online application form must be completed, we cannot accept CVs. Strictly no agencies please.



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EXPERTS

Dear Dr Sue



Dr Sue Pember, director of policy and external relations at Hoxe, 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: DO NEW PRINCIPALS NEED SECTOR EXPERIENCE?

We are just starting work to replace our retiring principal, and are considering essential candidate criteria. We can't agree on whether it is essential for candidates to have FE experience or not. What is your view?

Answer:

This is an interesting question and one for debate. In schools it is more clear-cut: an applicant headteacher is expected to undertake the national professional qualification for headship, and although it is possible to get on this course without teaching experience it is very unlikely.

“
Some like to see the role as mainly financial, but the reality is all about the students and the staff.”

Although in principle it should be possible to move from a senior business role to become chief executive of a college, and while several exceptional people have done exactly that, in practice it is much harder to be successful. Some like to see the role as being mainly financial, but the reality is it is all about the students and the staff.

If an external candidate doesn't know how to ensure a successful student experience and doesn't understand the basics about class/group size and how it affects the bottom line, they are unlikely to lead the college to success. Personally, I believe you need a few years of experience in the classroom to truly understand students and learning; it builds resilience and allows you to understand the impact of the government's constant changes first-hand, which in turn influences your responses and style of leadership when you become principal.

Q2: CAREER ADVICE TO STUDENTS

How can we maximise our opportunities with the recent change in the law requiring schools to allow colleges access to their pupils?

Answer:

As with many others, I was pleased when in January 2016, the then-education secretary Nicky Morgan announced that the government would legislate to require schools to give emphasis to academic and vocational routes alike, and would collaborate with colleges, university technical colleges and other training providers to ensure this was done.

I was very excited about Lord Baker's amendment, which came into force on January 2, requiring schools to allow providers of technical education and apprenticeships to contact pupils and promote their courses. But then I thought 'isn't it a sad world where we need legislation just to offer our young people fair and balanced advice?' I am sure all of us, whether in a school or college, would say we want what is best for our pupils.

However, we do need to embrace these new rights and, as you say, it is now over to providers to maximise this opportunity. To this end, you should work with schools to gain access and create a really engaging experience, using your best and most inspiring staff who can point out the differences between going to college or apprenticeships in positive way.

A college course or apprenticeship comes alive and is more appealing when pupils can come to see your premises. Access to pupils in the school is fine but there are other very effective practices: for example, offering specialist workshops in your premises to year 8s (12-year-olds) is one way to influence them.

Youngsters seem to know where they want to go before they pick their GCSEs so this new law is helpful but it is not going to fully solve the issue of ensuring fair information. It will still be up to you to make your offer known.

Q3: DATA PROTECTION REFORM

How does the new data protection law affect our work as governors?

Answer:

Governors and the senior executive should be preparing for the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) now and, as governors, you need to be aware of the changes and approve the corresponding college policy, which needs to be in place by May 25.

There is plenty of help and support out there and your first port of call is the Information Commissioner's Office, which has a set of tools and information for educational organisations.

These new regulations strengthen individual rights, and are supported by rules related to direct marketing which cover the promotion of aims and ideals as well as the sale of products and services. In many cases, organisations will need consent to send people marketing information, or to pass on their details.

“
In many cases, organisations will need consent to send people marketing information, or to pass on their details”

Organisations will need to be able to demonstrate that consent was knowingly and freely given, and should keep clear records. The rules on calls, texts and emails are stricter than those on mail marketing, and consent must be more specific. Organisations should not take a one-size-fits-all approach and therefore college processes and permissions will undoubtedly need to be revised.

UPCOMING EVENTS

NEW AUDIT APPROACH TO APPRENTICESHIP FUNDING

YORK

DATE: 21 FEBRUARY 2018

LONDON

DATE: 26 FEBRUARY 2018

Places are expected to go fast, so register now to avoid disappointment. The fee is £265+ VAT per delegate (no limit per organisation).

FE Week gold members will receive £50 off the cost of this event (gold membership must be in the delegates name).

Register now at no risk (full refund for cancellations 7 days or more before the event) as this event has been fully booked in the past.

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EXPERTS

Amanda Spielman cited Harlow College as having particularly good curriculum design at the AoC conference in the autumn – but what has it done that so impressed Ofsted? Its principal Karen Spencer explains

During 2017, Harlow College took part in an Ofsted survey visit, looking at the design of level two study programmes. The visit felt very different from an inspection: it was more of a professional conversation asking us to identify good practice, giving greater time, without judgements, for discussion.

“**Since we redesigned our curriculum, we’ve even had employers fighting over our students**”

We told Ofsted how we’d redesigned our level two engineering curriculum in consultation with local employers, and how we were using the same process for our new centre planned at Stansted Airport. They seemed impressed with our approach, which could be replicated by any college, whatever their local employer landscape, so we are happy to share it here.



KAREN SPENCER

Principal, Harlow College

What does Ofsted consider a good college curriculum?

Engage effectively with employers

We were aware that our students were arriving with some gaps, so we invited 30 local employers to join a forum to learn what they needed from them. We heard all of their complaints – it was useful therapy for them, and while it was hard for us to hear, the first part of any process is acknowledging the issue.

The employers made several requests, including more training in hand skills and five-days-a-week provision, which unsurprisingly caused sharp intakes of breath. Nevertheless, we set about identifying practical solutions; it was a genuine two-way process, as employers supported us.

Tailor provision to employer need

We compacted our engineering study programme so students attended five days each week until Christmas. Then they begin two blocks of six-week work placements. The final part of the course is taken up with

completing portfolios, employability skills training, interview techniques, and how to search for vacancies. Employers sponsor the programme, providing professional input to curriculum design, offering extended work placements and guaranteeing interviews for jobs (not a guaranteed job). We cobrand and badge the programmes as “pre-apprenticeships”.

Last year 94 per cent of young people from our programme progressed directly into an apprenticeship with a local employer. Our engineering apprenticeships have increased by 13 per cent and the numbers wanting to join the study programme this year have increased by 56 per cent.

Develop and maintain relationships

The consultation created goodwill. We found employers were very keen to be involved and commit to placements, professional input and guaranteed job interviews. In fact, since

we redesigned our curriculum, we’ve even had employers fighting over our students to employ them as apprentices.

Ongoing relationship management is critical. We therefore decided to invest in business development expertise, someone who understands the curriculum and is an engineer by trade.

Invest in facilities tailored to your area

We wanted to make our students more work-ready, not only their hand skills but also by familiarising them with the kind of advanced machinery they would use in the workplace.

That’s why we built the Harlow Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Centre with co-investment from the College, SELEP and Essex county council. Our state-of-the-art facilities allow students to design, rapidly prototype, manufacture and test with the latest CNC technology. We complement this with a small-scale R&D and production facility for employers, where they can batch-manufacture components. This is provided at a competitive price on the understanding that students are involved in the process. For example, we worked with a lawnmower company to produce components that they would otherwise send to China for production. Our students have gained a real insight into the design and production process, and assisted in the development of a real product.

We think we were used as an example of good practice for two main reasons: our proactive work with employers and our use of the flexibilities of the study programme. We have dared to think differently and innovate – something that’s a challenge when there’s so much change already in the sector.

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CAMPUS ROUND-UP *with Samantha King*



Shaf Hussain speaks at the event

British FE makes its pitch to China

Overseas ambassadors from three colleges have been selected to represent the UK education sector on a recent trip to China.

Nottingham College's head of international projects Shaf Hussain, Central Bedfordshire College's international manager Richard Harrison, and Cardiff and Vale College's international development manager Ian Thomas were all selected as guest speakers at the British Council Agent Training Workshops, which aimed to promote the UK FE sector to Chinese students and their parents.

Run by the British Council, the workshops took place in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou

and Chengdu, and were attended by education consultants, who are responsible for representing and helping families with their educational planning.

"A strong message went out to agents highlighting that FE is the best place to prepare international students for UK university study," said Mr Hussain. "The purpose of me attending was to try to positively impact on the international student market and I'm happy to say that I feel that I was able to achieve this."

The representatives hope their respective colleges will see an increased intake of international students by September 2018 as a result of the trip.

Unlock your talents at women's leadership conference

To celebrate International Women's Day, the Women's Leadership Network is hosting an annual conference on how employers and employees can identify their talents and achieve their full professional potential.

Four workshops will take place on themes including flexible working and board membership, and there will be a session led by Jackie Grubb, the principal of City of Westminster College, on mindfulness and wellbeing.

There will also be an interactive workshop on using social media to raise your professional profile.

Taking place on March 8 at Morley College in London, the event is open to leaders and aspiring leaders from across the FE sector.

"It will be a chance to think creatively and strategically about how we can transform organisations so that they recruit and retain talent when they need it and how they need it," explained Kathryn James, a member of the WLN. "Time will also be given to reflect on what we can do personally to be the best we can for ourselves and others, so that we all can use our innate talents for work and for wellbeing."

Tickets can be bought from the ETF's website, and 20 free places are on offer to women who work or study in the post-16 FE and training sector, and who are aspiring leaders. To find out more, visit <http://bit.ly/2E17Enm>



WLN member Pauline Odulinski



The venue

The fanciest possible baptism of fire



Fred Sirieix with the students

Two aspiring chefs have been completing work experience under the watchful eye of Fred Sirieix, star of the Channel 4 show *First Dates*.

Gabriel Innaccone and Joe Cheeseman, both 16, are first-year learners at London South East College's hospitality, food and enterprise career college, and were sent on work placement at Galvin at Windows, the swanky Park Lane restaurant where Mr Sirieix is general manager.

The Michelin-starred restaurant is situated on the 28th floor of the Hilton Hotel, and the learners have already been thrown

in at the deep end, preparing meals in the kitchen with guidance from the restaurant's chefs.

"As a product of a vocational education and training myself, I know just how an opportunity like this can be the basis of a very lucrative and rewarding career," said Ben Hobson, the sous chef at the restaurant who supervised the pair.

"This line of work relies so much on your attitude, as well as having an eye for quality and detail. It means working very hard and be willing to listen, observe and learn. It also requires lots of determination."



Cooking up a storm: the workshop

Cooking up a storm on the cheap

In an effort to encourage more students to move on to higher education, Walsall College has been running 'Cooking on a budget' workshops to prepare them for university life.

Learners have been taught how to become self-sufficient in the kitchen by making easy meals such as pasta dishes and Chilli Con Carne, and attendees were presented with a cookbook of affordable recipes at the end of the session.

Led by the college's hospitality and catering lecturer Chris Sammons, the workshops also covered how to shop on a budget, hygiene in the kitchen, and the correct way to store and

freeze food.

The workshops were part of the college's 'Aspire to HE' programme, which aims to support the government's goals to increase the number of young people pursuing higher education routes by 2020.

"Living independently and budgeting for food is a large part of university life," said Vivien Russell, the college's progress coach for Aspire to HE. "The workshop was chance to prepare students for some of the challenges and opportunities of living on a smaller budget, whilst being able to prepare healthy and tasty meals."



Chris Sammons

CAMPUS ROUND-UP *with Samantha King*FEATURED
CAMPUS
ROUND-UP

'Slow shopping' movement helps Bath's vulnerable residents

Bath College is helping to pilot an initiative at a local supermarket that gives people with dementia and additional needs the space, support and time to complete their weekly shop in comfort, reports Samantha King.

Seven of the college's health and social care students will help run the 'Slow Shopping' project at their local branch of Waitrose, where each Tuesday between 10 and 12 in the morning, lights will be dimmed, tannoys switched off, background noise limited and extra seating made available for shoppers who may become overwhelmed in an everyday supermarket environment.

The project was started by Katherine Vero, after experiencing her own mother's struggles with dementia while shopping, and projects are already established in branches of ASDA, Tesco and Sainsbury's in Newcastle and Essex.

"I heard Katherine on Radio 4, and afterwards I contacted her and said I'd really like to work with her, and that the students could learn a lot from this," said Sally Wilson, the care academy coordinator at Bath College. "She loved the idea of an intergenerational project where young people are supporting those who are often elderly, but not always. The joy of slow shopping is that it's for any shopper with



Slow Shopping in action

additional needs."

It is the first time a slow shopping project has involved students, and Ms Vero has visited learners and Waitrose staff together to train them in how to run the project, which involved a tour of the shop floor to identify any potential barriers for shoppers.

"They walked around the store and imagined it through the eyes of someone they may have worked with or cared for," Ms Wilson said. "If you have Alzheimer's for instance, it's difficult to know when

you come out of the toilets where the store entrance is, and people can become quite disorientated. It's about learning what simple things can be done to help."

The project, which has received funding from the St John's Foundation, a charity that works with Bath's elderly population, ran for the first time earlier last week, and has already received glowing feedback from the local community.

"We would love for other colleges to pick up and run with this," Ms Wilson added.



The students and shop staff involved



Making shopping easier

"Often with health and social care you're working in settings geared up towards supporting people, but this is day-to-day life in a real world environment."

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



Cath Orange

Chair of governors, Bradford College

Start date December 2017

Previous job

Dean and pro vice-chancellor, Leeds Metropolitan University

Interesting fact

Cath is a passionate Tranmere Rovers fan.



Dipa Ganguli

Principal, Sutton College

Start date January 2018

Previous job

Assistant principal, Westminster Adult Education Service

Interesting fact

Dipa loves travelling and learning about new cultures. Her alternative career choice would have been a researcher for Lonely Planet.



Peter Lauener

Chair, NCG

Start date March 2018

Previous job

Interim chief executive, the Student Loans Company

Interesting fact

When studying economics at university, Peter took a course in Marxian economics which was then cancelled because of lack of interest.



Dr Stephan Jungnitz

Interim principal, Thomas Rotherham College

Start date January 2018

Previous job

Interim principal, Hartlepool Sixth Form College

Interesting fact

Outside of education, Stephan works at the Huddersfield food bank, which helps to support individuals and families in crisis.



Steven Downham-Clarke

Vice-principal and deputy chief executive, Myerscough College

Start date April 2018

Previous job

Assistant principal, Kirklees College

Interesting fact

Steven has a keen interest in the outdoors and has hens, dogs, a cat and a horse.

Movers & Shakers

...

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

Difficulty:
EASY

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

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Solutions:
Next edition

Last Week's solutions

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

Difficulty:
EASY

4	3	7	1	8	6	5	9	2
1	6	2	5	7	9	4	8	3
5	8	9	4	3	2	1	7	6
9	4	6	8	1	7	3	2	5
8	1	5	6	2	3	7	4	9
7	2	3	9	5	4	6	1	8
3	7	8	2	4	5	9	6	1
2	9	4	3	6	1	8	5	7
6	5	1	7	9	8	2	3	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: Andy Gazey